

# BURKINA CONNECTION



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

2016 - NO. 1



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## FBF SUPPORTS NUTRITION PROJECT IN NEBROU

by Tom Vollrath, '67-'70



*Feeding children at the Nebrou health center*



*Nutritional education sessions*

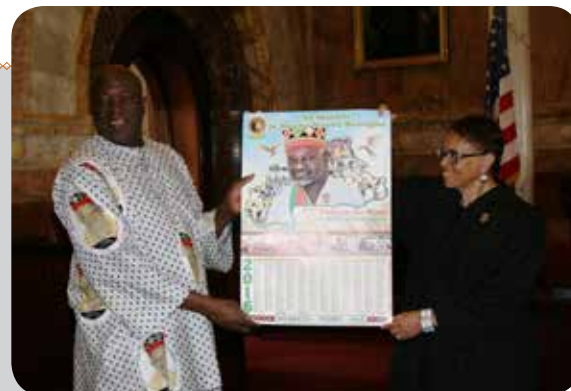
Early this year, after vetting several projects posted on the Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) website, the FBF Projects Committee approved the “Two Garden” project submitted by PCV Victor Cassmeyer-Martinez. The project addresses the need for better nutrition in Nebrou, a village of 2,900 located 110km southwest of Ouagadougou, in the Center-West province. The project also promises to build local human resources, as important training and management roles will be filled by community leaders and the local population. The Board unanimously voted funding to bridge the \$3,721 gap at its teleconference on February 16th, enabling Victor’s project to reach its \$14,536 financial goal.

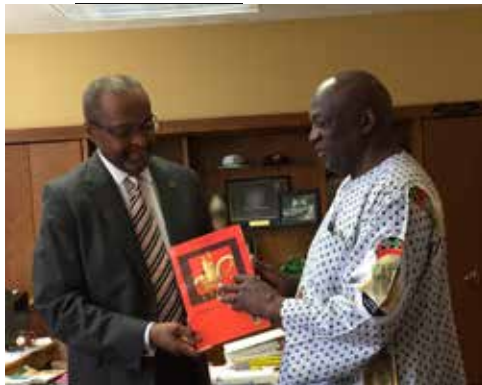
The project will enable the community to build two gardens, one at Nebrou’s primary school and another at its health center (COGES). Other goals are to educate the local population about better nutrition and local farmers about modern cultivation techniques. Produce harvested at the school’s garden will provide fresh vegetables for student lunches. The garden at the local health center will be an important source of vegetables to families in the village—and of moringa, an up-and-coming nutritional powerhouse in the area.

*Continues on [page 3](#)*

## 2015 PEACE AWARD WINNER HONORED IN MICHIGAN

Mr. Kabore, the Mogho Naba’s photographer, with Chief Justice Denise Page Hood in the U.S Federal Court in Detroit, where the court learned about the Mogho Naba, dubbed the “mediator monarch” by the [BBC](#). Read more in the [President’s Yiri](#).





(Top-Bottom) Mr. Kabore presents the Mogho Naba's book of poetry to the President of Central Michigan University, with students and faculty at CMU, with students at Pontianc ITA, with Judge Mester.

## PRESIDENT'S YIRI

by Michael Lavoie, '75-'77

### THE TRIUMPH OF PEACE, DEMOCRACY AND TRADITION: BURKINA FASO 2015

“Commissions” in Burkina are sometimes thought of as deliveries of items for which one person has taken responsibility for another. For example, as one person enters or leaves Burkina, he or she might accept and deliver commissions for another person, such as delivery of a letter, a book or some other object.

On April 18, 2016, Mr. Issaka Kabore, the photographer of the Mogho Naba, brought an extraordinary commission to Michigan: several copies of the Mogho Naba's book, *Poèmes de L' Empereur*. This book is the memorialization in the form of poetry of the great traditions, ideals and thoughts of the 800-year-old Mossi kingdom.

After first visiting his sons in Georgia, Mr. Kabore and his eldest son, Souleymane, came to Michigan. Over the next few days, at my invitation, Mr. Kabore presented inscribed copies of the Mogho Naba's book to the Pontiac International Technology Academy, Cranbrook Schools, Central Michigan University, and the United States Federal Court in Michigan. These copies of the books were purchased through a donation by a local and highly respected retired judge named Fred Mester in honor of his daughter, Catherine Lynne Mester.

