

## Guinea-Bissau

Estimated population 1.33 million

Independence was gained from Portugal in 1973 following a ten-year armed struggle. Although bedevilled by military coups, a civil war and political instability for many years elections in 2005 were described by international observer groups as calm and organised. Severe economic deprivation however militates against stability. Guinea Bissau's GDP per capita in 2005 was a mere \$190 and the country was placed 173rd on the UN Human Development Index. Of sociological interest is the matriarchal society which tenuously survives in the islands of the Bolama archipelago where men must compulsorily accept a woman's decision to marry them and religious affairs are carried out by a female priesthood.

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