

T5 STAR EVENTS SCHOOLS

BISSAU MISSIRA BISSAU HAFIA BAFATA GABU SAO DOMINGOS

GUINEA-BISSAU

PRAIA

CAPE VERDE

Spring Report 2009

Supporters will be aware of the events of March 1st and 2nd in Guinea-Bissau. [CNN](#) reported the news as follows:

"The President of Guinea-Bissau was assassinated Monday morning, a day after an explosion killed the head of the West Africa country's military, the prime-minister said. It was not immediately clear how President Joao Bernardo Vieira, 69, died. Prime-minister Carlos Gomes confirmed the death to CNN. Early Monday, gunfire and rocket explosions that lasted for about an hour were heard near the presidential palace in the capital Bissau, according to local media. Looting was later reported at the presidential palace. Army spokesman Zamora Indula said an aide to the president was killed during the gunfire. He added that the gunmen remained at large and that a 10-member commission will manage the army until a new chief of staff is named. The army, he said, will remain neutral. General Tagme Na Wai, chief of Guinea-Bissau's military, was killed in his office Sunday, according to local news reports. Five other high-ranking military officials were wounded, two of them critically. After the attack, all local radio stations were ordered to immediately suspend their programs."

In this report we publish extracts of an interview from [Pambazuka News](#) with the philosopher and anthropologist, [Carlos Cardoso](#); his comments serve to contextualise recent events as well as provide some pointers to Guinea-Bissau's political future.

First though, how did the events affect the schools? In common with all other institutions in the capital the Missira school remained closed in the days following the assassinations and, a week later, following the respective funerals. Missira fully re-opened on Wednesday 11th March. Some might argue that given the gravity of the situation we should not be worrying about the resulting economic consequences for T5; nonetheless, it remains a fact that we need to pay a monthly rent of approximately £750 for the Missira building and we can only do this by having the school open as much as possible. As Daniel Na Dunda, T5 Finance Manager, affirms: "I am dreading payment this month (March)...we have lost almost two weeks and the people do not want to invest in this high risk." Daniel's comments illustrate just how necessary it is for us to live "in the short-term". Nonetheless, the long-term future of Guinea-Bissau and the long-term future of T5 Star Events Schools are inextricably linked.

[Extract 1 of Carlos Cardoso's interview with Pambazuka News:](#)

PN: The political and institutional crisis engulfing Guinea-Bissau has long revolved around the rivalry between President Nino Vieira and the military chief Tagme Na Wai. Does their simultaneous and violent death present a chance at stability for the country?

CC: I don't think we should overestimate the impact of the recent event. Other factors must come into play for the political space to change. Bad governance generally afflicts Guinea, but needless to say, the elimination of Na Wai and Vieira will lead to dramatic changes given that they had an enormous influence on political and military life. It is also important to point out that these two men were the embodiment of the intractable contradictions that have characterized the instability in Guinea-Bissau.

PN: What was the nature of their conflict?

CC: This goes back a long time. Tagme Na Wai and Nino Vieira share a long history in the politics of Guinea-Bissau, but also personal ties dating back to the liberation struggle. One can speak of rivalry

between two men who distinguished themselves as soldiers. In spite of the personality and stature of men like Amilcar Cabral and others at the forefront of the liberation struggle, Nino was able to build up his own personality cult. Along with others like Tagme Na Wai, these personalities grew over the course of time.

Relations worsened during the 1985 coup d'état against Nino, when Tagme Na Wai was fingered as one of the key players. (on assuming power in 1980 through a coup d'état that deposed first president Luis Cabral, Nino Vieira survived three coup attempts in 1983, 1985 and 1993 before being removed in 1999. Tagme was detained and subjected for a long time after the 1985 coup attempt.) Again, during the 1998 rebellion, Tagme Na Wai sided with Ansumana Mane. (In 1998 an armed revolt led by military chief Ansumane Mane failed to remove Nino from power, thanks to the intervention of Senegalese troops). In spite of all this, when Tagme Na Wai was appointed military chief (following the assassination of General Verissimo Correia Seabra in 2004) and Nino Vieira was elected president (in 2005), the two men maintained a fractious relationship. Each knew that he could not stand but also could not do away with the other. There are two centers of power; one political, the other military. These relations were so intricate that the politics of Guinea-Bissau was plagued with strong interference by the armed forces as a result. This said, it is true that the deaths of these two men will change things in Guinea-Bissau, but to what extent, we are still not sure.