Mr. Kabore also brought another very special “commission.” With the warm and energetic translation assistance of his son Souleymane and his son's friend Eric Beba, along with the gift copies of the book he gave presentations entitled “The Triumph of Peace, Democracy and Tradition: Burkina Faso 2015.” Each presentation covered the coup d'état, its reversal, and the ensuing completely open and nonviolent election of a new president in 2015. It focused on the extraordinary role that the Mogho Naba played to help preserve peace during those dangerous times.

The presentations also explored the ways in which the Mogho Naba mediates for peace through impartiality, patience, wisdom, mutual understanding, love, respect and, most importantly, “sugri” or forgiveness. All of this came about in the aftermath of the Mogho Naba receiving the inaugural FBF Award for Peace in September 2015.

*Continues on page 3*



### Support the 2016 FBF Peace Award

The 2nd Annual Peace Award is fast approaching and we need **YOUR** help to make it another success. Your donation will contribute to the \$2000 award given to the charitable foundation of the winner's choosing.

Visit [www.gofundme.com/2016peaceaward](http://www.gofundme.com/2016peaceaward)

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Now



## NUTRITION PROJECT CONTINUED FROM P.1



The moringa tree grows well in savanna regions of West Africa. Originally from India, the tree thrives in hot, desert-like conditions. Its leaves, pods, seeds, and oils are a rich and inexpensive source of vitamins, minerals, and protein. Just three tablespoons of moringa leaf power give children 100 percent of their daily vitamin A needs. This serving also supplies 80 percent of children's daily calcium needs, 60 percent of their iron needs, and 40 percent of their protein needs.

Food prepared with moringa is an important tool in the fight against malnutrition, especially during the months leading up to the millet harvest, when many families struggle to eat a balanced diet. What's more, the market for moringa is expanding, offering farmers a potential source of income.

FBF would like to thank Aicha Pitroipa, Peace Corps Burkina staff member, who alerted us early in January that several volunteers had posted projects on the PCPP website. This was timely and welcome news, as it once again offered FBF an opportunity to support well-designed projects initiated by Peace Corps volunteers and their counterparts.

The Projects Committee met at Mead Over's home in D.C. on February 2 to discuss a number of issues, including the prospects of FBF financial support for the PCPP projects. It was impossible to tell whether these projects met our selection criteria, as outlined in the FBF's Grant Proposal Guidelines, from their brief web writeups, but the committee was favorably impressed by several.

I let Aicha know we were interested in learning more. She in turn helped us contact several of the volunteers and also forwarded the PCPP applications for several projects to us. These applications contained useful information, including the indispensable budgets. Once again our committee experienced how the combination of Peace Corps staff cooperation and volunteers' innovative energy makes it possible for us to fund exciting new programs like that of Victor Cassmeyer-Martinez.

## PRESIDENT'S YIRI CONTINUED FROM P.2



*Mr. Kabore at Cranbrook School with a meeting of its Namtenga Club.*

On April 24, Mr. Kabore returned to Burkina with another "commission." His "commission" was a special message to the Mogho Naba himself from those who had the honor to attend the presentations. The message was the profound recognition and appreciation of the Mogho Naba for being a leader and role model for peace in Burkina and beyond. We hope that message might in some small way add encouragement to the Mogho Naba's work for peace.



These "commissions" are far more than the exchange of transitory articles and things. Instead, they involve the exchange of some of the greatest ideals and traditions of history. This exchange of "commissions" is not unlike the experience of Peace Corps volunteers who first brought their talents to Burkina during the course of their service. At the completion of their service, they in turn brought back to America a rich knowledge and understanding of Burkina and its people. May we all work to continue the exchange of such enduring and priceless "commissions" between our countries.

# EVERY LAST UNRULY ONE

by El na Ruyter, '15-'17

*It turns out that rocking your fly fro with cokscrew curls so perfect  
they could open a bottle of wine is the least Burkinabe thing you can do.*

A few nights ago I witnessed something that upset me. I was sitting in near darkness with two women, one of whom was somewhat forcefully restraining her daughter so that the other women, bent over her, could finish her work. The child, barely four, was wailing and screaming, trying desperately to escape the pair whose stone-set faces showed no acknowledgment of how much pain the girl was in. The other woman's hands worked expertly, quickly, but watching I knew that no amount of skill or agility could change how painful it was or how it would hurt for days. But it was, both women insisted, entirely necessary that this be done.

This child is not being excised. She is having her hair braided. For those of you that have never had an African woman braid your hair, I can tell you it is very painful, and it takes hours. They pull and twist and tighten each braid fiercely, as though you've done something to deserve it. Sleeping that first night is difficult, and the headache can last for up to two days. Needless to say, it isn't good for your hair either.

