



## **International Peace and Prosperity Project—Guinea-Bissau**

### *Project Review*

**CDA Collaborative Learning Projects**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	i
<b>I. Introduction &amp; Background to the Project Review</b>	<b>1</b>
▪ Approach to Project Review	
▪ Methodology	
<b>II. The Situation in Guinea-Bissau: Past &amp; Present</b>	<b>4</b>
▪ IPPP Analyses of Conflict in Guinea-Bissau	
▪ Changes in the Situation from 2004 to the Present	
<b>III. Program Approach and Contributions to Conflict Prevention</b>	<b>7</b>
▪ Overall Programmatic Approach of IPPP	
▪ Shifts Over Time in Strategy and Focus of IPPP	
<b>IV. Analysis of the Conflict in Guinea-Bissau</b>	<b>13</b>
▪ A Systems Analysis of the Situation in Guinea-Bissau	
<b>V. Reflections on the Program</b>	<b>20</b>
▪ Application of the DAC Evaluation Criteria	
▪ Strengths and Weaknesses of the IPPP	
<b>VI. Recommendations</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>VII. Lessons Learned from the IPPP</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>VIII. A Final Word: the IPPP as an Experiment. How is it unique?</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Appendices:</b>	
A. Terms of Reference	40
B. List of People Interviewed	46
C. Summary of IPPP Activities (Oct 2004 – Mar 2008)	47
D. References	50



**Map of Guinea-Bissau**

## Executive Summary

This Project Review regarding the International Peace & Prosperity Project (IPPP) in Guinea-Bissau was undertaken by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects on behalf of the Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP) and the private donor, Milt Lauenstein, with the willing participation of the Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation (CIAN), the project implementer. The purposes of the Project Review were:

1. To discern whether and how the IPPP has contributed to reducing the likelihood of political violence in Guinea-Bissau;
2. To suggest ways to proceed with additional IPPP engagements in Guinea-Bissau, building on past efforts, and taking into account current political dynamics; and
3. To identify preliminary lessons that could be relevant to subsequent efforts to prevent violent conflict, especially elsewhere in West Africa.<sup>1</sup>

The CDA team relied on two main sources of information: a) interviews with a wide range of people in Guinea-Bissau, with a small number of regional observers in Dakar, Senegal, and with project staff and consultants based mostly in Canada; and b) project documents and other reports.

### *Situation in Guinea-Bissau*

Guinea-Bissau is an ethnically diverse nation of 1.5 million people in West Africa located between Senegal and Guinea. The nation has endured political instability since its independence from Portugal in 1974. Since gaining independence, the country's leaders have done little to develop the economy or the education, health, and judicial systems. Guinea-Bissau consistently ranks near the bottom of the UN Human Development Index, and its citizens have a life expectancy of only 46 years. Weak governance institutions and corruption have undermined development in Guinea-Bissau throughout the post-colonial era and fostered the political instability that led to the 1998-99 civil war. Following a short interim presidency, Guinea-Bissau held democratic presidential elections in 2000, but in 2003 the military overthrew the elected president. The next round of presidential elections was held in 2005, when the current president was elected.

One objective of this Project Review was to determine, if possible, whether progress is being made in Guinea-Bissau towards reduced vulnerability to violence, and whether IPPP contributed to progress since 2004. To explore that question, we asked in almost every interview how the situation has changed over the past five years: "How is the situation now different from 2003? Is the situation worse or better or the same?"

Most of those we interviewed considered that the situation in Guinea-Bissau has improved over the past five years; only a few were more pessimistic or cynical. The most consistent factor cited as an indicator of progress was a much greater openness to dialogue, debate, and even open public criticism of the government—something considered impossible five years ago. In

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<sup>1</sup> The proposed Global Crisis Prevention Mechanism, which involves many of the same people who helped launch the IPPP, intends to develop a second violence prevention initiative in West Africa, and is interested in incorporating lessons from the Guinea-Bissau experience.

addition, various elements of government, including the President, Prime Minister, National Assembly, and armed forces, are now seen to engage in open disagreements among themselves on occasion, without dire consequences. The government and armed forces appear more sensitive to the demands of the international community, as indicated by a greater adherence to standards of human rights.

Despite the greater openness to debate, several interviewees asserted that the political crisis in Guinea-Bissau has worsened—or has not improved, citing increased state fragility, “political implosion” and crisis, increased criminality, and drug trafficking. People universally acknowledged that the judicial system is inoperative.

