

**T5 STAR EVENTS SCHOOL (GUINEA-BISSAU)**

**News Update**

**May/June 2007**

As the rainy season sets in.....

**SUPPORT STAFF**

A busy few months ahead for all our staff but we pay special tribute this month to our support staff who work tirelessly to keep the school dry, well-maintained, clean and plugged in. Some of the staff have been with us since the early days, when they were working for virtually nothing in true NGO style. Frank, Marciano, Maria and all the Admin Staff – we salute you.

Following the recent robbery we are pleased to welcome Mamadu Cassama to the staff as night watchman. Mamadu previously worked for the CIMA Project ( a VSO teacher training initiative) in Bambadinca. We are confident that Mamadu's rather imposing presence will have the desired effect. 'Nuff said!

**NATIONAL CONTEXT**

Much better news politically: a change of prime- minister has led to a calmer, more stable situation. If the situation holds foreign donors may well feel more confident about investing in development. The 4WDs which cruise pass the school tend to belong to development organizations (including the UN) or the government. It's no

surprise, therefore, that many of our students see the school as a possible route into this elite sector.

More 4WDs in Bissau: could oil exploration and phosphate mining provide an answer to Guinea-Bissau's chronic poverty? We await developments with both excitement and trepidation.

### **T5 IN HAFIA**

We are pleased to announce that we will shortly be opening a new school in Hafia , an area close to the airport and Colinas de Boe University. This will be a joint venture with Victor Luis Capertuty, Director of SOS Guinea-Bissau. Essentially Victor will provide premises and resources and we will provide the curriculum and teaching staff. Throughout May, T5 staff have been conducting a marketing campaign in the area which has involved leaflets, meetings and, of course, the inevitable football match. We aim to move our original (scruffy but much-loved) school sign into the airport area – a T5 welcome for international travellers to Guinea-Bissau.

### **ENROLMENT**

Demand for places in Missira (the location of T5 Star Events School 1) still outstrips our ability to supply courses and classrooms. Even with a short break for many of our courses student numbers are still well over a thousand. From a financial point of view, the recent upturn in the national situation has enabled us to collect 85% fees, a

welcome improvement on the 62% reported previously.

The school still maintains its "scholarship" system – at the moment 23 students from a variety of partnership organizations and NGOs benefit from the scheme.

### TEACHING STAFF

We welcome Braima Balde to the English teaching staff. Braima was already a well-known face at the school having attended last year's teacher development course led by Fernando Sa and Nick Barrett. He joins us at a time when the school is particularly stretched – but somehow Cecil Cabral is managing to "keep the show on the road". With three of our more experienced teachers currently on a short-term contract with Plan International Cecil is dealing with the ensuing logistical nightmare. For this reason, and exceptionally for a member of staff, Cecil wins this month's coveted "Supporter of the Month" award.

### ACADEMIC PRIORITIES.....and an APPEAL

By far the biggest challenge for teaching staff at the moment is responding to the rapid progress of the students. A year ago almost 70% of our students were beginner level. Now many of our classes are levels 3,4 and 5. French and English teachers have very limited access to any kind of language or teacher development material. Currently, weekend workshops led primarily by Freddy Gama aim to

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address the issue of teaching higher levels but clearly staff need even more support.

In September this year, Nick Barrett and ,possibly, Eric Morris will be going to Bissau to provide further training and managerial advice. Supporters with a background in either training or management are encouraged to join this expedition. Supporters without that background can, of course, dip into their wallets as usual.

## MONEY

Supporters who wish to know all the facts and figures can easily find out by ringing 020 7265 1779. Essentially, the school is able to pay the rent, pay the staff a living wage, pay the admin costs and – if the students have money – have a little bit left over. There are no big funds in the bank.

The lack of teaching resources is pitiful. Many supporters have offered to provide resources but our problem has always been transport. We're pleased to report that we have been offered free space in a container traveling from London to Bissau.

Books... computers...ring the number above.

## OTHER NEWS

Fernando reports that the TT course with 15 trainees has now passed the halfway stage....Lembem continues to worry that there's never enough money for photocopying....John is liaising with "Falcosida" to organize an AIDS awareness workshop....Amadu has put out an appeal for any French teaching

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material....Belmira is sounding out the possibility of organizing a Domestic Skills course...and coach Ercilio thinks that pitch conditions will favour the T5 Star Events football teams throughout the rainy season.

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