It is extremely rare to see a woman in Burkina Faso elect to wear her hair natural. From the age of a couple of



months old a girl's hair is either coiffed, in a state of being coiffed, or in the uncomfortable middle ground between coifs. Despite the fact that shea butter, coconut oil and jojoba can be found in abundance here, women would rather a harsh chemical treatment and a new weave every two or so weeks. When I talk about hair care, even to my hairdresser Rita who has been responsible for the fate of more heads than a guillotine, I get a cross-eyed look. Natural hair is neither desired nor encouraged to grow to its full potential.



This fact has made my recent transformation from long hair to short a little awkward. Cutting off most of my hair last December was a big deal for me, since I have been growing my hair out for nearly a decade and a half now in hopes of someday reaching that holy grail that is shoulder-length. It's been a steady battle, my weapons of choice the comb, copious hair product and bobby pins. Despite these tried and true methods, my efforts are sometimes inadequate against the thousands of tiny strands fighting guerrilla warfare all over my head with the singular goal of making me look like a mad scientist. So when I was about 13, I called in reinforcements: a chemical relaxer. I have been chemically treating my hair for 13 years, and December 26th, 2015 was the first time since adolescence that I've had to face this unfamiliar yet totally natural tangle of curls.



A little background: I am a biracial adopted child and I grew up in a family of stunning straight-haired women. Despite my Russian ancestry, my curls are nearly as tight as a West African's and just as uncooperative. As a child, my mother learned to braid, corn row and twist, but nothing she did could ever slake my desire for long, straight hair. Through the years I struggled through different hair styles and levels of acceptance of my curls,



*Continues on page 5*



## UNRULY CONTINUED FROM P.4

finally reaching a happy medium with loose, chemically relaxed locks and enough daily product to drown a small herd of woolly mammoth.

You might expect Burkina Faso to be the perfect place for a lost child of the African diaspora to find her 'roots.' Unfortunately, it turns out that rocking your fly fro with corkscrew curls so perfect they could open a bottle of wine is the least Burkinabe thing you can do. When I first got to country, women swooned over my long hair jealously, telling me that they wanted to twist braid and 'coif'

it. The reception I received upon my drastic cut was less that warm. Some scowled. Some gasped. Others laughed. One of the nuns outright told me she didn't like the way I looked. But I held on to my natural black girl pride and assumed a vigorous care regime, determined not to lose any more of my fragile curls. I resisted constant offers to be properly coiffed and smiled sadly at the girls when they offered, over and over again, to take a broken-toothed comb to my hair. Why was it so essential that I hide the way my hair grows out of my head naturally?

I am particularly interested in the question of hair because Burkina Faso is not unique in its hesitancy to embrace natural locks. In fact, I can draw an eerie parallel with how people reacted in Burkina after my cut and how it felt going natural in my hometown of New York. Despite the recent trend in the United States for black women to cut off their treated hair, a quick look at popular culture will tell you the Americans aren't loving natural black hair either. Look at Kerry Washington in *Scandal*, or Nichelle Nichols in *Star Trek*, or even that paragon of black female power Beyoncé. In fact, ask yourself how often you see any black female icon regularly sport her natural hair, untreated and un-weaved. Tyra Banks once did a show where she asked black girls as young as 5 what kind of hair they'd like to have, and without fail they all selected the straight blond wig from the array of hair styles that sat mounted before them on mannequins. (In fact, one pointed at the Afro and explained that wearing your hair that way meant you were lower class). Having been not-so-subtly bombarded with the idea that long straight or wavy hair is what makes a woman beautiful, it was no surprise to me when I consciously felt men's eyes pass over me more readily when I went out to a bar after my cut.

The negative energy towards my hair in the States followed me to Africa. Burkina Faso is no exception when it comes to the damages colonialism left behind. They are economic and political but they are also social and aesthetic. Lighter skinned women with straighter hair are considered more beautiful than their darker sisters. Faux western style jewelry is preferred

to African-made accessories and foundation doesn't come in the smooth dark chocolate color of the women here. But most importantly, coiffed hair seems to be a pre-requisite to beauty. There is an aversion I have seen women exhibit to being too much their natural selves, and despite the fact that many aspects of beauty here are uniquely African, the distaste for natural hair is no more Burkinabe than french fries are French. My hair, with all its natural flyness, is not good for my country or this one.