It is clear to the review team that, by and large, the situation has improved, at least in terms of any sense of impending eruptions of violence. There are still significant apprehensions regarding instability, insecurity and recurrent political crises, but people do not appear concerned about a descent into violence in the short-term. This progress comes as the result of multiple actors and influences, so direct attribution to IPPP would be impossible and even undesirable. However, we have identified in some detail ways in which IPPP has contributed to reducing the likelihood of violence. (See Section V, Reflections on the Program.

### ***Overall Programmatic Approach of IPPP***

In brief, the IPPP works according to the following program model—each element of which is explained in the text:

1. Perform ongoing situation analysis;
2. Identify points of leverage and/or points for urgent intervention;
3. Provide small amounts of funding or other resources to catalyze action, usually with a strategic partner;
4. Intervene at Track 1 and Track 2 levels, including both public and quiet diplomacy initiatives; and
5. Link to the international community and advocate for actions by other entities

Section V of the report reflects on how the program activities following this general outline have addressed elements of the conflict, as presented in Section IV.

### ***Systems Analysis of Conflict in Guinea-Bissau***

The CDA team developed an analysis of the conflicts in Guinea-Bissau, based on information provided by those interviewed in the field, as well as secondary sources. (See Section IV.) The core of the conflict is described by local people as an “elite power struggle,” characterized by high-stakes efforts to gain and maintain power and access to scarce resources. Patronage politics, centered on powerful men, dominates the political landscape. These elements are reinforced by factors of exclusion and favoritism, often with ethnic and regional dimensions. High insecurity discourages investment, resulting an extremely weak private sector and scarce employment opportunities for young people, who are then vulnerable to being recruited into violence.

## *Application of the OECD DAC Evaluation Criteria<sup>2</sup>*

The report uses the Criteria for the Evaluation of Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Programmes developed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, as one lens for reflecting on the project. The following is a brief summary of the conclusions from this analysis.

### **1. Relevance and appropriateness: *Does the effort address key driving factors of conflict that constitute elements likely to lead to political violence? How?***

At the beginning of the project, IPPP focused on crisis management efforts, with particular attention to the military situation and the impending elections, as noted already among the contributions of the program. In the short term, these were quite relevant actions. As the situation calmed considerably towards the end of 2005, IPPP turned to consideration of a broader program of action, based primarily in the National Action Plan developed by a multi-stakeholder group in February of 2006.

Subsequently, IPPP undertook a series of efforts during 2006 and 2007 aimed at youth, security sector reform and reconciliation within the military, dialogue processes, business development, and continued support to journalists. In addition, IPPP supported development of the National Reconciliation Commission, in cooperation with ECOWAS. Each of these elements can be seen to address one or more of the key factors of conflict. In summary, IPPP's efforts have been highly relevant and appropriate, while not attempting, quite rightly, to address all important elements of the conflict.

### **2. Effectiveness: *To what extent did the program achieve its stated goals?***

Despite its stated mission, themes and elements, procedural guides and principles, it is nevertheless difficult to identify with any specificity the actual goals and objectives of the program. Despite this lack of specificity with regard to goals/objectives, we can ask whether IPPP has achieved its overall goal of reducing violence or the potential for violence in the country—and to what extent any such reduction can be attributed to the efforts of IPPP. Many local observers, partners and participants consider that IPPP has contributed to the reduction of the threat of violence in the country, especially during the run-up to the election in 2005, through interventions with regard to the role of the military and SSR, support to the Citizen's Goodwill Task Force and journalists, as well as initiation of efforts for reconciliation within the military and more broadly.

### **3. Efficiency: *Did the intervention deliver its outputs and outcomes in an efficient manner (results against costs)?***

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<sup>2</sup> Anderson, Mary B., Diana Chigas, and Peter Woodrow. "Encouraging Effective Evaluation of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities: Toward DAC Guidance." Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (September 2007). Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/14/24/39341279.pdf>.

The IPPP has been operating on approximately \$300,000 each year. One of its major strategies is to catalyze larger actions by providing small grants to get something moving in a key area, offering technical assistance, and organizing rather modest dialogue efforts. Considering the reasonably-sized overall budget (neither small/underfunded nor grossly over-resourced) and the quite small injections of cash, the IPPP program must be considered quite efficient.

