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The Newsletter of Friends of Guinea

Advocacy, Information, and Networking for Guinea and Peace Corps Guinea

15 June 2011 • No.38

NEWS FROM PEACE CORPS GUINEA

Dear Friends of Guinea,

I am happy to send you this update and to share with you that Peace Corps Guinea is alive and well! The road has been difficult to finally get to this point where the program is up and running once again – but we are finally there and looking forward to building a program that is more effective than ever and offers volunteers the best possible experience.

Peace Corps Guinea currently has 13 volunteers serving in four different program areas – Education, Public Health, Community Economic Development, and Agroforestry. In a few weeks, a stage of 23 Education volunteers will arrive. This will be the first post-2009 evacuation training group so this is a milestone. In addition, we have 19 Peace Corps Response positions scheduled to arrive in September 2011 for which we are currently recruiting (any of you interested in a return to service in Guinea, please check out the PCR website!).

As you know, in 2011 Peace Corps is celebrating its 50th anniversary. At Peace Corps Guinea, we are celebrating not only the 50th, but also the official reopening of the program in Guinea.

Starting earlier this year, Peace Corps organized a Leadership Development Workshop for about 75 local development agents at ENATEF (some of you must have fond memories of ENATEF!) in honor of the 50th anniversary. In April, we had a kick off

event with about 200 partners and invited guests at the Peace Corps main office where we presented the Peace Corps Guinea's Summary Report for 2009-2010. The event served to inform our partners about Peace Corps activities and programs during the course of 2009-2010 and to highlight program impact, and to reinforce our communication with partners about Peace Corps' approach and philosophy. The event was also an occasion to celebrate the 50th, and to remember the rich history of Peace Corps in Guinea. Elhadji Thiam (whom I am sure many of you remember) was a featured speaker and he gave a moving account of his memories throughout the decades of his time with Peace Corps. Peace Corps Guinea has also taken the opportunity to renew its collaboration with the Government of Guinea and recently signed new Memoranda of Understanding with our partner ministries.

I am about to head out tomorrow for a long journey to all three Regions where Regional Staff and Volunteers are organizing regional 50th anniversary/partners' meetings. Staff and volunteers felt it was important to take the celebrations to the Regions where volunteers are actually serving in order to recognize and reinforce excellent collaboration at the local level. I am thoroughly looking forward to these events (to be held in Kankan, Labe, Mamou, Kindia, and Boké) and hope that they will serve to spread the word that "Peace Corps is Back!"

Wontanarra!

Priscilla Ashamu Sampil

Interim PC-Guinea Director

In honor of Mother's Day and the Global Action Week for women and girls' education, School-to-School International launches its Girls' Education Campaign May 2-8, 2011.

While working with our partner schools in Guinea, School-to-School International has consistently witnessed girls struggling to complete elementary school. Nationwide, less than half of school-aged girls complete their elementary school education and advance to middle school. Girls who drop out of school are more vulnerable to poverty, maternal mortality, hunger, exploitation and illness.

To break this cycle, STS' Girls' Education Program is reaching 15 schools. In this school year, STS is hosting community forums with 250 local stakeholders to raise their awareness about the importance of girls' education, and to develop action plans to address the barriers to girls' education in their communities. STS is also organizing girls' clubs and providing scholarships to 375 girls in 15 schools - proven methods of helping girls' succeed in school.

N'Gamet Sylla, a Guinean mother with six children, attended a community workshop held by School-to-School International in April 2011 where she learned how poorly girls are doing in her community's elementary school. N'Gamet said, "I left the two day workshop realizing that women can play an important role in the social and economic development of our country if they are educated. For this to happen, I think we need to support the enrolment of girls in school and follow them closely. We also need to work with teachers, local leaders, and families and raise awareness so our girls can continue on to high school."

Mothers like N'Gamet from Guinea would like to enroll their daughters in school but poverty and other barriers of entry or poor quality education result in low enrollment and high drop-out for primary-aged girls. Presently 69 million children worldwide are not enrolled in school and 60% of those children are girls. The Global Campaign for Education's (www.campaignforeducation.org) Global Education Week, May 2-8, 2011, aims to highlight the importance of women and girls' education and the urgency to take action on the Millennium Development Goal of achieving education for every man, woman and child by 2015.

School-to-School is contributing to this effort by

raising awareness on girls' education issues in Guinea through our Facebook page, website and newsletter. During the week of May 2-6 we will post a blog each day on stories about girls' education in Guinea. Please visit our Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/School-to-School-International/103570246120>) and blog (<http://stsgirlseducation.blogspot.com/>).

Please consider making a contribution of \$25, \$50, \$100 or more to School-to-School's Girls' Education Campaign (<http://www.sts-international.org/donate.html>) to support girls' scholarships, community forums, and girls' clubs in Guinea. Our goal is to raise \$5,000 in honor of Mother's Day, April 18, 2011.



STS Seeks Board Members

Dear Prospective Board Member,

School-to-School International (STS) is a non-profit organization founded in 2002 whose mission is to transform education and school health in developing countries so that every child can succeed in school. Since its founding, STS has provided learning materials, wells, latrines, teacher training and community mobilization support to 30 partner elementary schools in Guinea, West Africa, leading to improved learning for children in those schools, and improved health for children and community members in which those schools are located.