When I finally did relent and let Rita twist golden mesh into my hair so that I had long, flowing twists, I was immediately aware of the difference. Men looked at me more. Women gasped and complimented me when I approached saying, 'now you are well coiffed!' The nun who didn't like my natural hair exclaimed, 'I definitely like you better this way.' Upon my arrival at the Center one of the girls covered her open mouth with her hands and said 'Elena, you have become beautiful...' I don't know what that means, I wanted to say to her. Your perfect black skin and beautiful shoulders and the way you wear your pagne is beautiful. The way you carry 70 lbs of water on your head and swing your hips is stunning. Your dark eyes and tight curls and perfect bone structure should be immortalized in marble. Your natural curls are beautiful, every last unruly one.

*Reprinted with permission from the author.*

*Elèna Ruyter is a 2nd year Community Economic Development volunteer in Solenzo (Banwa), near the Mali border. Follow her blog, [Tubabu](#).*

# hey Blogger...

Remember when you Skyped with your parents or Facebook messaged your friends back home during your time in the Peace Corps...er...or maybe not? Many PCVs today have access to social media and chronicle their adventures through a blog, an easy way to keep in touch with friends and family.

Check out some of these blogs from present PCBF Volunteers:

## LES LEÇONS DE LEGMOIN

Jeff Hudson, science teacher in Burkina, chronicles everything from making t  to drinking tea to organizing a women's soccer match. Jeff will COS later this year. His posts, [A Fulfoolish Challenge](#) and [Cup of Th ](#), shouldn't be missed.

## BURKINA FA SHO

Another soon to be COSing volunteer, Justin Miller, an education volunteer in Yaho (Bal ), has a run-in with crickets and frogs in his [Frog Song](#) post.

## BIKING THROUGH BURKINA

Sarah Rockwell, a pediatric nurse turned community health volunteer, has reached her one-year mark in country. Read [Village Life: It's All New](#) and [The Sounds of Silence](#). Sarah also has some beautiful photography posted.

## BEALS IN BURKINA

Michael Beals details his work as a community economic development volunteer in Ramsa. His most recent post, [The One Year Mark \(in Ramsa\)](#), includes a little bit of everything: dancing, chickens, potatoes, and the mask festival.

## GOOD MORNING BURKINA FASO

A BloggingAbroad.org-featured blog, Bethany Woodson is based in Orodara. Her post titled [All the Ways Burkina Faso will Overwhelm Your Senses](#) should bring back some memories.



## TUBABU

El na Ruyter's blog, Tubabu, is accompanied by many beautiful photos. Read her [Why Wonder Woman Wasn't Burkinabe](#) and [Camp Consolidation 2015](#), written during the attempted coup in late 2015. Her most recent post, [Every Last Unruly One](#), is featured in this newsletter.

*And coming soon...*

## BECOMING BURKINABE

Emily Kitts, picture inset, is a recent graduate of Arizona State University and former on-campus [Peace Corps Ambassador](#). In June 2016, Emily is scheduled to leave for Burkina Faso, where she will be a community health volunteer.

If you have content suggestions for the Burkina Connection, please send them to [fbfnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:fbfnewsletter@gmail.com)



Sirina Ouedraogo, Medical School

## POSTSECONDARY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS PAST & PRESENT

by Suzanne Plopper, '67-'69

Meet current scholarship recipients Sirina (studying medicine) and Stephanie and Mariam (training to be primary school teachers). These delightful and deserving young women are in their first year of training, thanks to FBF-supported scholarships.

Of the 116 young women whose postsecondary education/training scholarships Friends of Burkina Faso has supported since 2010, 39 have completed their training in primary school teaching, nursing or midwifery. According to NEEED, 34 of these women are employed in the profession for which they have been trained, while five continue to seek employment. Graduates of postsecondary education and training apply for positions throughout the country and must take recruitment tests for the regions where they wish to work. The five graduates who are still looking for fulltime positions are engaged in private schools and clinics while awaiting the next government civil service exams.

We receive 'Thank you's' from time to time from young women whose scholarships FBF has supported. Eugenie, who completed her training in nursing in 2014, recently echoed feedback received by other scholarship recipients with the following message:

*After school, I took the civil service exam and thank God, it went well and I was assigned to the Koupela clinic. My profession is such a noble one. I love following women's prenatal progress, helping them give birth to a new life, and lavishing care on a baby. It's a source of pride for me. Thanks to you and your commitment, I've been able to live my dreams. Again, deepest thanks, long life, and may God bless you abundantly.*

Another of our former scholarship recipients who remains in contact is now on her own and pursuing a doctorate in law.

We continue to be proud of the achievements of the young women whose scholarships FBF members and our partners so generously support!



