

Çava?

The Newsletter of Friends of Guinea
Advocacy, Information, and Networking for Guinea and Peace Corps Guinea



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Petition to President-elect Obama

*"Just as we must value and encourage military service across our society, we must honor and expand other opportunities to serve. Because the future of our nation depends on the soldier at Fort Carson, but it also depends on the teacher in East LA, or the nurse in Appalachia, the after-school worker in New Orleans, **the Peace Corps volunteer in Africa...** And we're going to grow our Foreign Service...and **double the size of Peace Corps by 2011** to renew our diplomacy."--President-Elect Barack Obama, speaking in Colorado Springs, Colorado, on July 2, 2008*

With the election of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States, the National Peace Corps Association and its MorePeaceCorps campaign has launched an on-line petition urging support for a bigger, better and bolder Peace Corps. The petition is addressed to President-elect Obama, and will be presented to the Obama transition team. We also plan to use the petition as a way of showing critical state and congressional district support during meetings in the coming months with Capitol Hill lawmakers.

The next six months mark a critical point for action on the MorePeaceCorps campaign. Get started RIGHT NOW by signing the petition and getting at least ten other people you know (family members, friends, colleagues, etc.) to sign. You can also forward this petition to others you know overseas, as a demonstration of the global interest for MorePeaceCorps.

Take action right now, right here:

<http://www.PetitionOnline.com/morepc/petition.html>

More information can be found at:
www.morepeacecorps.org

Kankan Girls Conference a Success

Amy E. Hylinski, Kankan '07-'10

The month of October saw the end of rainy season and the return of Girls Conference to Haute Guinea. Seven volunteers from around the region participated in the 10th annual Girls Conference; each brought two girls from their respective villages.



Kankan Girls Conference participants, volunteers, and PC Country Director Dan Evans pose for a photo.

Over the course of the three-day conference the girls actively participated in sessions with topics ranging from HIV/AIDS to environmental protection. A myriad of organizations were eager to participate. AGBEF, an organization that focuses on health issues, spoke about family planning. A representative from the Director Regionale de Sante facilitated a session with the girls about the importance and nutritional value of Morgina. TOSTAN was also in attendance.

On the last day of the conference the girls had a chance to speak with a panel of professional women from the Kankan area and Kristine Schantz, the new Associate Peace Corps Director of small

business development and agro-forestry. For the final session of the day Dr. Traian, Peace Corps Doctor, spoke to the girls about what they can do to succeed in school and answered specific questions about the medical profession.



Conference participants.

“This conference changed the way I think,” said one Girls Conference participant, adding, “I learned what I can do to help myself, to make changes in my own life.”

A big THANK YOU goes out to all the Friends of Guinea for your support. We hope to see you back in 2009! Ko Baaraka!

Editor's Note: Friends of Guinea donated a total of \$3845 for this year's conferences in Kankan and Mamou (a report on the Mamou conference was included in the August 2008 issue of ÇaVa?).



At the end of the conference, each participant wrote a short phrase explaining a life goal they have and signed a paper that read “Women Can Do Anything.” They then put a painted handprint on the paper.



Dear Friends of Guinea,

We acknowledge with deep gratitude your recent donation of \$250 to Guinée news. On behalf of our team of volunteers, I would like to extend our sincere thanks for your continued support of our website.

Regards,
Mamadou Barry, Treasurer, Guinée news

Opportunity for RPCVs: Go Back into the Field with Kiva.org

Dear Returned Peace Corps Volunteer,

We believe you would be interested in learning more about Kiva.org, the world's first person-to-person micro-lending website. **Kiva.org** lets individuals lend to specific entrepreneurs in the developing world – empowering them to lift themselves out of poverty. When you browse entrepreneurs' profiles on www.kiva.org, choose someone to lend to, and then make a loan, you are helping a *real person* make great strides towards economic independence and improve his / her life. Once your loan is repaid, you can re-lend to another entrepreneur in need.

In addition to lending, you can *do more* to change lives in the developing world:

- **Kiva Fellows:** Individuals spend 10 weeks to 1 year with a microfinance institution in a *developing country*, chronicling the lives of the working poor and assisting the microfinance institutions to maximize their relationship with Kiva.
- **Kiva Translators:** Volunteering from their own homes, individuals translate entrepreneurs' profiles and loan descriptions written in the local language to English, which is then posted on Kiva.org.