In the last year, STS has experienced rapid growth, with our revenues tripling and our presence growing from four countries to twelve (see www.sts-international.org for more details). While this expansion has been exciting, it has also increased our need for support and guidance in the management of our growing organization, as well as to help us continue expanding to reach a wider audience.

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Peace Corps News

by Brian Farenell, FOG Communications Director
www.friendsofguinea.blogspot.com

The Peace Corps celebrated its 50th anniversary on March 1, the date President John F. Kennedy signed the executive order which created the PC. Hundreds of house parties across the nation united PCVs in celebration.

The Peace Corps' revered founding director Sargent Shriver passed away on January 18 at the age of 95.

The buoyancy was tempered when the Peace Corps came under heavy criticism from PCV victims of rape and sexual assault. Investigations by *The New York Times* and ABC News' *20/20* painted the portrait of a 'blame the victim' organizational culture.

The *NYT* piece quoted Jessica Gregg, who was drugged and sexually assaulted in 2007 in Mozambique. She said a Peace Corps medical officer "made me write in my testimony that I was intoxicated" and suggested that "I willingly had sex with this guy." She and a number of other women complained that a training video the Peace Corps uses places too much emphasis on the role of alcohol in sexual assaults.

The furor prompted hearings by the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Director Aaron Williams told the House panel that he was committed to reforming Peace Corp's practices to create a more "victim-centered approach, to ensure that it provides compassionate care" to crime victims.

Critics will be watching the agency's response closely. Statistics indicate that PCVs are no more likely to be victims of violent crime than people in America. But one PCV victim quoted by the *NYT* expressed her shock that so little had changed in the agency's culture since her own rape in 1991.

News from Guinea

by Brian Farenell, FOG Communications Director
www.friendsofguinea.blogspot.com

Guinea's adjustment to democracy has been a rocky one. Continued tension persists between the government of President Alpha Condé and supporters of Cellou Dalein Diallo, the man he defeated in last year's elections.

Diallo complained that his Conakry residence was briefly invaded by a dozen soldiers and nine members of the presidential guard, an act he described as "intimidation."

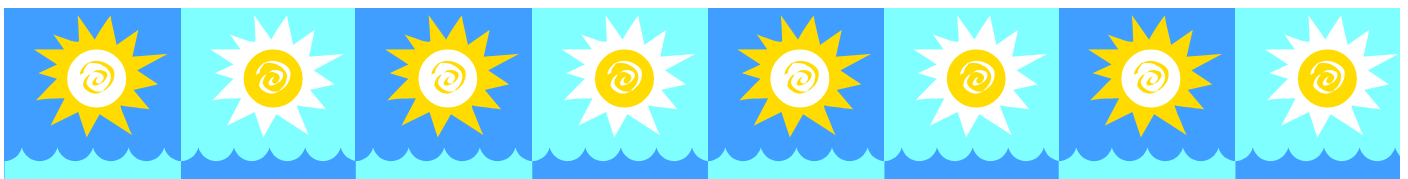
In April, *Jeune Afrique* reported that dozens of protesters were injured when security forces fired at Diallo supporters who'd gather at the Conakry airport to protest Condé's administration. The magazine quoted Guinea's leading human rights advocate as saying that twenty-seven people were hospitalized, eight of whom with bullet wounds.

President Condé attracted some criticism for a decree that named several members of the military among the newly appointed *prefets*.

Condé also promised to "punish" mining companies who obtained their government license via corruption. Aside from widespread human rights violations, the granting of mining licenses was among the most controversial decisions made by the transitional regimes of General Sekouba Konate and Captain Moussa Dadis Camara. The president said he would seek assistance from investor George Soros to help review and reform the country's mining code.

The political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire had an impact, as the arrival of over 30,000 Ivorian refugees put a strain on water and sanitation services in eastern Guinea.

In January, Condé announced successful negotiation of a railway between Kankan and Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, yet details are still unclear.





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We are therefore seeking new board members with experience in the following areas:

- legal
- finance
- philanthropy/fundraising
- strategic planning, and
- marketing.

If you are interested, we would be pleased to receive your CV, or that of another candidate through your referral.

Thank you for considering a board member position with STS. Please feel free to contact me at mlynd@sts-international.org or Wendy Dougherty w.dougherty@sts-international.org with any questions about board membership and to receive a full description of the board member positions to be filled.

Sincerely,

Mark Lynd, President and Founder
School-to-School International

ÇaVa? Is the quarterly newsletter of Friends of Guinea and seeks to maintain contact and community among members as well as inform them of official activities of the organization. We welcome submissions!

FOG is run by a small group of volunteers. Consider joining our ranks! Email us ...@friendsofguinea.org

communications@.... Brian Farenell	newsletter@... Mackenzie Dabo (editor)
finances@... Shad Engkilterra	projects@... Donald Parker
gps@... Diane Carlson (parents)	registry@.... Lance Constien
listserv@... Urska Manners	secretary@... Position open (volunteers welcome!)
membership@... Brian Clappier	web@... Karen Star
mentor@... Meghan Greeley (parents)	info@friendsofguinea.org (General information)

Website: <http://friendsofguinea.org>

Friends of Guinea is a non-profit organization made up of former Guinea Peace Corps Volunteers, Guineans inside and outside of Guinea, and others interested in promoting the cause of Guinean development in the world at large. We are a country-of-service affiliate of the National Peace Corps Association. Dues are \$15 annually for individuals and \$23 for families.

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Visit us at: <http://friendsofguinea.org>