



Diaspora engagement mapping

GUINEA BISSAU

Facts & figures

Terminology: Guinea Bissau refers to its diaspora as 'diáspora' (Portuguese) but also Bissau-Guineans abroad, or 'communities abroad' (*comunidades no estrangeiro*).

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad²



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **10.48%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **206.11**

Voting from abroad:

At embassies/consulates



Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from UNDESA (2024) and remittances from the World Bank (2023).

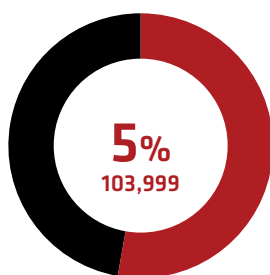
Emigration



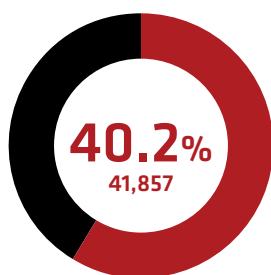
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 52.5%
♀ 47.5%



♂ 58.8%
♀ 41.2%

Top countries of destination



Portugal	36,682
Senegal	31,321
Gambia	15,119
Cabo Verde	5,576
Guinea	4,217

¹ In 2010, the Citizenship Law was changed in order to end the principle that the acquisition of a foreign nationality leads to the loss of Bissau-Guinean citizenship <http://citizenshiprightsafrika.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Guinea-Bissau-Lei-da-nacionalidade-2010.pdf>

² Voting rights abroad pertain solely to legislative elections and do not extend to presidential elections <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/voting-from-abroad-the-international-idea-handbook.pdf>. In Guinea-Bissau, there is a strong emphasis on external voting both in the constitution and the electoral law, however, external voting was only implemented for the 1999 elections.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2008** ● **Bilateral Readmission Agreement with Spain** to cover the admission of workers, assisted voluntary return, integration, migration and development, the fight against irregular migration, and readmission of Bissau-Guinean nationals.³
- 2011** ● **National Investment Code (2011)** includes general tax incentives to promote foreign investment that apply to all foreign residents, including members of the diaspora. However, it makes no specific provisions for this group.⁴
- 2011** ∨
2015 ● **National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2 (DENARP):** Guinea-Bissau's second National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper includes one sole reference to "mobilizing contributions from the Diaspora, and investing in infrastructure and vocational training," but it gave no detail on how this was to be achieved.⁵

Diaspora Engagement Strategy in National Development. 2021 Diaspora Engagement Strategy in National Development outlines the seven key areas of focus listed below:⁶

- 2021** ●
1. Ensuring the Political and Institutional Coherence of public policies on Migration
 2. Strengthen trust between the State and the Diaspora
 3. Promote diplomatic action aimed at protecting emigrants
 4. Strengthen and improve Diaspora Support Services
 5. Promote the Contribution of the Diaspora to the Development of Human Capital
 6. Promote Diaspora Investment
 7. Support the local development projects promoted by the Diaspora



Trends

In 2001, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation changed its title to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and the Diaspora. The Ministry conducted some outreach and meetings with the diaspora in France in 2009.⁷ In 2013, the Ministry changed its title again to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, and Communities Abroad, which indicates that diaspora engagement was still a concern for the government even after the 2012 coup. However, there has been little, if any, action on diaspora engagement since then.

Brain drain of skilled staff, especially in the health and education sectors, has proved a persistent problem. The government has sought to address this through promoting temporary circular migration by members of the diaspora in some key areas, under the sponsorship of the government and IOM.⁸ In 2007 there was an attempt to create a MIDA-type project, but this was halted by the coup in 2012.⁹

The Bissau-Guinean diaspora demonstrates a strong associative dynamism. A 2012 the Groupe de Recherche et de Realisation's (GRDR) mapping of Bissau Guinean organisations in Portugal and across Europe identified several diaspora organisations active in countries of residence and

3 http://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/legaldocument/wcms_380163.pdf

4 <http://www.grupoformosa-gub.net/docs/Codigo.pdf>

5 https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/guinea-bissau_prsp_2011.pdf p72.