If you need more information, please contact Tamara@kiva.org or visit our website at www.kiva.org/fellows.

Best regards,
Tamara Sanderson

Teneh's Cold

Alex Alper, Banfele (Kouroussa) '06-'07

Mariama looks at me.

"You suck at this," she says.

She is seated on an overturned mortar, removing chunks of ginger from the caldron of juice. It is pungent and opaque, almost ready for the children who will purchase it in plastic bags after school.

"I know," I say.

My job is to peel open the baggies for the juice. It is like prying a piece of masking tape off a sheet of plastic wrap, except less fun. My fingers are red, my eyes ache, and I've opened about ten bags.

Teneh laughs and leans towards me. The mayor's wife, her hair is elaborately braided, her complet new and starchy. Today she has a bad cold. Her eyes are small and watery. Seated on a stool beside me, she snuffles and snot droplets fall on the dust.

"Tubabu," she rolls her eyes, smiling. "White people." She snatches a pile of unopened bags off my lap. She grasps one and blows deeply into it. "TENEH!" I yell.

She is startled. Mariama stops stirring. They stare at me.

"Uh, bad things, the cold, bad, in the thing there," I say in Malinke. "Person drink juice, bad thing there, cough cough bad."

Teneh stares at me and then she gets it. She starts to laugh. It's deep and throaty with phlegm. Tears of mirth and cold germs dripping down her cheeks, she turns to Mariama, who is still confused.

"Listen to this: tubabu is saying that if I blow into this bag, and someone drinks the juice--are you listening?--Then they are going to get sick, too." Mariama jerks forward. "Get sick? From drinking juice? No way! Are you serious?!"

Teneh yells to a group of farmers who have appeared around the corner. "Mamadi! Sidi! Come listen to this!" They file over to her and form a wall of loud ridicule.

"Germs cause disease! Germs cause disease!" I keep insisting. Western science is as useless to me here as my usually potent powers of persuasion. To them, I am hysterical, absurd. I am funny to look at, I lose half a bucket of water every time I carry it home from the pump, and my prepositions are a mess. And now this.

A childlike petulance wells up inside me. Where is teacher? Who will tell them I'm right? Just think how they'll feel when they find out I'm right!

But there's no teacher. The doctor is out of town. Educated Guineans, other volunteers, America, are too far away to tell them I'm right.

I run to my hut and I sulk, with a profound sense of entitlement. I came all this way to help and no one



listens! If people won't even trust me on basic western science, how will they ever be open to my other ideas?

These issues grated, but what really upset me was that nobody liked me. My best friends, Mariama and Teneh, thought I was a fool. They would tell their families that night over dinner and have another

good laugh. From then on, people would surely laugh and retell the story every time they bought juice.

I lay under the mosquito net, contemplating early termination. Strangely, what popped into my head were those painfully obvious adages from anti-drug campaigns and the biographies of great men. "You have to believe in yourself." "There's no guarantee people will accept you even when you are right." "You mustn't rely on the approval of others." So this is what they meant. Those vacant, hackneyed phrases from so many mandatory middle school reading lists actually meant something quite valuable.

How strange to learn it in a village in Africa! How strange to let the opinion of foreign villagers matter so much that I might learn it here!

But it really makes perfect sense: being inescapably absurd for two years to strangers (who can't help but become your peer group) is arguably the best lesson in strength of character. If everything I do is crazy, I must give up on being sane. If I give up on being sane, I can promote crazy new ideas, weed out the open-minded people in town, dance miserably and unabashedly in a drum circle. Maybe I can even go back to America and do the same thing.

It wasn't easy being the lone believer in germs in Banfele. I got a cold, along with everyone else, a few days after the vendors started sneezing. I got ridiculed if I suggested the existence of disease vectors, and I never knew

if anyone changed their minds. All I know for sure is that so many needless episodes of sinusitis resulted in my acceptance of being unaccepted, arguably the best outcome of Peace Corps service---and excessive phlegm--ever.



Guinea celebrates 50 years of independence amid social tension

Brian Farenell, FOG Communications Director

FOG blog: friendsofguinea.blogspot.com

On October 2, celebrations were held across Guinea to mark the country's 50th anniversary of independence from France. Festivities in Conakry were attended by the heads of state of Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Senegal and The Gambia.

