



BURKINA CONNECTION

A NEWSLETTER BY AND FOR THE MEMBERS OF FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO



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CROP YIELDS IMPROVE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

by Leslie Berger, '81-'83



The AIVDPL Team (left) and Ag training session led by Mourfou in Zoungou (right)

The Manga team of professionals is to be congratulated for developing clear goals and initiating an excellent new agricultural project aimed at addressing food insecurity and reducing rural poverty in south-central Burkina Faso. The AIVDPL team recognised that the success of its training project to introduce new agricultural practices to small farmers in 15 villages in South-Central BF would hinge on gaining local buy-in from the local communities. Consequently, they mobilized support from mayors, tribal chiefs, village leaders as well as regional agricultural officials. The team also organized meetings and public ceremonies with farmers to explain in detail what would be required and how participants would benefit. The team sparked the interest of farmers by visiting and making presentations in each of 15 villages, with five located in each of the following regions--Manga, Gogo, and Binde. They also ensured that important decisions, such as the selection of farmers who would participate in the project, were made by village leaders. Women's role in this project was highlighted with the team emphasising the aim to include 50% women farmers in the project.

The team worked closely with farmers providing them with the following training, logistical support, and encouragement:

- Teaching the benefits of using manure and step by step instructions in installing on-farm manure pits,
- Providing tips for collection and treatment of manure,
- Securing supplies and distribution of improved seed and agro-chemicals,
- Putting demonstration plots in place to showcase best practice in production of corn, soy, rice and cowpeas
- Conducting crop management training sessions at each demonstration plot at key points in the crop year.

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The primary goal of the project was to improve food security by increasing yields of locally grown crops. The AIVDPL team hoped that by trialling the use of high quality seed and by applying fertiliser and pesticides in appropriate dosages and times through the season farmers would learn how changes in their production practices could benefit them. Two training sessions were held at each of 10 demonstration plots at key points throughout the crop year, most importantly at crop emergence and just before harvest. In total 375 farmers directly benefited from the training sessions and adopted the new agricultural practices in their own fields. One of the key objectives of this project was to target women farmers who made up more than 60% of the total number who received training. The AIVDPL team in their final report noted that the benefits from the project reached far beyond the 375 farmers chosen to participate as in each case the extended family members of these farmers also benefited.



IMPROVED AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Longer and irregular periods of drought, intermittent rain, and increasingly destructive pest infestations have clearly adversely affected crop yields in Burkina Faso and have lowered production in recent years. To counter the negative impact of climate change, AIVPDL, a small group of retired agricultural experts, launched a program in 2017 to educate subsistence farmers about how to increase yields, bolster production, and become self-sufficient in food. The results of their efforts are impressive. AIVPDL documented in their final report to FBF that crops yields in farmer fields that deployed the recommended agricultural practices far exceeded yields in fields using traditional methods of cultivation.

During the year there was good interaction between the FBF and the AIVDPL team. Faissal Ouedraogo, FBF President, Desire Banse, Project Committee member, and Lisa Nebie, a Burkinabe student made regular visits to meet with the AIVDPL team in Burkina to ensure open communication on project objectives, progress and challenges. The AIVDPL team provided well-documented project reports and photographs and made the following observations:

In spite of periods of drought in August and September, the soil in plots treated with organic manure retained moisture longer, crop leaves remained greener for longer, fields were denser and plants grew taller, and, for maize, ears grew larger and thicker than in fields not treated

Widespread pest problems occurred in corn and cowpea crops (caterpillars) but using improved seed and selected pesticides helped to reduce pest damage.

The AIVDPL team was pleased with the first year results showing yields for each of the crops increasing significantly compared to yields using conventional methods. In demonstration plots treated with organic manure, yields doubled for corn, soybean and cowpeas. Rice yields were reported to have increased four-fold. Yields were even higher when organic manure was used in combination with artificial fertiliser. Additional data will be collected during year two to further verify these results.

Three hundred village farmers will be chosen to participate in the AIVPDL project in 2018, thanks to continued financial support from FBF. These farmers will largely be instructed in the same way as those from the first group in 2017.

The Project Committee felt it was important to reinforce the lessons from the first year by retaining a group of original participants. Therefore, a few farmers from the original group are to be chosen to participate in 2018 for a second year. By closely observing these farmers' working methods during the second crop year, it will be possible for AIVPDL to determine if they continued to apply what they had learned the previous year.