Stephanie Tiemtore, Teacher



Mariam Ouedraogo, Teacher



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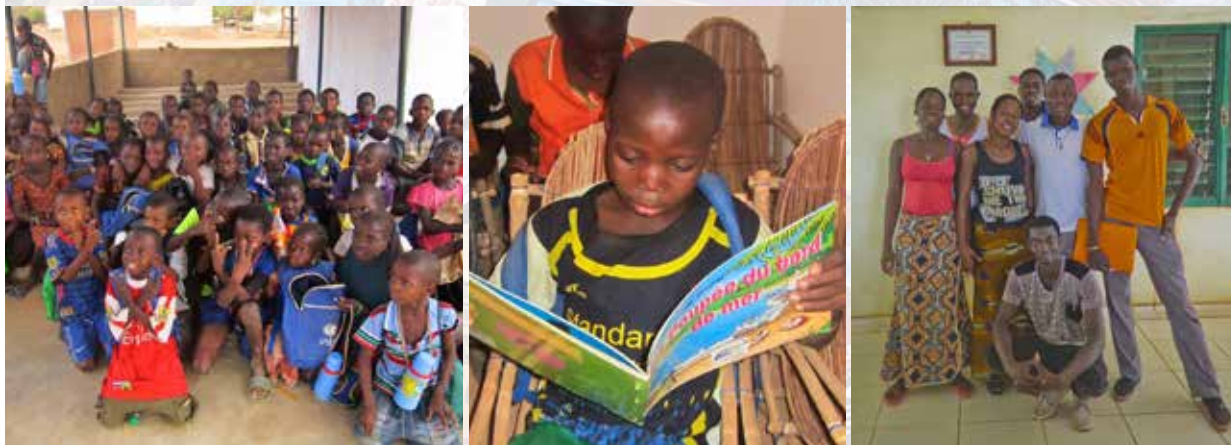
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## COMMUNITY LIBRARY OPENS IN SEBBA

by Tom Vollrath, '67-'70

The first public library in Northeast Burkina Faso opened in the village of Sebba, near BF's borders with Mali and Niger, on April 19, 2016. The library took almost one year to set up. There were some delays due to the political instability in Burkina over the past year, as well as the relative remoteness of Sebba. But other components of establishing a library took their normal course. They ranged from completely refurbishing a building donated by local authorities to constructing shelves, tables, and chairs, and from hiring and training a librarian to buying locally relevant books.



*(L-R) Students at the library's inauguration, Sebba's librarian Ly Kamahoulaye encircled by trainees*

The grand opening was attended by local government authorities, village leaders, school administrators, teachers, students, representatives from Friends of African Libraries (FAVL), members of the Greeley family, and many others. A welcome address was delivered by the President of the Special Delegation of Sebba, or PDS. He spoke about the importance of reading and the love of country. The PDS also thanked all who had contributed time, effort, and resources making the library a reality.

Just before the opening ceremony, Alidou, who works for FAVL's office in Ouaga, delivered 335 books and magazines, including a few comic books! Most of the books, purchased with funds provided by FBF, are in French, with some in local languages. Many are written by Africans and tell stories about Africa. Alidou met with elementary school students to introduce and welcome them to the new library. He explained procedures and practices for using the library. He also emphasized the

importance of taking good care of the books they read in the library and those they check out to take home.

Early this year, following an extensive search and interviews with many candidates, Ly Kamahoulaye Hama was chosen to be the Sebba librarian. After a week's training with six other librarians working in Burkina Faso, he gained hands-on experience in a week-long internship in an established FAVL library. Kamahoulaye will be working with primary and secondary school teachers in the village to develop programs, such as reading sessions and games, designed to inspire students to read, value literature, and gain knowledge that books can convey.

The library will serve the residents of not only Sebba, but also the 20 or so smaller communities and villages nearby. Now, both young and old in northeastern Burkina Faso will have access to reading material. All will be able to use the library for many years to come. Hallelujah!

# A NEW ERA IN BURKINA

by Judith Novack, '13-'15

On November 29, 2015, Burkina Faso made history. For the first time since 1966, the country gained a new president as a result of an election rather than a military coup. And for the first time in the country's history, the man elected was not the incumbent. While the past two years had been tumultuous, Burkina Faso turned a page in the country's political history and launched into a new era!

For the Peace Corps volunteers on the ground, the months leading up to the election were full of excitement and nerves. Due to heightened security following two separate coup d'états, volunteers spent over two months on "stand fast," meaning they had to either remain at their site or, if away from their site, remain wherever they were and await further instructions. The hope was that a peaceful and successful election would finally allow life to return to normal.