The day was bittersweet in many quarters. Guineans are generally proud of their historical status as the first sub-Saharan African country to demand and gain sovereignty from France, but are disappointed in how the first half century of independence has turned out.

Guinea's first head of state, Sékou Touré, famously told French President de Gaulle, "We would rather have poverty in freedom than riches in slavery." Most Guineans complain they've gotten plenty of poverty but not much freedom.

A group of families of the victims of Camp Boiro marked the 50th anniversary celebrations with a protest demanding those who ran Touré's notorious political prison be brought to justice.

In general, Guineans are tired of endemic corruption, poverty, a decaying infrastructure and a declining standard of living. Frustrations at this boiled over most notably last year when a bloody general strike paralyzed the country.

But that was not the end of the social tension. There have been many protests, some violent, since the end of the general strike. Earlier this month, youths took to the street in Conakry to protest high gas prices. A few days prior, people in Boké protested lack of access to water and electricity, both of which are readily available to the city's CBG bauxite mining company. Several other mining communities have faced similar protests.

Finally, Guinea is also becoming increasingly vulnerable to the drug trade that is exploiting the West African coast as a transit point between South American producers and European consumers. Cocaine traffickers have virtually taken over the failed state of Guinea-Bissau. The neighboring country's proximity combined with the weakness of the Guinean state and the country's poverty is making Guinea increasingly attractive to this illicit activity. International officials are referring to this part of Africa as the 'cocaine coast.'

Bureaucratic corruption is another obstacle toward tackling this scourge. Police Commissioner Moussa Sackho Camara told the BBC that "some suspected drugs traffickers had been freed from detention without his knowledge."

In September, the governor, mayor and other senior police officials in Boké were arrested after an aircraft reportedly carrying a huge quantity of cocaine landed in the town's airport and then took off.

What is...

ÇaVa?

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



Edited by: Mackenzie Dabo

Email: newsletter@friendsofguinea.org

Who are we?

FOG is run by a small group of volunteers. Consider joining our ranks!



Email us @friendsofguinea.org
(eg., "projects@friendsofguinea.org")

Stephanie Chasteen	.. secretary
Mackenzie Dabo newsletter
Rita Gerlach newsletter2
Brian Clappier membership
Shad Engilterra finances
Claire Lea projects
Brian Farenell communications
Nathan Shepherd	... web
Urska Manners listserv
Lance Constien registry
Sharon Buehler gps (parents)

Friends of Guinea

Friends of Guinea is a non-profit organization made up of former and currently serving 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.

email: info@friendsofguinea.org

website: <http://friendsofguinea.org>



You may also join the NPCA at www.rpcv.org

Why Work for Peace Corps When Mining Companies Pay So Much More?

By Caron Alarab, Dalaba '06-'08

(The following poem is dedicated to the four Guinean staff members at Peace Corps Guinea who left their jobs, after years of loyal service, for better-paying positions at Laro, a gold mining company. In chronological order: Abdoulaye Diallo, former Agroforestry APCD, worked for Peace Corps Guinea since before G-Zero. Mohamed Fofana was the Education APCD since 1999. Mohamed attended teacher training school in Maneah before becoming a Fulbright Scholar and studied at Boston University. Amadou Diaby, training director since the end of 2000, when training switched from a hot summer in Senegal to a cool January in Guinea. Alpha Barry, former Cross-Cultural Coordinator, a trained English teacher and unforgettable personality in stagiare lore, he left after he lost a chance at Diaby's position to Safety and Security guru Ousmane Diallo.) *Editor's note: M. Fofana was replaced internally by Dioulde Barry and A. Barry was replaced by Mr. Konna. A. Diallo's position was taken over by APCD SED, K. Schantz. Other posts cannot be filled due to budget constraints.*

Peace Corps Guinea, Peace Corps Guinea,
What will the future bring?
If your most experienced HCNs
Drop their jobs for more "cha-ching"?

Corps de la Paix en Guinee,
How will you stay afloat?
If your Guinean staff see decent pay
And quickly jump the boat?

Peace Corps Guinea, evac and back,
Who else will leave your team?
When many fear another strike
And envy the American dream?

First the Agfo APCD,
Sir Abdoulaye left our ranks.
He chose to work for Laro Gold Mines,
So we said goodbye and thanks.

