

VOZES DO POVO

Data Mining and Analysis
Report

Public Opinion in Guinea-Bissau

Miguel Carter, PhD

Financed by



Implemented by



Research Coordination and Project Report
Miguel Carter, PhD

Statistical Advisory
Nafiou Inoussa

Technical Support
Mario Costa e José Gutierrez

Guinea-Bissau Advisory
Carlos Cardoso, CESAC

Citation

Carter, Miguel. *Relatório de mineração e análise de dados. A opinião pública na Guiné-Bissau*. Bissau: DEMOS, 2021.

Point of Clarification

The content of this report is the sole responsibility of the author and cannot be interpreted in any way as the opinion of the European Union.

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Executive Summary

The *Vozes do Povo* initiative seeks to support Guinea-Bissau's democratic development by improving knowledge of the country's politics and society. Three instruments were created to this effect:

- A data mining and analysis report based on the first public opinion survey conducted in Guinea-Bissau, led by DEMOS in 2018.
- A focus group study carried out in ten communities across the country.
- A comparison of public opinion poll results in Guinea-Bissau and 17 African countries, including the entire ECOWAS region, based on Afrobarometer data.

The data mining and analysis report, delivered here, is the most extensive of all three, and a unique achievement in many regards.

A DEMOS research team created 55 indexes and subcomponents to probe the results of the 2018 survey. The indexes address six broad themes: social strata, support for democracy, engagement in public life, social coexistence, social equality, and risk of religious sectarianism.

All these indexes were combined with a variety of demographic and identity indicators, which greatly enriched the data trove. The information produced is of exceptional value for understanding various aspects of the Guinean people – their life conditions, perceptions, opinions, and values.

The inquiry undertaken proved to be complex, innovative, and ambitious. Complex due to the scope of the research. Innovative in its methodology. Ambitious in the breadth and quality of the knowledge produced. No other country in Africa has carried out a public opinion study of this scope and originality.

The three reports prepared by the *Vozes do Povo* initiative represent a remarkable progress for Guinea-Bissau. A country that had never conducted single public opinion poll, until 2018, now has one of the most advanced studies of its kind in the region.

This informational “gold mine” can be explored in a variety of ways. Seven key findings - or “gold nuggets” – unearthed during this research are examined in the introduction to the report. These build on the following observations:

- Support for democracy in Guinea-Bissau is widespread yet precarious.
- Civic engagement, religious tolerance, and approval of women's rights, help advance democratic values in this country.
- Sympathy for gender equality can strengthen efforts to bring about this social change.
- Trust is a mobilizing asset in Bissau-Guinean society.
- Party politics in Guinea-Bissau contributes to national integration but is vulnerable to ethnic politicization.

- Religious life tends to decrease the risk of sectarianism and foster social tolerance.
- Knowledge is power. The information produced by the *Vozes do Povo* project is unprecedented. It can help perfect strategies and empower Guinea-Bissau's democratic development.

This assessment concludes with ten recommendations geared towards improving democratic prospects in this country.

The full Data Mining and Analysis Report includes nine annexes. The first, *Annex A*, describes the methodology used and examines some of the study's main findings. These discuss issues related to popular support for democracy, engagement in public life, party activism, interpersonal trust, attitudes towards gender equality, provide a depiction of the country's main ethnic groups, and appraise the risk of religious sectarianism.

Annex B presents the *Vozes do Povo* survey questionnaire used in the 2018 survey. *Annex C* provides a brief summation of the 55 indexes and nine demographic and identity variables prepared for this study. *Annex D* offers a technical account of how the indexes were created.

The last five appendixes include all the statistical cross tabulations and exercises crafted for this project. *Annex E* combines the indexes with nine demographic and identity variables. *Annex F* cross tabulates all 55 indexes and subcomponents. *Annex G* combines the demographic and identity variables with all the results of the *Vozes do Povo* survey. *Annex H* cross tabulates the same survey results with all 55 indexes and subcomponents.

Finally, *Annex I* contains a series of statistical exercises - correlations and factorial analyzes - carried out with all indexes and subcomponents prepared for this research project.

Recommendations

Insights derived from the *Vozes do Povo* study can be distilled into the following practical recommendations, designed to strengthen Guinea-Bissau's democratic development.