**4. Impact: *What are the primary and secondary, direct and indirect, positive and negative, intended and unintended, immediate and long-term, short-term and lasting effects of the effort?***

The CDA team asked almost all interviewees what they thought the main contributions of the IPPP have been. The following represent the elements mentioned most often in those interviews:

- Support to the Citizens Good Will Task Force and to journalists during the 2005 elections.
- Getting the Security Sector Reform process off the blocks.
- Initiating the National Reconciliation Commission with ECOWAS.
- Supporting the military reconciliation process and civil-military dialogue.
- Ongoing support to journalists.

**5. Sustainability: *Are the processes, structures and mechanisms conducted or promoted by the program likely to continue after direct involvement ends? To what extent were they locally-driven?***

In some ways, if IPPP ceased operations tomorrow, it would cause barely a ripple on the local scene, partly because the IPPP team deliberately keeps a low profile and has no ongoing local presence. On the positive side, IPPP has not created any dependency, relying, rather, on small actions that have avoided generating unrealistic expectations or unsustainable programming. On the other hand, no one in Guinea-Bissau “owns” the violence prevention agenda, particularly not at an organizational level. So far, there is no shared understanding among a significant group of people of what violence prevention means in Guinea-Bissau or what the specific elements might be of a comprehensive plan to reduce the vulnerability to violence. Thus despite the real contributions of IPPP, it is not clear that the progress the program has helped catalyze will be sustained.

**6. Linkages: *How are program efforts linked to higher/lower levels (community, national, regional) and to parallel efforts in other sectors/domains (across sectors)?***

IPPP has done well at integrating approaches to official actors (Track 1) and civil society (Track 2), including some activities that engaged both groups, such as the National Action Plan process in 2006 and the dialogue regarding the formation of a National Reconciliation Commission in 2007. IPPP has worked in a range of sectors and issues: military/DDR/SSR, civil society strengthening, economic development, media development, election monitoring, youth, etc. Some of those interviewed praised IPPP’s independence and relative neutrality—a rare commodity in Guinea-Bissau. On the other hand, others criticized IPPP for working in a fairly isolated manner, without taking notice of what others are doing.

***Strengths and Weaknesses of the IPPP***

The following is a brief summary of the main points:

### ***Strengths***

- The program has provided quick funding to provide impetus for important initiatives or move things that are stuck.
- IPPP has organized dialogue processes and modeled multi-stakeholder interactions.
- It has made small pushes on specific economic questions (incubator study, cashew production, trade fair, and youth roster).
- IPPP grants have, on occasion, catalyzed funding from other sources.
- The program has worked across different levels/sectors: it is nimble and flexible.
- IPPP staff maintain remarkable access to government officials.
- The program has put Guinea-Bissau on the map through various forms of advocacy.
- Technical assistance providers from outside of Guinea-Bissau (like Search for Common Ground) have been identified and brought in.

### ***Weaknesses/Areas for Improvement***

- IPPP lacks a consistent presence in the country—which makes follow through difficult at times.
- The “flip side” of flexibility/nimbleness is that the program can appear to be scattered, inconsistent, and it is difficult to maintain relationships as the focus shifts.
- Communication with partners has not been consistent, particularly with civil society and NGO groups.
- There are a number of “loose ends”—initiatives that were started and have not been followed through.
- Some organizations that IPPP has supported with rapid small grants also require long-term funding and have specific technical assistance needs.
- IPPP has generally reacted to crisis or near-crisis situations, rather than proactively building the capacity of local institutions to anticipate and mitigate potential conflict situations before they intensify.

### ***Recommendations***

The CDA has made the following recommendations—each of which is explained fully in the report.

1. Develop specific goals and objectives
2. Reconsider the staffing model
3. Develop a common understanding and overall approach to conflict prevention among local leaders
4. Address the conflict sensitivity and conflict prevention potential of all programming in Guinea-Bissau
5. Establish a simple mechanism for consultation and decision making
6. Build capacity for conflict management
7. Attend to loose ends (or acknowledge dead ends...)
8. Consider a broader advocacy strategy
9. Strengthen partnerships and communication

10. Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan
11. Produce an exit plan

### ***Lessons Learned***

The IPPP reveals several lessons that may inform the implementation of other similar efforts aimed at violence reduction. Again, these are summary statements that are enlarged upon in the report.

