

SOLDIERS' CULTURE GUIDE TO EBOLA AFFECTED AREAS

GUINEA

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Facts & Figures

Capital: Conakry

Population: 11.5 million (2014)

Languages: French is official and is used in education, government and business. Of the 37 indigenous languages, the most popular are Fula or Fulani (32%), Malinké (30%), Soussou, Kissi, Kpelle, and Toma.



Ethnicity: Three main ethnic groups in Guinea

- 40% - Peuhl or Fulani
- 30% - Malinka
- 20% - Soussou
- 10% - Gerzé, Toma, Kissi, Koniagi, etc.

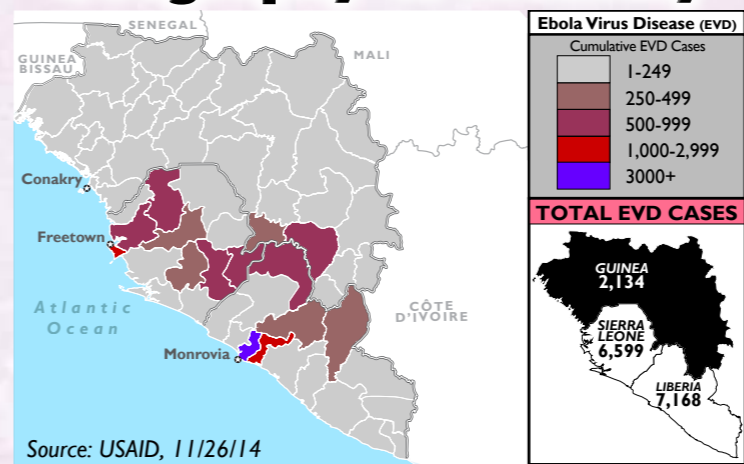
Major Infectious Diseases: Malaria and water borne diseases are common. Other diseases to watch for are: hepatitis A, typhoid, dengue, Lassa and yellow fevers.

Public Holidays: New Year's Day, 1 May Labor Day, 2 Oct Independence Day.

Muslim Holidays: 2 Jan 15 Mawlid, 18 Jun 15 Ramadan, 17 Jul 15 Eid al-Fitr, 23 Sep 15 Tabaski. All exact dates depend on sighting of the moon.

Christian Holidays: 5 Apr Easter, 15 Aug Assumption, 25 Dec Christmas.

Geography & Economy



Shaped as a crescent, Guinea is located in West Africa. The Atlantic Ocean is located on the west coast, Guinea-Bissau in the northwest, Senegal and Mali in the north, Côte d'Ivoire in the east and Liberia and Sierra Leone in the south.

Mining is Guinea's economic lifeline, accounting for about 46% of GDP. Bauxite, gold and diamond are the principal minerals. Services are the next largest economic sector with 31% of the GDP. Agriculture contributes 22% of the GDP.

Leadership & Government

President: Alpha Condé (since 21 Dec 2010, 5-yr term)

Prime Minister: Mohamed Said Fofana

Minister of Defense: Alpha Condé

Minister of Health: Col. Remy Lamah



Political Parties: Rally for the Guinean People (RPG, President's party), PEDN, UPG, UFDG, UFR, overall, there are more than 140 registered parties.

Early History

- Part of West Africa empires, 10th and 15th centuries
- Origins in the Mandinka Empire of Mali.
- Ethnic differentiations were important in Guinea's political evolution. Political leadership historically dominated by the Mandinka people, mostly Muslim.
- France colonized Guinea, 1880s. Signed treaty with Mandinka rulers.
- The French negotiated boundaries of Guinea with neighboring British & Portuguese colonies.



Independence History

- Ahmed Sékou Touré (1922-1984), independence leader, pan-Africanist, trade unionist & socialist.
- Established Marxist state, 1958. Guinea's insistence on total independence (not federation) led to years of ambivalent policies from France.
- Touré ruled as dictator until death in 1984.
- Period of instability and military coups after Touré's death. 1996, military mutiny.
- Dec 2008, military coup led by Cpt. Moussa Dadis Camara. Sep 2009, Dadis' soldiers open fire on opposition rally at Conakry stadium: 157 killed, 1200 injured, 100+ women raped. UN: Crimes against humanity.
- Nov 2010, Alpha Condé became civilian President.
- Continuing military coup attempts, security forces clash with opposition.
- Military coups, one-party state, rebellion and civil war undermined people's trust in the state, set back economic, social and infrastructure development. Effects felt in Ebola response.



Gender Roles & Secret Societies

Poro: Men's secret religious-civic society with origins in the Mande people, but now widespread. Civil society adheres to Poro's codes of conduct. Entry by initiation. Special rituals and language, tattooing. Meetings in the bush, normally in dry season, October to May.

Sande (or Bondo): Women's secret society. Widespread in central West Africa. Initiates girls into adulthood, maintains codes of sexuality & morality. Practice female genital mutilation (FGM) with 96% prevalence in Guinea, 2nd highest national rate after Somalia. Practitioners of FGM ("Sowei") have great political influence. Women are responsible for washing corpses before burial.



Poro & Sande rituals performed early in epidemic, intended to cure the disease, likely had a role in its spread.

Instability and Ebola

- Years of dictators and military coups have led to little confidence in government and public health workers.
- Reliance instead, on traditional healers, spiritual practitioners, herbalists and on burial customs when all else fails.
- **Government and health workers' measures to contain epidemic conflict with tradition:** Removing ill from care of loved ones; quarantine; denying traditional burial and contact with deceased; cremation.
- Population's reaction is often to resist, or to hide the ill from mistrusted authorities.



