

T5 STAR EVENTS SCHOOLS

MISSIRA, HAFIA, BAFATA AND GABU

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER NEWS UPDATE

Guinea-Bissau, for reasons now well know to supporters, finally entered the political discourse of the UK with David Cameron taking an unexpected interest in flights into the Bijagós Islands (see recent UK Tory party conference speech).

Unfortunately, at the T5 Star Events School in Missira, furniture, rather than drugs, has provided us with our own unexpected crisis.

“NIGHTMARE”

The “Furniture Crisis”, as previously reported, erupted in spectacular and heart breaking fashion.

On October 10th the Missira school’s previous tenants arrived at the school in trucks waving legal papers. They then proceeded to remove all the desks, chairs and blackboards from the school. All twelve classrooms were stripped bare. Inevitably all classes had to be cancelled.



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Furniture Crisis continued

Amazingly, we can report that we were able to re-furnish the school completely within three and a half days

Francelino Sanca (Frank), our carpenter, has been working all hours to build new tables, chairs, boards and cabinets. In the short-term we've also had to hire desks and tables but Frank aims to provide us with all our furniture before the hire agreements expire.

The wood required for such an enterprise is costing us dearly, however. Supporters who can help with wood purchase will have the added bonus of having their names carved into Frank's new desks. A unique educational opportunity. Donations please to the T5ngo account : HSBC 40-02-33 71493671

STAR EVENTS GROUP

Maddy Sheals, Director of Star Events Group, made a two week visit to Guinea-Bissau from October 12th to 26th.



This was the first time that T5 has received a visit from our main sponsors. Students and staff are immensely grateful that Maddy took the time to visit Guinea-Bissau, especially at a time when the local climate was at its most hostile.

Maddy visited all our schools across the country introducing herself and Star Events Group to well over a thousand of our students. In a whirlwind tour she managed to fit in individual talks with all T5 managers as well as doing radio interviews in both Gabu and Bissau. The Missira school now has a “Star Events Group display with the pictures of “Star Events” in Nigeria garnering the most interest among students.

We hope, of course, that Maddy’s visit will cement the partnership between T5ngo and Star Events Group. We fondly anticipate that T5’s anniversary celebrations will take place at the National Stadium with Youssou N’Dour providing the entertainment and Star Events Group providing the production and staging.

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LEGALISATION

Following our “School inspection” on June 13th we received state accreditation on 16th October with only a surprisingly low 5.000 xof required for “processing fees”. This certification essentially validates all our courses and may lead to a more productive relationship with the Ministry of Education.

In view of the withdrawal from G-Bissau of one of our potential funders, (Premier Oil) we have decided to postpone work on the curriculum project in favour of focusing our attention toward establishing T5 Star Events as the Teacher Training Centre for English and French teachers in Guinea-Bissau. Despite our newly acquired status, however, previous experience suggests that our dealings with the Ministry on this issue may take some time.

T5 INFORNET

The T5 partnership with InforNet – T5 InforNet has resulted in our first IT classes at the Missira school. InforNet have installed fourteen computers terminals in our “Arsenal” classroom and currently T5 InforNet is providing 3 hours of computer training per day. An added bonus of this partnership is that our own staff now have the opportunity to train in IT Skills.

TRAINING PROGRAMME

The final months of 2007 will be dominated by intensive training programme to upskill both the English and French departments and to provide managerial support for new and current managers. We will also be running courses for potential new T5 teachers.

Ongoing training lies at the heart of T5’s work but, as previously reported, one international ngo, “Plan”, formerly “Plan International” is exerting a malign influence on our attempts to establish national expertise. We have previously reported the “poaching” of members of our Exec and training staff. Current estimates suggest that over twenty T5 staff and T5 trainees are currently employed at Plan on short-term contracts primarily for their English language skills.

T5 seeks to reach an agreement with Plan regarding this situation. A recent visit to Bissau by Plan’s Chief Executive underlined the grotesque nature of much of so-called “International Development”. Each nights’ stay at the “Bissau Palace” cost Plan the equivalent of two months teacher’s salary. We think Plan can afford to compensate T5 for running their English language training programme. Watch this space.

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NATIONAL CONTEXT

In downtown Bissau a sign adjacent to the Pindjiguiti Memorial Monument reads “Guiné-Bissau Zona Africana Livre De Narcotrafico”. We must report, however, that this statement is wildly optimistic.

AND FINALLY

T5 ngo wishes to thank supporters who feel able to contribute towards helping us through the furniture crisis. In the short-term we have hired replacement desks and chairs but our longer-term future totally depends on our ability to purchase wood to build our own furniture.

Donations can be sent to T5ngo’s HSBC account.