*The Basic IPPP Model Works:* With some logical departures demanded by local conditions, the project has followed the essential outlines of the original concept. This approach has proved viable and—again with appropriate adaptations—applicable to other similar situations.

*Adherence to Guiding Principles:* The IPPP has articulated a set of principles that has guided decision making. These principles, which can be stated as a series of “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not” are valuable advice to anyone seeking to deter violence.

*Flexibility/Agility versus Follow-through/Persistence:* Conflict prevention efforts need to maintain maximum flexibility—and pursue multiple initiatives simultaneously, especially during times of impending crisis or escalating violence when “operational prevention” must be the priority. On the other hand, the underlying conflict dynamics are long-term systems that change only quite slowly. These elements are addressed through efforts at “structural prevention” that require more careful analysis, effective strategies for change over time, longer-term planning, consistent resources, and greater follow through.

*Addressing Both Track 1 and Track 2 Work:* The IPPP has had remarkable access to official actors—government ministers, military leaders, the Prime Minister, and other highly placed individuals, as well as with key civil society leaders. Future intervention efforts should consider the appropriate mix of initiatives in relation to government and civil society, based on an analysis of the situation and the views of local partners.

*Ongoing Local Presence versus Multiple Visits:* Except for a brief period when IPPP had a local coordinator, it has functioned entirely on the basis of periodic trips from staff or consultants based in North America, Europe, or elsewhere in West Africa. We see clear advantages to this “light-on-the-ground” approach, and consider it part of the principle of flexibility. However, we are not sure that this model should be taken as a proven rule that is applicable to all circumstances. Rather, we would suggest that the decision regarding whether to adopt a “no-ongoing-presence” model or to establish some form of local office and/or staffing should be guided by the needs of each situation.

*Working with Local Leaders:* IPPP has been working with an extraordinary group of local partners—from government and from civil society. The principle of identifying and supporting such people has proven to be fully justified. Every society will have courageous and creative people who are ready to lead their society towards a stable peace with greater justice. Nonetheless, the Guinea-Bissau experience suggests a number of challenges and dilemmas: how to address the time constraints of busy people; how to build skills; how to develop a common

understanding and a common agenda regarding conflict prevention; and how to engage local leaders in an advisory role in relation to the project.

### *The Uniqueness of IPPP*

While IPPP has followed commonly-accepted practice in a number of ways, it has also broken new ground or placed unique emphasis on specific elements. Four aspects of the IPPP approach appear a bit more unusual—in degree, if not in kind:

- IPPP bases the decision of where and whether to intervene on an analysis of available information regarding the nature of conflict and the likelihood that violence will erupt. In other words, the decision is data-driven and based on need. Many organizations are guided more by organizational expertise and previous contacts.
- IPPP has taken the idea of being flexible and nimble to a high art. While many aspire to be responsive, IPPP has the ability to mobilize financial resources quickly, largely due to its private and independent funding source. On occasion, it has also been able to provide needed technical expertise in a rapid manner.
- IPPP has maintained a clear focus on violence prevention. Other organizations typically pursue a broader agenda associated with development, humanitarian assistance or even a more expansive peace initiative.
- Relationship building—at all levels—is at the heart of the IPPP approach. While other organizations build relations as needed to get the work done, IPPP considers this as fundamental to its approach.

Possibly, the uniqueness of IPPP lies in the way that it has combined the various elements cited above, but even this does not provide a completely satisfactory answer to the uniqueness question. We would suggest that, at its heart, IPPP:

- Remains engaged but not enmeshed (in other words, it continues to be interested and intermittently present, but does not become a part of the local scene or beholden to donors, other national interests or even the international community);
- Holds no agenda apart from violence prevention, maintaining neutrality, except in opposition to violence; and
- Is remarkably free to follow immediate and longer-term needs and to deal with any/all political actors, as demanded by the situation and within its violence prevention mandate.

If one were to seek an analogy, this configuration appears much like a Special Representative of the Secretary General—but without the baggage of the UN system! While many SRSGs are effective, they are also constrained by the very official and visible nature of their positions and by the requirement that they deal directly and primarily with the government in power. The representatives of IPPP, on the other hand, are able to perform many of the same functions, but relying solely on the credibility they gain through personal interactions and their greater flexibility to engage directly and quietly with any and all stakeholders. IPPP is accountable primarily to its mission of preventing violence, rather than to a series of competing national and international interests.