Third-year volunteer Charlotte Lane spoke with FBF about what the election was like for her as a Peace Corps volunteer living in a village. Ms. Lane, a Harvard alum, was surprised that the election was delayed by only one month following the September 2015 coup attempt. At the same time, she was excited to watch villagers participate in the momentous election.

Charlotte spent the weeks leading up to voting day asking her Burkinabe friends and associates for their thoughts about the impending election.

Speaking with friends and colleagues, she noticed that many were not exactly sure what they were voting for.

On election day, Charlotte recalls the long lines outside of the polling locations and the armed guards on standby to ensure that only one person entered the voting area at a time. She remembers helpers helping illiterate



*Voting in the Presidential Election in Burkina on November 29th, 2015. Although delayed for a month due to an attempted coup, Roch Marc Kabore was elected in the first round of voting, earning 53.5% of the popular vote in a field of 12 candidates.*

voters cast their votes. The event brought people from a wide cross-section of the population together—farmers, village leaders, functionaries, etc.—making the day very exciting and meaningful for everyone.

Here, Ms. Lane describes the emotion she still feels from that monumental day:

*During my time as a Peace Corps volunteer, I had the honor and privilege of watching the country move from being ruled by a military despot to a functioning democracy. I watched history in the making. Each person walking out of the local primary school with their finger marked in ink was a sign of change. A tangible sign that Burkina Faso, Africa, and the world were moving toward true freedom. Military leaders controlling primarily through their might were no longer going to be tolerated. Burkina Faso had taken a stand. Not once, but twice it had refused to accept the cliché of Africa and demanded more. Demanded freedom and democracy. Congratulations, Burkina Faso. May your example continue to grow and spread.*



# THE LAST GUINEA WORM

by Jonah Busch, '00-'02

*This blog was originally posted on the Center for Global Development site in September 2015. Since then a few of the facts in the story have changed: President Carter's [status](#) has greatly improved and there are even fewer Guinea worms left now, one as of the most recent count from the [Carter Center](#).*

When Jimmy Carter announced last year that he had been diagnosed with brain cancer, the 90-year-old former president stated that it was his wish to see the last guinea worm die before he does. He may well get his wish.

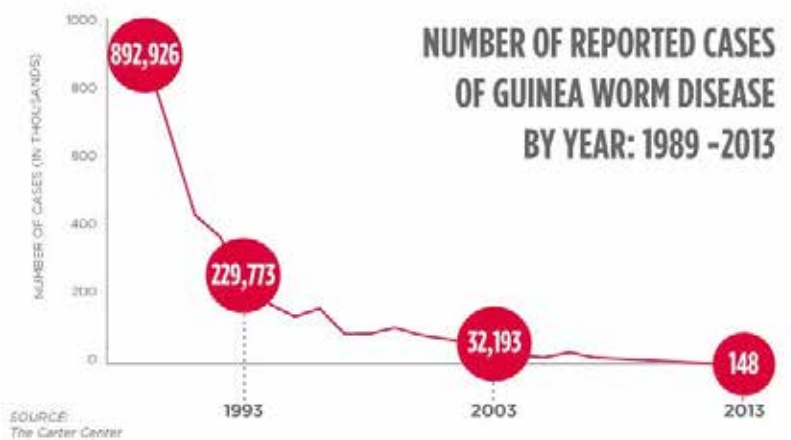
The crippling disease once infected millions of people a year across a swath of the planet stretching from Senegal to India. Now, thanks to the tireless work of Carter and others, there are only 14 guinea worm cases left on Earth —

You see, guinea worm will be vanquished not by a medical cure or vaccine, like smallpox and rinderpest, but by the small heroism of millions of people in poor villages, convincing their neighbors to change their everyday behavior. I'm privileged to be friends with a few of those people, and I look forward to raising a toast in their honor.

Let me back up a bit. Let me back up fourteen years, to be precise, to a sweltering West African midday in 2001. I was in Boulporé, a little village on the austere Mossi Plateau 60 kilometers north of Ouagadougou and a known epicenter of guinea worm.

I was a math teacher in the Peace Corps at the time, making the most of a weekend by accompanying my friend and fellow volunteer Christina Gomez-Mira to scout for sites for "Worm Week." Christina was one of several dozen health volunteers tasked with eradicating guinea worm from Burkina Faso. At that time, per the Carter Center chart [at left], there were still about 50 thousand guinea worm cases worldwide, and eradicating them from Burkina Faso seemed a daunting task. Worm Week was a festival organized by Peace Corps volunteers to fight the worm, in which health lessons and waterfilter distribution were interspersed between free food, drinks, music, and dancing.

