

## A TURBULENT PAST

Guinea-Bissau's history has been plagued by upheaval since independence from Portugal in 1974. Much of the conflict stems from a contest for power between military and state institutions, exacerbated by money and corruption from the drug trade. The struggle is ongoing: March 2009 saw the assassinations of President João Vieira and Army Chief of Staff Batista Tagme Na Waie. In April 2010, the military briefly detained the current Prime Minister.



# AFRICA

## GUINEA-BISSAU

### A STRONG PARTNERSHIP GROWS STRONGER

Interpeace has been working in Guinea-Bissau since 2007 through the Voz di Paz ('Voice of Peace') programme. The initiative seeks to remove the obstacles to the consolidation of peace and stability in the country through an inclusive, participatory dialogue process that incorporates representatives from all facets of Bissau-Guinean society. In February 2010, Voz di Paz became a fully independent non-profit organization, deepening the capacity of Interpeace and Voz di Paz to work together for peace.

### KEY ISSUES

In 2008-2009, Voz di Paz conducted nationwide consultations with over 6,000 Bissau-Guineans including, for the first time, members of the military and the police. Four main obstacles to peace were identified:

- Lack of effective state institutions and poor governance;
- Poverty;
- Poor administration of justice; and
- Tribalism.

### GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

These findings were disseminated through a nationwide integrated awareness campaign, which fostered debate and ownership of the issues by Bissau-Guineans. Outreach through a wide variety of media continues:

#### Radio

- Partnering with 25 regional and local radio stations, Voz di Paz produces weekly programmes on current issues such as land disputes and governance. Some partner stations are located deep in the countryside, enabling Voz di Paz to bring dialogue on the issues to the most remote areas.

#### Newsletter

- In October 2010, Voz di Paz launched Eco da Voz di Paz, a newsletter which addresses different topics of interest each month. The bulletin is read both within Guinea-Bissau and by members of the diaspora around the world.

#### Building Local Media Capacity

- Voz di Paz provided assistance in the training of 44 local radio journalists, which covered best practices, information management and objective

reporting in conflict situations. A further 46 journalists will be trained in the coming year.

### A TRUSTED ACTOR

#### Including the Military

Voz di Paz is one of the few organizations that have been able to get close to the military, earning enough respect to involve the security sector in the national dialogue process. The programme now regularly creates 'dialogue spaces' around specific activities to facilitate rapprochement between civilians and the military. On 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2010, over 3,000 people participated in a social event where civilians interacted with the country's largest infantry unit, something that was unprecedented in the country.

#### Quenching the Thirst for Dialogue

Voz di Paz has set up 10 Regional Spaces for Dialogue, covering the eight regions. Used as safe spaces for dialogue, mediation and reconciliation they are proving effective environments for resolving issues and conflicts at the local level, enabling people to address their pressing issues peacefully, avoiding the use of violence.

Compared to events of 2009, 2010-2011 was a more tranquil year for Guinea-Bissau. Despite some moments of uncertainty due to power struggles in the army, on the whole Guinea-Bissau shows clear signs of recovery and willingness to move beyond the status quo.