Star Events Group

The response to the current crisis from our main sponsors, Star Events Group, has been excellent. We are pleased to announce that Star Events have agreed to continue their support of T5 for the next three years. Part of this support has included topping up the required funds to ship donated materials to Bissau. This shipment should be on its way right now (pirates permitting). Again T5 would like to thank Maddy Sheals for her tireless co-ordination of the Star Events – T5 partnership. Supporters who participated in the recent “Put People First” march and rally in Hyde Park, London, will have noted that Star Events Group provided the staging for that event.

Cape Verde??

As previously reported, Lembem Essamai and Julio Imbula have been negotiating the opening of T5 Star Events School, Praia, in Cape Verde. We are pleased to announce that courses have now started (currently English and Maths). In order to expand our provision we are currently completing the necessary administration with the Cape Verdean Ministry of Education. It remains to be seen whether T5 will be able to sustain this foray into international expansion but both Lembem and Julio-Imbula are optimistic about "T5 Praia".

Materials

We need more teaching materials....especially Teaching French as a Foreign Language materials. If supporters can get unwanted materials to London it looks likely that we can (continue to) get them to Bissau. Please call Nick on 020 7265 1779.

News from Missira

There are currently 1,392 students at the school (726 English students, 666 French students). Due to the ongoing problems in the State sector (see later report) many of our students are attending T5 Star Events School as their only source of education.

Fernando Sa and Ercilio Evora are leading another T5 teacher training course. These courses, whilst not exactly money-spinners, are essential to the development of T5.

We say farewell to one ex-T5 trainee, popular English teacher, Armandinho. We wish him well in Saudi Arabia.

The Management Team decided that, with much regret, tuition fees would be increased. Fees are, of course, still very low; even so, fees

collected at Missira subsidise our work in the regions where poverty is scandalously widespread.

A new lick of paint for the main school has improved the look of the place.....and a silencer for the generator has improved the sound of the place immeasurably.

Frank has been busy again replacing some damaged desks and building more furniture for the larger classrooms.

Missira was three years old on February 12th. Although T5 courses pre-date our time in Missira (most notably at Taborda School, Sintra) it's fair to say that T5 became fully established with the move to Missira. February 12th 2006 also marks the beginning of our partnership with Star Events Group. Needless to say, a hugely enjoyable party was held to mark the event. As Bacar Sera, T5 Information Manager says, "the anniversary was really wonderful".

There is now a canteen at Missira. Can it pay for itself? Too early to say – find out in the next report.

There may be a "banking crisis" (or, as some might have it, the latest manifestation of global injustice) elsewhere but we have our own minor "banking triumph". For the first time, all our staff now have bank accounts and T5 salaries are paid directly into these accounts. Great work by Daniei Na Dunda to set this up.

[Carlos Cardoso - Extract 2:](#)

PN: Why is it that 30 years after the liberation struggle, the army still holds such sway in political life?

CC: This is in large part due to the violent heritage that characterizes Guinea-Bissau's society. This is particularly the case because after independence, the new government did not set in place mechanisms to redefine the role of the military in a civilian state. Furthermore, there was the tendency by political leaders to either claim or cling to

power by co-opting the military. The military thus occupied a central role whereby political differences were no longer settled peacefully but with their involvement. Politicians were thus accustomed to using the military to their own ends. This combination of factors has put the military in a very influential political position.

PN: Are there countervailing forces that can help Guinea-Bissau out of the current situation?