6 Ministry of Foreign Affairs & IOM. Estratégias de Envolvimento da Diáspora no Desenvolvimento Nacional. 2021.

7 <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/guinea-bissau/>

8 Abreu (2012), Migration and development in contemporary Guinea Bissau: a political economy approach. PhD Thesis, SOAS, University of London. Available at: https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/14243/1/Abreu_3401.pdf

9 Ibid.

origin, especially at the local level.¹⁰ It showed that Bissau Guinean diaspora groups were active in delivering projects across wide range of sectors, including health, education, agriculture and aquaculture. The same was found in the 2019 IOM study, according to which 92% of those surveyed in France belonged to an association and 64% in Portugal.¹¹ Many Bissau-Guinean diaspora organisations in Europe have strong regional connections and members therefore carry development activities benefitting their local region of heritage, albeit with little or no interaction with the government.¹²

The contribution from the diaspora is yet to be further explored and has often been spontaneous. To overcome this, the government will develop a diaspora engagement strategy to guide diaspora initiatives where they are needed the most and where they could be more sustainable.¹³

Obstacles



- **Difficulties assessing diaspora size:** The GRDR mapping cited above highlights that Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and the Gambia are linked by a long tradition of mobility which, when added to the porous nature of the border, makes it extremely difficult to estimate the number of individuals of Guinean origin present in both Senegal and the Gambia.¹⁴ It is also difficult to accurately estimate the Bissau-Guinean population in Europe because this diaspora has often settled in Europe after acquiring a different nationality.
- **Institutional fragility and lack of support for the diaspora:** Institutions in Guinea Bissau are weak and the country has faced persistent political instability. A lack of governance and political instability discourage both investment and the return of the diaspora.
- **Lack of diversity in economic opportunities:** Guinea-Bissau relies massively on growing and exporting cashew nuts and has not invested enough in diversifying its economy, which is a barrier in attracting diaspora investments in other industries.
- **Drug-related insecurity:** The country's increasing association as a narco-state involved in the trafficking of drugs into Africa and then Europe is a further barrier to diaspora return and investment.

SPOTLIGHT: Effective practices

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Strengthening co-development initiatives in the Cacheu-Guinea-Bissau region (RICODEV)

This project funded by ECOWAS and AECID and implemented by the Groupe de Recherche et de Realisation (GRDR) focuses mainly on the promotion of the involvement of migrant associations in the development of their region of origin according to an approach based on exchanges and consultation between the public, local actors and migrant associations¹⁵. According to the 2016 ICMPD/IOM/ECOWAS study cited above, this was still functional in 2016 but the current status of all its activities remains unclear.¹⁶

NETWORKING +
DATA

10 <https://grdr.org/Repertoire-du-co-developpement,739>

11 <https://www.iseg.ulisboa.pt/aquila/getFile.do?method=getFile&fileId=899494>

12 Ibid.

13 https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbd1416/files/resources_files/vnr_gcm_rev_guinea_bissau.pdf

14 https://grdr.org/IMG/pdf/repertoire_def.pdf

15 <https://grdr.org/Repertoire-du-co-developpement,739>

16 ICMPD / IOM / ECOWAS (2016) A Survey of Migration Policies in West Africa, available at: https://fmmwestafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/en-A_Survey_on_Migration_Policies_in_West_Africa_EN_SOFT2nd.pdf



This project also included a 2019 mapping of Guinea-Bissau diaspora organisations in France, Spain, Portugal, Gambia and Senegal with the aim of enabling diaspora organisations to connect and build better knowledge of initiatives conducted in the country, particularly in the region of Cacheu so as to enable better engagement between the government and diaspora involved in development projects back home.¹⁷ The study showed that diaspora organisations have continued to deliver projects at local level across a range of sectors in Guinea Bissau but with little to no interaction with the state authorities.

REINTEGRATION

European Union Emergency Trust Fund-International Organisation for Migration (EUTF-IOM) Project on Migrant Protection and Reintegration and Migration Profile

As part of the EUTF-IOM project on migrant protection and reintegration, IOM has been supporting the reintegration of 700 returnees through individual, collective and community reintegration projects.¹⁸ It is also building the capacity of the government to manage return migration.¹⁹

NETWORKING

2023 Futures Thinking Workshop

Organised by UNDP with representatives of International Organizations representing the Bissau-Guinean Diaspora in the EU, Africa and South America. The aim of the Futures Thinking Workshop was to engage both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has a dedicated bureau, General Direction of Communities and the Diaspora organizations on the future projections of Diaspora integration in the country's development.

NETWORKING

Meetings between Guinean Diaspora Organizations

Action Ilanda Guiné! Djuntu, implemented by IMVF and funded by the European Union, has been instrumental in engaging the Bissau-Guinean diaspora to contribute to the country's development. Key initiatives include Diaspora Network Building through regular meetings among diaspora organisations, as well as the West African Diaspora Forum, which was recently organised in Paris in May 2024, bringing together government officials and diaspora representatives to discuss collaboration and development opportunities.

LABOUR MIGRATION + YOUTH + SKILLS TRANSFER

Intra-regional Labour mobility project

IOM has launched a €4 million project aiming to promote intra-regional labour mobility among Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Senegal, and The Gambia. Activities include diaspora mapping, stakeholder engagement, and capacity-building on labor migration governance. The initiative aims to strengthen diaspora engagement with government counterparts, and to create the needed platforms and resources for youth to collaborate with the private sector, diasporas and civil society and contribute to youth labour market insertion in Guinea-Bissau.

