

AAINews

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Interesting Photo Album from Guinea

Conakry, the capital of Guinea, has an annual precipitation of 4,000 mm. The downpour is impressive as most of the rain falls between June and September. Many times, I witnessed torrential downpours, stronger than any rain I have experienced in Japan (See photo 1). My visit this time was during the rainy season and it was raining in Conakry every day. The roads became rivers and potholed tar roads formed ponds. Conakry has slums at every corner of the town and is extremely dirty. Fortunately, heavy rain flushes the town's garbage away during the rainy season.



Please have a look at photos 2, 3, and 4. They were taken on my way in country. Photo 2 captured a taxi with a large number of passengers. I counted 14 outside and perhaps 7 or so inside although I couldn't see all of them. This means a rough total of 21 passengers. Unbelievable! I heard that the taxi fare is the same whether you are in or riding outside of the taxi. Is there no limit for the load because people are not goods? Photo 3 shows people on top of the truck who look as if they are almost falling off. It is none of my business, but I cannot help thinking they should sit more in the middle part of the truck. Photo 4 is a telegraph pole, although it looks like any timber you may find anywhere. Although there is no picture, empty cans were hanging on the connected wires.



Guinea is located in West Africa and is adjacent to six countries, namely Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Mali, Cote D'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. It is located on the border of Anglophone and Francophone Africa. Perhaps because of continuous civil war, Guinea is one of the poorest countries in Africa a continent which has so many poor countries. After achieving independence in 1958, Guinea parted from the suzerain France and was going towards sovereign socialism. However, with the collapse of socialism, support from socialist countries stopped. This led to the total breakdown of almost all the infrastructure including roads, electricity and postal services. The taxi passengers have no choice but take a taxi in this way. The people on the roof of the truck are not having fun or playing around. I heard that, because of the extremely bad road conditions, there are areas where the trucks cannot navigate without the direction and support from the people on top. The telegraph pole may be a temporary solution due to the lack of materials, which were probably stolen. As the postal service is not functioning, letters are entrusted to friends and taxi drivers.



Today, Guinea is trying to get out of poverty with assistance from international organizations and developed nations such as Japan. The future will be very difficult. The country accepts foreign assistance as if it is their natural right to receive it. Some technicians do not show any willingness to work without income from foreign aid. There is also serious structural corruption and social decay. It is said that a part of government funds also disappears as bribes. Excellent technicians seem to either lose faith and leave the country or chase after money. The monthly salary of high level government officials is around US\$ 1,000. In rural areas, a vegetable seller was trying hard to sell a bundle of leeks for two cents.



During this investigation visit, I walked around the interior of Guinea. The smiles of the children were universally heart warming and I could learn a lot, supported by kind people. We will continue investigations in Guinea. I feel that something must be done to change the situation. (By Zaitso, October 2008)