The farmers chosen to establish demonstration fields in 2018 will be adding plots using conventional methods of cultivation (i.e., no chemical fertilizer, no organic manure, and non-improved seed). This will enable AIVPDL to collect more complete and accurate yield data needed to conduct control trials that can generate reliable comparisons between conventional agricultural practices with the improved technologies.

FBF hopes that in the second year, greater support will be given to this project by local and national agricultural officials. AIVPDL and FBF will be looking for ways to foster such support.

For more information on this project contact [Leslie Berger](#).



FBF SUPPORTS BILINGUAL SCHOOL IN SIGNOGHIN

by Tom Vollrath, '68-'70



SEDELAN & ABADAS representatives visit the school site in December 2017

Father Maurice Oudet was overjoyed when Fulani women in a pastoral zone reserved for herders approached him expressing their desire to have a primary school built for their children. Signoghin, includes 3 villages and is located approximately 5 -7 kilometers from Bittou (Boulgou Province). Father Maurice encouraged the women to speak with the government authorities. Shortly

thereafter, the women, together with their husbands and tribal leaders, approached the Mayor and the local Inspector of Primary Education. The Mayor offered to provide money from the jurisdiction's budget to help with financing the school. The Inspector pledged that, if the primary school were to be built, the government would provide it with teachers. Both officials encouraged the Fulani contingent to seek financial assistance from friends, both in-country and abroad.

SEDELAN, a non-profit organization in Kaya founded by Father Maurice, and ABADAS, an NGO located in Arradon, France, formed a partnership to support the Fulani school initiative. Having committed substantial resources to build the school, SEDELAN/ABADAS sought additional funding needed to complete construction from FBF.

FBF Projects Committee members liked the concept of providing the young Fulani children with an opportunity to attend school. They also believe that students benefit from being in schools where both the local language (Fulfulde) and French would be spoken and literacy taught. Based on the Projects Committee's recommendation, FBF's Board of Directors authorized the release of the funds needed to complete construction of the primary school earlier this year.

A SLICE OF PI

by Tom Vollrath, '68-'70

In May 2015, a group of fifth-grade students in Herndon, Virginia, interested in computers and robotics joined the First Lego League, an organization that introduces young people to the fun and excitement of science and technology. A core objective of the FFL program is that the children learn that friendly competition and mutual gain are not separate goals, lending a hand to one another is the foundation of teamwork, and helping others in society less fortunate than themselves is socially very important. In 2015, the Herndon team, which the students christened, Structile Robotum, raised funds to support the FBF/ NEEED scholarship program. This program enables young women in Yatenga to become primary school teachers.

Fast forward to 2018: These same students, now in 7th and 8th grade, created a new robotics team, called Slice of Pie. The team chose to raise money for FBF's "Lambs" project. The Lambs program makes it possible for young girls to enter primary school and opens up opportunities for them to gain a secondary and post-secondary education.

Here is a wonderful [video](#) that a Slice of Pi member made about their FBF fundraising efforts.



Tom Vollrath meets with Slice of Pi members to receive funds for the Lambs Project



THE VALUE OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION

by Tom Vollrath, '68-'70

Many governments in Sub-Saharan Africa require the use of the official national language in the classroom. The motivation behind this trend is to grow their economies and improve the career prospects of their younger generations. Research findings throughout the world consistently show, however, that learners benefit from using their home language in education.

In the words of Gigi Luk, an associate professor at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, "bilingualism is an experience that shapes our brain for a lifetime." According to Antonella Sorace, professor of Developmental Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh, "bilinguals are better able to focus attention without being distracted and also are better able to switch from one task to another in comparison with monologists." Empirical research in the United States shows that people who speak two languages often outperform monolinguals on general measures of executive function. A four-year, randomized trial conducted by Jennifer Steele at American University revealed that dual-language students outperformed their peers in English-reading skills by a full school year's worth of learning by the end of middle school.

Angelina Kioko, professor of English and Linguistics in Nairobi Kenya, summarizes why starting school in the learners' mother tongue is particularly important in the early

years when children begin attending school:

The use of learners' home language in the classroom promotes a smooth transition between home and school. It means learners get more involved in the learning process and speeds up the development of basic literacy skills. It also enables more flexibility, innovation and creativity in teacher preparation. Using learners' home language is also more likely to get the support of the general community in the teaching/learning process and creates an emotional stability which translates to cognitive stability. In short, it leads to a better educational outcome.

I urge persons interested to read what professor Kioko has to say about teaching young children in Africa in their home language [here](#).