CC: It is possible but only if politicians take account of the enormous responsibilities they have. For years the need to reform the armed forces as a prerequisite for political stability has been discussed. The inherent obstacles do not necessarily mean it is altogether impossible. Everything hinges on political will. And I believe things will get easier now that there is a new and focused generation, a generation who were not a part of the liberation struggle. In this generation Guinea-Bissau has well-trained cadres with a different understanding of politics, governance and civil order. They still have to contend with the old guard but the change will happen. The change can start now if the military is reformed into a modern institution that can rise above the challenges facing the country.

PN: At the end of the 60-day transition period with Raimundo Pereira at the helm, elections are scheduled to take place. Do you think this will happen?

CC: I had indeed foreseen a scenario where a transition period would take place in a power-vacuum. But again I remain optimistic that the constitutional timeframe will be respected if the political will exists. Granted, there are structural deficiencies. Guinea-Bissau is practically bankrupt with huge deficits, but in life where the will to do right exists financial means are not the sole determinant. I am gratified that the prime-minister re-affirmed plans to hold elections in the stipulated period. If the international community comes to the party with the necessary support, if ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) commits itself to the process it can be achieved. I am, however, under no illusion that in a country with such structural and administrative problems it will be plain

sailing. I just think that the challenges are surmountable and everything else is open to conjecture.

[IRINNEWS – March 20th – “Teachers strike over non-pay”](#)

“Intermittent teacher strikes that have disrupted the school year since October 2008 are on again as most of the country’s teachers went on strike on 19th March over salary arrears , according to the Union of Teachers. The strike was initially planned to last 48 hours and end on 20th March but union spokesman Mario Lima Ingualde told reporters on 19th March: ‘We will continue until 24, 25 and 26 March unless the government agrees to our demands.’ Teachers are asking for up to one year of unpaid salary as well as education sector reform, including improved school equipment, better teacher training and increases in the education budget, according to the teachers’ union, SINAPROF. Education has not been a priority for Guinea-Bissau governments and the budget does not always cover salaries, secondary school teacher Infamara Conte told Irin. In the meantime it is children who suffer, said head of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Guinea-Bissau Silvia Luciana. ‘Children should not pay the price of the State’s fragility...The children of Guinea-Bissau have already lost over four months of school this year, due to repeated teachers’ strikes and political instability.’ Teacher strikes have plagued Guinea-Bissau’s education system for years ever since the end of the civil war a decade ago. Education officials have been forced to declare entire school years as null and void because of continuous strikes over conditions and pay.”

[Ministry of Education](#)

One way for the cash-strapped Ministry of Education to raise funds is to charge educational NGOs huge fees for annual accreditation. This year’s fee for T5 has proved to be so huge that Ercilio Evora has been forced to broker a deal with the Ministry to pay by installments.

News from the Regions

T5 Star Events schools in Bafata and Sao Domingos continue to expand provision. Not such good news from Gabu and Hafia – in order to make these schools viable it seems likely that Missira will need to provide more long-term support. Meanwhile, we are looking into the possibility of establishing schools in Bula (a town in the north of Guinea-Bissau) and in Antula (a suburb of Bissau). It's worth noting that the relatively recent availability of mobile phones in Guinea-Bissau – the two major players being MTN and Orange – has enabled us to co-ordinate our work throughout the regions. Distances between our schools are not enormous but there are only 500 kilometres of paved roads in the entire country – traveling between schools can therefore be time-consuming.

T5 Student Services Manager, Helder Lopes, reports that the theft of mobile phones at the Missira school has started to become an issue for all users of the building.

Carlos Cardoso - Extract 3:

PN: If the elections do take place do you foresee real political stability holding?

CC: First and foremost, the current government elected in November 2008 must remain in place. If a dialogue takes place now with other political actors (this is necessary during the transition period) it will be possible to hold free and fair elections. I do not think the opposition is strong enough to mount an upheaval. The November 2008 elections, in my opinion, demonstrated that the opposition had lost traction. And contrary to conventional logic, the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, the majority party) is likely to become even stronger following Vieira's death because he embodied the very contradictions that weakened his party, in particular, leadership differences between him and Carlos Gomes Junior (the current prime-minister). With the demise of Vieira it will be easier for the PAIGC to heal itself and

govern the country with a stable parliamentary majority. But I am basing this on the assumption that the PAIGC wins the upcoming elections. At the moment we do not know who the candidates will be. If the eventual winner is not from the PAIGC he will have problems governing. But then again, this depends on the personality of the winning candidate.

