

General Topics :: International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES)

International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) - posted by groh_frog, on: 2005/12/1 12:52

I don't know how many of you have heard of this organization, but I was thinking about it lately. I just recently received their "Special Report" the IFES magazine in the mail. I had the privilege of meeting one of the families who is affiliated with them a few years ago. I was honored.

I thought I'd write to you one of the articles in the magazine. It really encouraged me about what's going on in the rest of the world.

Diary of a Pioneer - posted by groh_frog, on: 2005/12/1 13:19

"Last year we pioneered student ministry in our 150th country, Guinea Bissau. Gideon Para-Mallam, IFES staff, recounts his visit in April to our 151st country, Equatorial Guinea."

Monday 11 April: A year of waiting and praying. Today I began daily visits to the Embassy in Lagos, coming up against all kinds of arbitrary conditions.

Friday 15: Almost gave up, but got a surprise call from a lady I had not met, urging me on, saying the trip would be worth it.

Monday 18: At 11am I handed in the final document. They then asked for another letter from the IFES International Office. I was dismayed. An elderly woman interpreter urged me in English, 'My country needs you; my people are under bondage. I really want you to get this visa.'

I was touched by her plea in front of Embassy staff. I called the office in Oxford, UK and Kirsty Thorburn responded swiftly. Got the letter within half an hour. The visa was offered around 3:15pm; the last plane departed at 4:45pm. I made it by just five minutes.

Tuesday 19: Landed in Malabo. Most passengers had cases ransacked and money demanded by Customs. I escaped, but then two security guards collected my passport and that of a Nigerian pastor, demanding money. We refused. A local pastor intervened, but the guards just tucked the passports away from view. We stood there helpless. The Guinean Pastor had to pay before we had them returned. My spirit was wounded and very low. I hadn't expected things to be this tough. The urgency in my heart grew - we needed a vibrant evangelical student movement which could make a difference.

Accommodation is sparse and the hotels expensive. I found a Red Cross facility with a bed, water in buckets, and no more.

Wednesday 20: Met with an elderly Christian businessman who was the country's first Ambassador to Nigeria. He was cautiously helpful.

The Universidad Nacional De Guinea Ecuatorial is the only university, with campuses in Malabo and Bata. Made my way to Malabo campus, sharing a taxi with a young Guinea who spoke some English. He asked if I was a professor. I said I taught students the Bible. Just like the Ethiopian and Philip, he said he'd been looking for someone to teach him the Bible. Adolfo gave his life to Jesus after I explained the gospel, and became my first interpreter.

Thursday 21: To Bata where I stayed with the Nigerian Consul-General. The Consulate Interpreter -also a pastor- came with me to the campus. Three students want to be part of an IFES group. We talked with a Ghanaian pastor who was deeply touched when he realised IFES was a grassroots movement. For seven years he had ministered to foreign Christians, and longed to draw in the Guineans. 'IFES seems to get it right from the start', he said. I was elated.

Saturday 23: Back to Malabo. The first student I met was joined by three others. Through an interpreter I shared the IFES vision: Discipleship, Evangelism, Mission and Leadership Development. I told stories from around the world. After their questions, I asked the students if they would spearhead a movement. 'Yes!' they said. (It won't be easy. Special permission is needed for any meeting of more than five students - usually denied.)

Fruitful meeting with CHurch leader. It's Vice-President thanked me for 'this noble vision, centred on GOd's Word and discipleship'. He said it would 'breathe fresh air' into the country's students and sensed it had 'prophetic implications'.

May the seeds sown be watered by God, so we see a clear witness to Christ established in the Spanish-speaking enclave.

Gideon plans to go back to Equatorial Guinea shortly after this is published. There remain 18 countries with no established Christian witness among students.

Re: Diary of a Pioneer - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2005/12/2 15:42

IFES is the overseas equivalent of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (who runs InterVarsity Press) in the US. It is a ministry serving university/college campuses.