According to the [British Council](#):

...starting school in the learners' mother tongue does not delay education; rather it leads to faster acquisition of the skills and attitudes needed for success in formal education.

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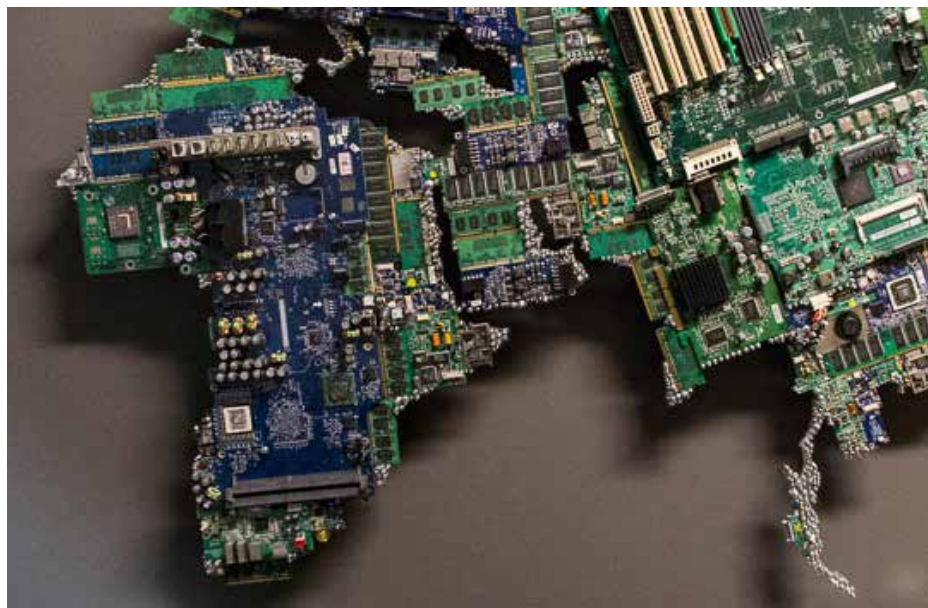
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Aaron Buchsbaum at
webmanager
@friendsofburkinafaso.org
with some of your
technology interests or hopes.

We'll find a good match between
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needs for FBF.

In other words, please volunteer!

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

by Aaron Buchsbaum, '08-'10



Last newsletter we mentioned our website, online surveys, email applications, fundraising sites, and a bunch of other stuff. Ya wusgo de!

This newsletter I'll give you two shorter updates:

- Automated emails
- FBF blog site

WHEE MAIL!

We know emails aren't typically something to celebrate. (*Look darling! Someone thought of us and sent mail all the way from the Internet!*) But, they're functional, free, and fast, which makes them very attractive to FBF's lean budget and all-volunteer Board.

In the last month we created automatic welcome messages and, importantly, automated membership renewal notices. Gone will be the days of having to update everyone's membership on or about the same time. Join the group in December? Great! Renew next year in December! Find us in June? Same thing!

I thought we could fully integrate membership payments to our member database, meaning it would go like this: you get an email, you pay online with PayPal, and that action is automatically logged in your FBF profile. It looks like I was overly optimistic, and we'll still need a bit of hand labor to connect all the dots. *Na n zemsame.*

BLOG-KINA FASO!

PCVs blog. A lot. But... what about us RPCVs and the greater Burkinabe community? Well, thanks to our Communications Officer Beth Knight, our stalwart supporter John Sneed, and our omni-capable web guru Chris Wells, we're bringing a member blog to our site!

Details are still being ironed out, but the vision is to appoint a couple FBF folks as the "clickers in charge". We'll review to make sure there are no secret Fulfuldé curses, and then voila: you're a published author.

Merci mes amis! Enjoy the newsletter, and keep an eye on your inbox for things from friendsofburkinafaso.org.



A PLACE TO GO

by Tom Vollrath, '68-'70

All too often, diarrheal disease, weakens, and can even cause Burkina Faso to die prematurely in Burkina Faso. Many children, especially those under the age of five, struggle with chronically infected intestines, illness that can compromise their ability to absorb nutrients and stunt their growth. Underweight women are also particularly vulnerable when infected with pathogens. They give birth to underweight babies, who are more vulnerable to infections and less able to benefit from medications.

