

Interview with A Government Official

1) Since there are many current environmental issues, are you at all troubled that this will decrease the large agricultural intake that is so important to our economy?

A. I am not at all concerned with how our current environmental issues affect our economy because even though those matters can be extreme, our agricultural intake still is steadily progressing. Most of the environmental difficulties we have suffered in the past were heavily looked into and dismissed almost immediately. Although the environment is a very serious matter our land is being well taken care of with the funds that are available.

2) Elementary school is mandatory but many do not attend. What is being done to increase the education and literacy for their futures?

A. As you are aware children are required by law to complete elementary school but it is up to their parents to make sure they actually attend and get the full education being provided for them. Our school systems and teachers are hardworking and we try our best to make sure that they will provide the children with the fundamentals that are needed. Funding is low so our schools are not nearly advanced as those in wealthy countries but we can offer the basic skills and can help advance those students wishing to gain a maximum education with what is being provided for them.

3) As a result of the failure to diversify and cultivate export markets, Sao Tome and Principe ran a US \$253.8 million account deficit in 2000. How do you feel about such an extensive debt and are you worried that this may cause problems in the future?

A. I feel that such an extensive debt did not put a negative impact on our country but we are promptly regaining our economic strength. Every country has financial issues recurring throughout their existence and our problem can be resolved with certain aid from other government officials and funding for the necessities Sao Tome and Principe needs. I am not worried about our future because I know with the help of sponsors from around the world we will be getting the funding needed to move forward.

4) Presently there are 1,200 people affected by the AIDS virus, compared to the 300 known cases from last year. This is an alarmingly large number for this small country and the amount of cases being discovered in Africa is growing into tens of millions. What is the government in Sao Tome and Principe doing to help lower these statistics and provide the proper knowledge on this subject?

A. AIDS is a well-known problem all over the world not just in Sao Tome and Principe. This fatal disease is occurring everywhere and we are not the only place having somewhat high statistics. Attention to being brought upon this subject and matters are being taken care of in order to educate people on the risks and protection they have to understand in order to rid themselves of this dilemma.

5) The country of Sao Tome only has one hospital, which is not equipped with most of the tools needed to help these residents with their disease and illnesses. Pregnant women have showed an HIV prevalence rate and tons of children are affected with malaria and other fatal diseases without the proper care available. How is the government preparing to handle and provide more health-care where it is needed?

A. You are correct. There is only one hospital but there are plenty of clinics available which seems to be quite a bit of medical attention accessible due to the small population and the money on hand. Also, there are now more shots being given to rid these children of future health risks and attention on these matters are taken serious. Children are now being vaccinated against some diseases such as polio, diphtheria, tetanus, measles and tuberculosis as babies therefore relieving them from some future problems and healthcare is currently sought as our first priority with funding that we are receiving.