¹⁷ https://grdr.org/IMG/pdf/repertoire_def.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.iom.int/countries/guinea-bissau>

¹⁹ Ibid.

Annex:

List of Actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 430+ institutions](#)

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU CIDO)

Guinea-Bissau is a member of the African Union and nominates a diaspora focal point to represent the country as part of the African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU CIDO) Continental Meetings.

ECOWAS

Guinea-Bissau has been a member country of ECOWAS since 1997.

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities, Directorate of Communities is responsible for all matters pertaining the assistance to Bissau-Guinean migrants abroad including the reception of forcibly repatriated migrants and of returning migrants in general.

- At sub-ministerial level

The Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on “Policies and Programs for the Promotion of Community Welfare and Development, including Migration” is led by the Secretary of State for International Cooperation and Communities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities, Directorate of Communities) and acts as a high-level technical coordination mechanism for initiatives at the intersection of migration and community development.

Diaspora organisations in Europe

Read more about diaspora organisations in [“Starting guide: What is a diaspora organisation”](#)

Rede de Associacao dos Filhos e Amigos de Farim (RAFA)

Development activities

RAFA is a structured community development organisation focused on the Farim region. Also has some involvement in reintegration activities.

Associacao dos filhos e Amigos de Bigene (AFABU)

✓ Development activities

AFABU is a community organisation involved in development projects in the Bigene region, with specific projects related to infrastructure, education, and managing clandestine migration.

Fédération des Associations du Secteur de Calequisse en Europe France (FASCAE)

Development activities

FASCE, created in 2007, undertakes development projects across West Africa (Guinea Bissau, Senegal, and Gambia). These projects range from public health initiatives, construction of schools, libraries, and sports; as well as infrastructure projects including roads, bridges, electricity, and modernisation of agriculture practises.

Nô Lanta Djunto Germany

Nô Lanta Djunto e.V. []

Development activities

The association Nô Lanta Djunto was founded by Berlin citizens from Guinea-Bissau and their friends.

We have set ourselves the goal of improving the living conditions of the people in Guinea-Bissau with the participation of local associations and the people concerned. Through projects, events and lectures we want to draw attention to the country, its living situation and its resources or potentials. Through active participation in the creation of education, health and medical care, we want to create a sustainable perspective for the people.

ASSOCIAÇÃO SUÍÇA PARA OS CUIDADOS DE PESSOAS DIABÉTICAS NA GUINÉ-BISSAU Switzerland

Association pour l'aide aux personnes diabétiques en Guinée-Bissau []

Development activities

The association is carrying out several activities: a mission to Guinea Bissau - to survey needs in 2018, a training on diabetes in Bissau, in partnership with the NGO AIDA in 2019, the creation of a specialised consultation for diabetics, financed by the Association (consultations, materials used in consultations, etc.) at Simão Mendes Hospital, sending technicians (teachers, doctors, other technicians), sending goods (clothing, footwear, toys), sending medicines and medical materials...

ASSOCIAÇÃO GASTRONOMIA DE GUINÉ SERVIÇO Luxembourg

Guiné-Bissau Service | Luxembourg []

Development activities

We promote Guinea-Bissau through the valorization of people, goods, products and services. Sending catering equipment to set up a gastronomy school in Bissau (processing of products) Sending health materials.

FAIASCAP- FEDERAÇÃO DAS ASSOCIAÇÕES DE IMIGRANTES E AMIGOS DO SECTOR DE CALEQUISSE EM PORTUGAL Portugal 2020

Faiascap []

Development activities

Activities include: building an agricultural cooperative, Training young people in agriculture and reviewing the migrant statute in Guinea-Bissau.

- ☑ Development activities
- ☑ Integration activities

The association aims at bringing together people from this town in Guinea - Bissau, encouraging their inclusion in Luxembourg society and contributing to Co-development projects. Particularly active in Luxembourg, the association takes part in numerous public events such as the Festival des migrations, des cultures et de la citoyenneté and Rencontres sans frontières. In 2013, it was a partner in the Tous citoyens Européens, a project run by several associations to raise awareness among their members of the importance of registering to vote. The association also enables its members to get together and strengthen bonds of solidarity, compensating for the loneliness associated with recent immigration to Luxembourg.

Aware that solidarity and efficiency come first and foremost at local level, the association has signed a partnership agreement with the Association pour le Développement de Cabienque, which will be responsible for the operational implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the projects. Particularly active in Cabienque, this association was born of the desire to create a culture of solidarity through local projects.

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