Then Ed APCD Mohamed,
Heard Abdoulaye's pay was good.
So Fofana said, after 11 years,
"I had to get out while I could."

Training Manager Amadou Diaby
Was the next old friend to go.
Like the fellow Fulbright before him,
He has moved to a mining bureau.

And after years of training stagiaires,

A Peace Corps icon resigned, too,
As blue-eyed Mr. Barry joined up
With his friends on the mining crew.
So how can Peace Corps Guinea
Deny Guineans equal pay?
When those rich, patrony miners,
Just lured four of them away?

It seems PCVs care enough
To come so far and volunteer.
But even with no children to feed,
They're protected and paid to come here.

In theory, Guineans who've worked longest
Could get equal pay to PCVs.
But with pay schedules and budget cuts,
Peace Corps Guinea has other priorities.

Even when I asked my friend Odette
If she plans to join the mining crew.
"Not unless they make a good offer," she said.
Ehhh Alah, Odette!
Not you, too.

Caron Alarab served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Guinea, West Africa from July 2006 to October 2008. She was evacuated with the program in January 2007 and reinstated at the start of the 2007-2008 school year to continue teaching high school English in Dalaba. She helped design the English section of the 2008 Baccalaureate exam in Guinea and trained G16, the first education stage since the 2007 evacuation.

Help FOG; Purchase from Amazon!

FOG gets a 5% kickback on purchases that you make from Amazon through our site. Please bookmark <http://friendsofguinea.org/support.shtml> and use the Amazon link on that page when you make purchases to give FOG a little easy cash. We make about \$100 a year through this link, which helps us to support projects in Guinea and maintain our website. We used to make about \$200 a year -- so go on, stimulate the economy, and help FOG at the same time. Merci!



Interested in Guinea health statistics?

The Guinean government, in collaboration with the DHS, completed a comprehensive health study in 2005 and has posted the information at: <http://tinyurl.com/64qzuf>

There are numerous links that will take you to more links (in English and French) that have the various health statistics.

Guinea's Soccer Team Advances

On October 12, the Syli National of Guinea beat the Harambee Stars of Kenya by a score of 3 to 2 in Conakry at the Stade du 28 Septembre. Guinea took an early lead, and was up 1-0 at the half. Guinea led the entire game, scoring also in the 51st and 80th minutes, but tensions raised as Kenya scored their second goal in the 93rd minute. Guinea goals were scored by Ismael Bangoura, Mamadou Bah and Kamil Zayatte.

As always after a Syli win, Conakry and the suburbs were full of revelry. It was made sweeter because, in winning the match, Guinea's national team finished top of their group in the round of 2010 African Nations Cup and 2010 World Cup qualifying. Guinea had three wins, two draws and only one loss to end with 11 points, nudging out group-mate Kenya's 10 point finish. Zimbabwe and Namibia did not qualify

for the next round. Guinea will start matches on March 28, 2009, playing new group members Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Malawi each twice during the following eight months. The group winner will play in World Cup 2010 in South Africa (June and July), while the top three group finishers qualify for the February 2010 African Nations Cup in Angola. The team will play Gabon in a friendly match on November 18 outside of Paris, France.



Mentoring Opportunities for Guinea RPCVs and Parents

Remember what it was like when you were preparing to go to Guinea? How helpful it was (or would have been) to talk to those who had been there? Share your experiences by serving as a mentor for those who are entering PC service in Guinea. It's easy -- just go to <http://friendsofguinea.org/registry/> and follow the instructions to add yourself to the FOG Registry. Make sure to check "Volunteer mentor" and volunteers leaving for Guinea can use you as a resource. If you are the parent or friend of a PCV or RPCV, you can also serve as a "Parent mentor" and offer to talk to those that new volunteers have left behind.

Attention 1997 Guinea RPCVs

Allison Kane writes: "We are in the early stages of planning a Fall 2009 reunion for our group and are taking a poll to see who is interested. The poll is posted on the PC Guinea Class of 1997 Yahoo group. Please join and let us know if you are interested in the reunion. Here is the link to the Yahoo group:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/search?query=peace+corps+guinea%2C+class+of+1997>

Also, a similar group has been created on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=35535612014>."

The organization Guinea Youth (<http://guineayouth.com/> or <http://guineayouth.org/>) also has a Facebook group at: <http://www.new.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=23530791426>



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