Guinea worm is a painful and humiliating parasite. It is ingested when you drink unfiltered water drawn from an infected pond. The waterborne larva grows inside your body for months into a thin, meterlong worm. After a year or so the worm, or worms, emerge from your extremities, slowly and painfully. The



not even enough for a soccer match. Soon, the last of these terrible little creatures will die. It may die next week or it may die next year, but its demise is now all but inevitable.



When the last guinea worm dies, it will be just the third disease humans have eradicated, after smallpox and rinderpest (a cattle disease). It will be a victory for President Carter's philanthropy, the Carter Center, which for years led the international campaign against guinea worm. It will also be a victory for President John F. Kennedy's vision of person-to-person development, exemplified by the Peace Corps.

## GUINEA WORM CONTINUED FROM p.10

agony of the emerging worm is quenched by dousing the affected limbs in water, at which point the worms' eggs are released to spread and hatch, ready to infect again.

The only treatment for the guinea worm is to coax it slowly from your body, twisting it around a twig millimeter by millimeter over the course of weeks, like living spaghetti around a tiny fork. If the worm breaks before it is fully removed, it dies, and its body hardens inside your limb into a debilitating residue that can cripple you for life. The image of a worm twisted around a stick is thought by some to be the origin of the rod of Asclepius — the symbol of modern medicine.

Preventing guinea worm is straightforward if you just follow two steps: first, don't drink unfiltered water from infected sources. Wells, water filters, and larvicide help with this, as described in the case study on guinea worm in *Millions Saved*, by the Center for Global Development (CGD) (new edition coming soon). And second, if you're infected, don't dip your wounded limbs in the drinking water source.

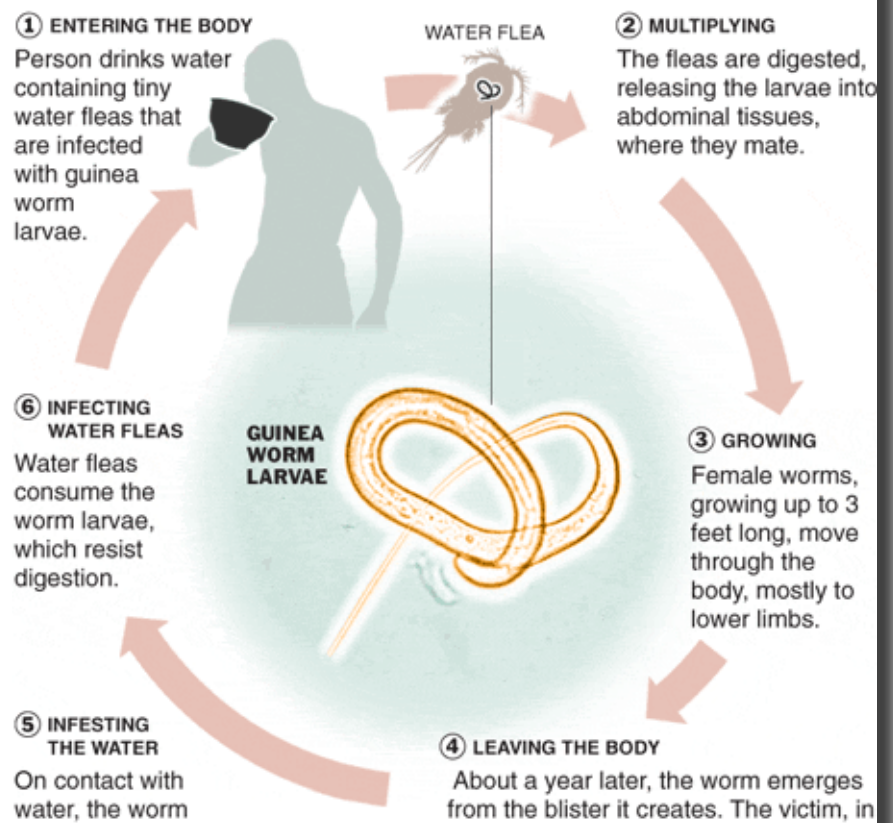
Sounds easy enough, right? If everyone in a village follows those steps for a year, as we were attempting with Worm Week, the guinea worm disappears from the village. If everyone on the planet follows those steps for a year, the guinea worm will vanish from Earth. That's exactly what's about to happen. It was by no means inevitable.