1. Bolster civic education. The effort to advance democracy in this country must identify its shortcomings and seek to overcome them. Popular support for democratic procedures, norms and ideals are crucial to the outlook for this system of government. Findings made by the study suggest the need to invest in basic civic education. Among key issues that should be reinforced are people's: (a) understanding of the concept of democracy, and (b) appreciation for the idea of freedom of expression, particularly, the value of dissent.

2. Promote citizen engagement. Activities designed to stimulate civic engagement, support for women's rights and democratic values can find strong, mutual affinities in Guinea-Bissau. Women and youth would constitute ideal constituencies for these engagements, given their lower levels of civic participation. The country's broad sensibilities around environmental issues, suggest these concerns could offer an attractive venue for such actions. Concrete undertakings, for instance, could help foster a national youth movement to clean up trash and plant trees.

3. Support ecumenical collaboration. Dialogue and collaboration with religious leaders, in ways that seek to reinforce ecumenical ties and activities, can shore up religious toleration and, with it, the values of democracy. In Guinea-Bissau, religious forces are mostly a friend of democracy and advocate for social peace - and should be recognized and engaged as such.

4. Organize and empower women. The obstacles to gender equality in Guinea-Bissau are enormous. The public's broad sympathy for egalitarian norms, however, should be leveraged to help overcome these barriers. Women are grossly underrepresented in public life – from access to news, dialogue over politics, party activism and representation in parliament. Much can be done to revert this situation. Organizing women to drive this change and improve leadership capabilities, particularly in the political realm, will be crucial to this quest.

5. Assist political parties. Political parties are significant actors in Guinea-Bissau and deserve greater attention from the international community. Parties play a pivotal role in shaping and selecting the country's political leaders. The nation's prospects for democratic development hinges largely on the quality of its politicians. Guinean politics could benefit greatly from a technical cooperation program designed to assist political parties and provide cross-party trainings for women and youth activists. Creative efforts to instill a sense of public service, hone practical skills and cultivate democratic ideals among party youth, could help nurture a new generation of Guinean leaders.

6. Enhance access to reliable news. Democracy-building requires an informed and active citizenry. The availability of reliable news sources is critical to this. As revealed in the *Vozes do Povo* study, a substantial portion of the population has little or no access to news, and as a result are mostly disengaged from the country's civic life. Support for radio programming and community radio stations could make a major difference in this regard, above all in rural areas, which are most deprived of news sources.

7. Prioritize national endeavors. Projects devised to strengthen democracy in Guinea-Bissau – through civic engagement, support for gender equality, collaboration with religious groups and political parties – should be of national aim and scope, rather than centered solely around local communities. These initiatives should include activities designed to foster inter-ethnic ties, build cross-regional relations, support urban-rural linkages, and encourage equal collaboration among men and women. The pursuit of democratic development in Guinea-Bissau must go beyond the addition of micro-endeavors and address - in a meaningful and sensible way - the macro issues at stake.

8. Foster inter-ethnic cooperation. Ethnic identities matter in Guinea-Bissau. This small nation hosts at least 26 ethnic groups and languages. Inter-ethnic relations in this country are generally peaceful and constructive. Inter-ethnic marriage has contributed to this. The *Vozes do Povo* survey, nonetheless, detected concerns over tribal grievances and risk of their politicization. Communal peace is an asset that needs to be cultivated on a regular basis. Hence, the importance of incorporating strategies that encourage inter-ethnic cooperation in all civic undertakings.

9. Boost confidence and motivations. Democratic development can only make headway with the willpower to effect this. In countries like Guinea-Bissau, afflicted by endemic problems and exceedingly weak states, there is a tendency to get stuck on feelings of failure. A failure complex can fuel low self-esteem, mistrust, and a sense of hopelessness, all of which tend to disempower efforts to pursue change. Collective action can help overcome these sentiments and nurture self-confidence and trust. Appropriate pedagogical instruments – including camp trainings – can strengthen these shared experiences. Such activities can enhance various skills, create social networks, and stir the willpower to make a difference.

10. Improve research capabilities. Public opinion studies provide a valuable tool for assessing popular perceptions and feelings beyond the electoral cycle. As such, they offer a unique opportunity to provide feedback on government performance. Continued support for these surveys, carried out in collaboration with Afrobarometer, could lead to a reliable stream of useful data on this country. As the *Vozes do Povo* initiative has shown, scientific endeavors can generate innovative insights and practical ideas in support of Guinea-Bissau's democratic development.