European Union

The office of the EU in Bissau have contacted us asking us to provide English tuition to two EU staff members. This is exactly the kind of contract we need for long-term sustainability. Unfortunately, only three other organizations operating in Guinea-Bissau have comparable resources – the UN, the International NGO “Plan International” (yes, the International NGO which likes to steal our staff) and “SNV”, a Dutch NGO. We will, of course, seek to do business with these big hitters. Clearly, the EU can afford to pay us much more than our students can.....

National TV

Our partnership with the national television station is bearing fruit.....advertisements for T5 Star Events Schools are now being broadcast on a daily basis. We, of course, are providing employees with English language tuition. Namir Lopes, T5 PR Manager, reports that “similar deals” are still in place with Radio Jovem and Radio Quelele.

Carlos Cardosa - Extract 4:

PN: Guinea-Bissau is currently seen as a narco-state. What impact has the drug trade played in the current violence?

CC: It is indeed a key factor in the current crisis. Drug trafficking seems to involve the military. Given the ubiquity of the military

in political life anything that affects it affects the state. Tagme Na Wai put on a public show of fighting the drug scourge. Nino Vieira, by contrast, was not as visible. It is possible that they had differences on this score. All the same, Nino's negative image came from the manner in which he returned from exile to contest the 2005 elections and won. He arrived in Bissau by helicopter even though the airspace was closed to him. This was a blatant challenge to the country's laws. In the same way drug traffickers seem to be able to land their small planes anywhere and leave undetected.

[IRINNEWS – March 20th – “Buying more time to reform army”](#)

The head of the European mission to help Guinea-Bissau reform its security sector has called on the government to extend the mission's mandate by one year. 'We need to extend security sector reform until November 2009,' General Juan Esteban Verasastegui told reporters on 19th March, after submitting his one-year mission report to Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior.....the reform mission began in March 2008 under a one-year mandate to streamline and modernize the country's armed forces, police units, air force, navy and judiciary, with help from the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (UNOGBIS). Up to 2,500 members of the armed forces are to be retired as part of the scheme. But so far just 30 army officers have been demobilized, according to Verasastegui, who says the mission is still only in its planning and research stage."

[IRINNEWS – March 30th – “Instability deprives people of clean water”](#)

With 80% of the Guinea-Bissau capital's water contaminated with harmful bacteria, residents are used to outbreaks of cholera and other deadly diarrhoeal diseases, but donors say they can fund major infrastructure projects only if stability can be guaranteed. The most recent cholera outbreak, which the government declared over in February 2009, killed 225 people and infected some 14,000, most of them in the capital Bissau.....Most Bissauan families draw water from shallow wells they build themselves – often constructed

dangerously close to latrines – with population growth in the capital exacerbating the situation. “These days we hardly ever get water during the day”, said Antonio Goia, a resident of the Caracol neighbourhood in southwest Bissau. “To wash we have to get water from a well and, to drink it is hard to find any clean water at all.”

The water used at T5 Star Events School, Missira is drawn from a nearby well.

Collective Management

T5 is currently undergoing a “structure review”. A four person “Executive” is, at the moment, elected by and answerable to a twelve person Management Team. It has become increasingly clear that the French Department is under-represented on the Exec and in the Management Team. A decision has yet to be made about whether both the Exec and the MT will be expanded – the principle of parity has, however, been agreed by all T5ers. Exec elections will take place at the end of the academic year.

Donations

Supporter of the month is back! [Andrew Walkley](#) is the worthy winner!

The T5 UK bank account is (HSBC) 40 – 02 – 33 71493671.

And finally.....

An alternative “G20” of the world’s least developed nations (according to the United Nations Development Indices) would comprise: The Gambia, Benin, Malawi, Zambia, Eritrea, Rwanda, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali, Ethiopia, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mozambique, Liberia, DR Congo,

Central African Republic and Sierra Leone.