Christina and I arrived in Boulporé by bicycle, under the blazing Sahelian sun. Our hosts were expecting us, and they offered us a calabash of refreshing welcome water. We faced a conundrum—should we drink it? It was odd-smelling and a little chunky; not very waterlike. Turning up our nose at their hospitality would have been the height of rudeness, jeopardizing our mission from the outset. On the other hand, by drinking infected water we risked acquiring a horrific and entirely preventable disease. How would we explain that to Mom and Dad back home?

We deliberated between ourselves in English before arriving at a compromise. We would touch the drink to our lips for a few seconds, but not swallow any of it. When we did so we were relieved to realize that the smelly liquid was not water at all, but zoom koom, a sort of runny yogurt. The villagers were a step ahead of us—they knew their drinking water was fouled and had offered us a reasonable alternative.

The discomfort we felt with the “welcome water” was just a warm-up for what happened next. An elder asked if we wanted to see a guinea worm. Morbid curiosity got the best of us. We did. He summoned a young girl forward, who sat in the dirt before us. He instructed her to show us

## The Life Cycle of Guinea Worm



## GUINEA WORM CONTINUED FROM P.11

where a white spaghetti-string worm was protruding several inches from her foot. Here, come get a better look, he said, as he yanked the worm from her skin. The worm broke off, partially, leaving the rest inside her foot. Christina and I were mortified; the girl now faced serious disability for the remainder of her life.

We left Boulporé that evening. Ultimately we decided to hold Worm Week in a different village. I still remember the chant we made up in the Mooré language: *nyiini yaa wenga, kuuli tond tenga!* (The guinea worm is bad, get it out of our land!). And when our two years in Peace Corps were up, we left worm-stricken Burkina Faso to pursue careers in the United States. These days I work on climate change and tropical deforestation — big daunting issues with more bad news than good. I hope that within our lifetime we'll be able to tame runaway deforestation, and turn a corner on climate change. So I find it inspirational to look back on humanity's triumphs, when everyone came together to solve a common problem, like the ozone hole, smallpox, or guinea worm.

I thought about guinea worm recently in a seminar at CGD by Daniel Immerwahr, a professor of history at Northwestern University. It was an excellent presentation based on his book *Thinking Small*. He explained how in the 1950s and 1960s a vision of grassroots, person-to-person, teach-a-man-to-fish development extolled by the novel *The Ugly American* swept through world capitals. This vision of development from the bottom up led to President Jawaharlal Nehru's thousands-of-villages-strong community development program in India, and President Kennedy's Peace Corps.

But after a few years, Immerwahr explained, this 60s-era brand of grassroots development fell out of favor as idealistic community development workers failed to budge entrenched village hierarchies content with the status quo. India's community development program withered as quickly as it blossomed. Peace Corps endures, but has been dismissed as mired in the past by a colleague of mine who I nevertheless respect highly. These days experts are more inclined to attribute development to economic growth, or the right institutions, or political rights, or technofixes, or fairer rules of the global game, or straight-up cash. And I have little doubt of the importance of any of these things.

And yet, somewhere out there the last guinea worm is waiting to die. And when it does, the vanquishing of a disease that once hobbled millions of people will be a victory for grassroots, person-to-person development. Community health educators. Peace Corps volunteers. Wells and water filters. Millions of people across sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia who made small changes in their drinking and bathing habits, and convinced their friends and neighbors to do the same. Thanks to all of them, a dreadful scourge will soon be gone from Earth, forever.





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## GIVE WATER GIVE LIFE LAUNCHES IN KAMSI

by Kathleen McDonald

Kathleen McDonald, FBF Vice President, visited Burkina Faso to launch the construction of a water catchment basin in the village of Kamsi for Community Building Group's Give Water Give Life program. Accompanied by the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission, David Young, the village of Kamsi also received solar panels for an elementary school and some homes.

In his remarks, Deputy Ambassador David Young described the technological advance represented by the project. "With the rehabilitation of water retention basins, rainwater will be collected and, due to the satellite technology placement of the basin, the water aquifer will be restored, which will raise the water table. This, he explained, "raises the level of the water in the various wells around the basin that can then be used for successful rural economic development."

As an added bonus, Kati was able to visit with the 2015 Award for Peace winner, the Mogho Naaba, at his palace in Ouagadougou. Kati presented the Mogho Naba with a framed photograph of the Award for Peace Ceremony in his honor.



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*The U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission, David Young, helps at the rainwater catchment basin launch in Kamsi.*



*This garden is cultivated by the women's cooperative group of Kamsi. The plots are fully irrigated using the water collected in the rainwater catchment basin.*



*Kati McDonald presenting the Mogho Naba with a photograph of the 2015 Peace Award Ceremony.*

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