Medical Vocabulary

| ENGLISH | FRENCH |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Bleed | Saigner |
| When did your pain start? | Ton douleur a commencé quand ? |
| I am constipated | Je suis constipé |
| I am vomiting | Je vomis |
| I have a headache | J'ai mal à la tête |
| I have a stomach ache | J'ai mal au ventre |
| I have diarrhea | J'ai la diarrhée |
| Injection | Injection / Piqûre |
| Mosquito net | Moustiquaire |
| I have heart pain | J'ai mal au coeur |
| Stitch | Suture |
| Where does it hurt? | Où est-ce que tu as mal ? |
| Body | Le corps |
| Head | La tête |
| Heart | Le coeur |
| Mouth | La bouche |
| Stomach | Le ventre |

Folkways and Arts

Guineans are fun-loving and spirited people. They are also very keen on preserving their beliefs, which is evident in their religious practices and cultural festivities. Many festivities are spiced with a combination of ethnic and Islamic tones and flavor.

Griots or *djeli* (bards) play an important role in Guinean society. They are an embodiment of Guinean culture, serving the roles of historians and conflict mediators.



Guinean music makes use of a stringed instrument, the kora

With the outbreak of the Ebola virus, they can also play the role of communicators, especially to illiterate populations.

Music, dance, rallies, posters and drama are among most effective means of social mobilization.

Gender Roles

Guinean women are on average less educated and less financially secure than men. In rural areas, women do most of the farming and cater to household chores and the children. In urban areas, they constitute a major component of the informal market sector. Forced marriage of women and girls is common; the same goes for polygamy. (Islam allows a man four wives.) While divorce is legal, laws favor men in awarding custody and division of assets. Legal testimony given by women carries less weight than testimony by men, in accordance with Islamic law.

Etiquette

Eye contact is important when men greet other men. Women, youths and people of lower social status may not stare into the eyes of an elder or person of higher social status when communicating with him or her.

It is preferable to approach an elder through an intermediary. It is rude and considered unhygienic to use the left hand in social interactions, unless two hands are required for a certain action.

Personal Space



About an arm's length is common during conversations, less between people of the same sex and a bit more between those of the opposite sex. Fair amount of touching during conversations between people of the same sex, though there is less physical contact between men and women in public.

Time

In most business and social situations it is not rude to be late. In the rural areas there are little to no expectations of timeliness. Guineans' notion of time is flexible; the time of the rich and powerful is highly valued. People will wait for more than a day to see a doctor because the doctor is so busy and important. Time is the one currency that the poor can afford to spend, and so it is one of their few bargaining chips. By putting in the time, they win the right to be recognized by the person in authority.

The Rumor Mill

- Ebola is an invention of the government.
- Ebola only a way for the corrupt leaders to leach funding from the Western countries.
- Westerners brought Ebola to the country to decimate the Muslim population.
- Written instructions are often not understood; people in the countryside rarely know how to read. It is difficult to disseminate information to remote areas. Leaves people susceptible to rumor.
- Shocked by instructions that forbid touching the deceased. Refuse to change traditional funeral customs, family members' preparing the dead.
- **People so convinced that emergency personnel bring Ebola that 8 Ebola mobilizers were attacked and killed in Guinea, 16 Sep 2014**



Social mobilizer dispenses antimicrobial spray foam in an effort to teach methods to prevent transmission of Ebola.

Cuisine

Rice, sorghum, millet, and cassava are common foods. Dishes are prepared with sauces that differ according to region, season, and the wealth of the household. A majority of sauces are made with peanuts ("groundnuts"), okra, and tomatoes, and may contain fresh or smoked fish, meat, or poultry.



Greetings

Greetings are very important. It is rude to ask a question or to make a request without first inquiring about the other person's health and well-being of his family. These questions are formulaic and may be repeated several times and they are accompanied by a firm handshake or, among the upper classes, by brief kisses on the cheeks.



Beliefs about Health & Sickness

- Most Guineans do not know of the germ theory of disease. Disease occurs because a person's ancestors committed a sin against another family and they have sent evil spirits against him. Endless cycle of retribution and revenge.
- Ebola reservoir suspected to be fruit bats, sometimes eaten by Guineans. People believe that they have lived with these animals "for centuries" without this disease, therefore something new is the cause. What is new: "Space suits," disinfecting houses, quarantines, and hospitals from which relatives do not return.
- Ebola survivors sometimes shunned & may need psycho-social support.



Religion & Spiritual Worldview

- Constitution: Freedom of religion.
 - Islam (85%)
 - Christianity (8%)
 - Animist (7%)

Islam and Christianity in Guinea are often heterodox blends with local traditions.

- Belief that God is involved directly in daily life. Important to believe in God; not important how one worships Him.
- Belief in witchcraft, close connection between visible and invisible worlds. People sometimes accused of witchcraft.

- Belief that ancestors have real and daily influence in life. Ritual fetish objects convey great spiritual power.
- Churches, mosques and public clearings in the forest or town are focal points for religious activities, whether directed toward God or ancestral spirits.



Fetish object



Conakry Grand Mosque

Death & Burial Customs



- Cremation is not practiced, particularly not among the Muslim majority, who believe that the soul remains in the body until Judgement Day.
- Death is a journey for which the deceased must be prepared, e.g. cleaned, shrouded. Also, the dead may transport items to others in the afterworld. Attending the burial and physical contact with the corpse is viewed as an obligation not only to the living, but to previously deceased kin.
- Changing burial practices is not a matter of improving hygiene. It is a disruption of the social fabric that isolates the living from the dead, whose spirits continue to influence the daily lives of the living.