

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Guinea-Bissau

CAPITAL: Bissau

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Multiparty Republic

AREA: 36,125 Sq Km (13,948 Sq Mi)

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION 1,179,800



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Guinea-Bissau is located on the coast of West Africa. It is bound by Guinea to the south and east, Senegal to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the southwest. The territory consists of the mainland, the Bissagos archipelago which is a group of over 18 islands and various other coastal islands. The mainland terrain has a forested coastal plain typified by mangrove lined estuaries as well as a transitional savannah covered plateau which forms the Planalto de Bafata and Planalto de Gabu. The country is drained by a number of rivers that flow into the Atlantic Ocean and the principal rivers are the Cacheu or Farim, Mansoa, Geba, Corubal, Rio Grande and Cacine. Major Cities (pop. est.); Bissau 125,000, Bafata 14,000, Gabu 8,000 (1988). Land Use; forested 38%, pastures 38%, agricultural-cultivated 12%, other 12% (1993).

CLIMATE: Guinea-Bissau has a tropical climate with two seasons, a wet season from June to November with August the wettest month and a dry season from December to May with April and May the hottest months. The prevailing wind is the hot dust laden Harmattan which blows from the Sahara Desert in the west. Average annual precipitation in Bissau is 1,950 mm (77 inches) while average temperature ranges are from 24 degrees Celsius (75 degrees Fahrenheit) to 27 degrees Celsius (81 degrees Fahrenheit) all year.

PEOPLE: The majority of the population is of Black African origin and includes the following ethnic groups, the Balante who account for 27% while the Fulani account for 23%, the Malinke for 12%, the Mandyako for 11% and the Pepel for 10%. The Mestizos, Mulattoes and Assimilados who are of mixed racial descent, constitute the most important ethnic minorities representing around 2% of the population.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 27 persons per sq km (71 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 19.9% urban, 80.1% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 49.2% male, 50.8% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 39.9 years male, 43.1 years female (1990). Age Breakdown; 41% under 15, 25% 15 to 29, 17% 30 to 44, 11% 45 to 59, 5% 60 to 74, 1% 75 and over (1990). Birth Rate; 42.9 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 23.0 per 1,000 (1990). Increase Rate; 19.9 per 1,000 (1990). Infant Mortality Rate; 151.0 per 1,000 live births (1990).

RELIGIONS: Over 65% of the population follow local native tribal beliefs while 30% are Muslims and the remainder are Christians, predominantly Roman Catholic.

LANGUAGES: The official language is Portuguese, although a Creole Patois is the trade and national language. The indigenous people all speak dialects derived from the Niger-Congo family of languages.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: N/A. Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 211,200 or 36.5% (1990).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: During the 1950's and 1960's an independence movement swept across Africa. In 1956 African nationalist leaders in Portuguese Guinea founded the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) and during the early 1960's the PAIGC trained many Portuguese Guinean farmers in guerrilla warfare. The war for independence began in 1962 and by 1973 the National People's Assembly declared the province to be an independent nation called Guinea-Bissau with Luiz Cabral as President. The war for independence ended when Portugal recognized Guinea-Bissau's independence on Sept. 10, 1974. The PAIGC began work to rebuild and develop the country as well as unite Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde under one government. However, only four days after the adoption of a new constitution aimed at the unification of the two governments, a coup led by Berbarado Vieira overthrew Guinea-Bissau's civilian government on Nov. 14 1980. Cape Verde condemned the coup and cut off diplomatic relations, although the two countries held reconciliation talks in June 1982. In 1984 Guinea-Bissau adopted a constitution that established a new National Assembly, which also removed the post of Prime Minister and gave greater powers to the President. In Nov. 1985 several ministers and officials were accused of plotting to overthrow the government and were subsequently executed in 1986. In Nov. 1986 Pres. Vieira announced the continuation of economic liberalization reforms and proposed to further reduce state controls over trade and the economy. In Apr. 1990 a dispute erupted with Senegal regarding territorial waters rights after Senegal seized three Guinea-Bissau ships. In Sept. 1990 the government adopted a document providing for a transition to a two party political system which was approved in Jan. 1991 by the PAIGC. In May 1991 the Parliament approved a number of multiparty reforms and in June 1991 the constitution was amended to legalize opposition parties. Portugal agreed to oversee the multiparty elections and Pres. Vieira agreed that the PAIGC would hold a special congress in Dec. 1991 to discuss constitutional amendments. On Nov. 18, 1991 the Supreme Court legalized the opposition party the Democratic Front led by Aristides Menezes, in effect ending the 17 year one-party rule. In Dec. 1991 two further parties were also legalized. Also during 1991 the government introduced special monopolistic powers for the central bank over the foreign exchange market in an attempt to curtail the black market currency trafficking. On Mar. 7, 1992 an approved opposition demonstration denouncing PAIGC corruption took place with some 30,000 people attending.

On Mar. 9, 1992 dates were set for presidential and legislative elections for Nov. 15 and Dec. 13 respectively, although they were later postponed until March 1993. In Dec. 1992 Senegalese military units bombed purported Casamance rebel bases in the Sao Domingos region of Guinea-Bissau killing two people. Following which the government denied providing any assistance to the rebel Movement of Democratic Forces in Casamance and their leader Diamacoune Sinfhor was expelled from the country. During 1992 as a result of the government's continued privatization of state enterprises and the freeing of prices export-crop production rose by 19% while there were large-scale army desertions at the end of 1992 due to appalling living conditions. On Mar. 17, 1993 an associate of Pres. Vieira, Major Robalo de Pina was killed by another officer which further delayed the planned elections. In May 1993 the leader of the Party for Renovation and Development was arrested amid claims of involvement in a planned March coup attempt, although he was later released. On July 10, 1993 Pres. Vieira announced that the elections would be held on Mar. 27, 1994.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Peso (PG) divided into 100 Centavos.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$241,700,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$633,600,000 (1993). Imports; USD \$90,000,000 (1991). Exports; USD \$23,000,000 (1991). Tourism Receipts; N/A. Balance of Trade; PG -293,146,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 461,000 or 45.8% of total population (1992). Unemployed; N/A.

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are Portugal, Egypt, Senegal, France, Spain, Cape Verde, Germany and Algeria.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Bauxite, Cereals, Coconuts, Cotton, Fish, Palm Kernels, Peanuts, Rice, Timber.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Beverages, Construction, Fishing, Food Processing, Forestry.

MAIN EXPORTS: Fish, Ground Nuts, Palm Kernels, Timber.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; nil. Roads; length 3,500 km (2,175 mi) (1989). Vehicles; cars 3,200 (1989), trucks and buses 2,400 (1989). Merchant Marine; vessels 18 (1990), deadweight tonnage 1,846 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 9,000,000 (5,592,000 passenger-mi) (1985), cargo ton-km 1,000,000 (685,000 short ton-mi) (1985).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 1 with a total circulation of 6,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 40,000 (1994). Television; N/A. Telephones; units 8,600 (1993).

MILITARY: 7,250 (1995) total active duty personnel with 93.8% army, 4.8% navy and 1.4% air force while military expenditure accounts for 3.3% (1992) of the Gross National Product (GNP).