PCV Melissa Sieffert, assigned to the village Kaonguin-Sanrgo, developed a plan of work focused on hygiene, nutrition, and education. Upon evaluating the data at the local clinic, she concluded that 20% of the non-malaria related cases treated at the clinic could have been diminished with improved sanitation. She was aware that the everyday practice of relying upon open-air defecation, which is all-to-common in much of the developing world, contributes to the contamination of drinking water, diarrheal disease, and malnutrition. She also knew that building latrines in household compounds would help alleviate sickness and improve villagers' overall health and well-being.

Both the conseiller of Kaonguin-Sanrgo as well as the president of the Village Development Committee encouraged Melissa to focus attention on the issue of public sanitation. Interviews with village elders and community leaders led to the collective commitment to construct 75 latrines village compounds that would benefit 1,500 villagers. The community pledged to assume responsibility for digging pits for the latrines, making mud-bricks for their walls, and providing water, gravel, and sand for cement mixing. These in-kind contributions equaled to 47% of the resources needed to complete the project.

Let's hope that acts of terroristic violence will soon end and that the Peace Corps will soon return to Burkina Faso to help increase understanding, do good work, and promote good will among people.



You will never solve poverty without solving water and sanitation.

-- Matt Damon,
Co-founder [Water.org](https://www.water.org)



POST-EVACUATION: THE PROJECT MUST GO ON

by Melissa Seiffert, '16-'17

It was unexpected because we didn't want it to happen, but all the signs were there. The terrorist attack that rocked Ouaga on August 13th made us anxious about the possibility of an impending evacuation. The "standfast" that Peace Corps Burkina issued almost immediately after the swear-in of the newest group, G34, should have prompted all volunteers to be prepared to pack our bags. But, none of us did.

I was on vacation in Italy when all Peace Corps Burkina Faso volunteers received the official email detailing evacuation procedures, and I immediately burst into tears. The issuance of evacuation orders was made even more difficult by the fact that volunteers were not allowed to breathe a word about leaving the country until all the volunteers were safely across the Ghanaian border. This included not telling our villages about what would be our sudden and prolonged disappearances.

About a week after the Peace Corps program in BF was officially terminated on September 9th, I made contact with my village (Kaonguin-Sanrgo). My homologues had called, asking whether I would be home the next day for the village-wide meeting we had arranged to discuss the latrine project we had launched in July. I explained as best I could that all Peace Corps volunteers had been evacuated and I could not come back anytime soon due to security concerns.



Project Manager surveys progress

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Platforms are prepared



A completed latrine

My homologues graciously accepted my explanation, and though sad, were pleased to hear I was safe. Hearing their voices again, never knowing if I was going to see them nor other friends in my community to say a proper goodbye, and being treated with so much understanding finally brought home everything I was going to miss by not getting to serve my second year. Before I knew what I was saying, I told my homologues that I wanted to finish the project we had started, and that I would raise the money they needed to build the 75 latrines we planned for the community. I had no idea how I was going to do this at the time, but like so many times in Burkina, I figured I would find a way.

On March 13th, I received a grainy video call from my friend Ben Ouedraogo, whom I asked to help me get the fundraised money to my homologues, as well as monitor the project. He wanted to show me the latrine progress in real time. Unfortunately, cell service was never good enough in my village for a video call. But Ben inundated me

with photos that documented the transport of cement and rebar to my former courtyard, the laying of bricks and platforms, and the digging of pits. The flood of photos increased my awareness of the value of Peace Corps and how great feats can be accomplished with teamwork, organization, and most importantly, trust!

It was fortunate that planning for the latrine project had been conducted well before the Peace Corps evacuation. The need to pursue a water sanitation project was originally brought to my attention by the *conseiller du village* and the president of the village development committee in February of 2017. My homologues and I spoke to the chief of the village about the advisability of launching the project last Spring. We held organizational and budgeting meetings throughout July and August. I was well on my way toward completing the grant proposal for the project when we finally received the fateful email from Peace Corps.

Though the moving parts were in place, this project never would have come to fruition without such an amazing team to work with. I must mention two people in particular, Silvain Ouedraogo and Moumini Sawadogo, not only for their dedication and trustworthiness in completing this project, but also, for all the times they patiently waited for me to figure out the right French words to explain myself and for all the times they openly supported my project ideas and helped me refine them. Most importantly, I am thankful for all the small kindnesses they showed in helping me integrate into a wonderful village.

After returning to the US, I was worried I would never find an equivalent to the communal relationships that exist in Burkinabé culture. However, when I started my GoFundMe campaign to raise the money for the latrine project, I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of support, not just from friends and

family, but from other volunteers as well. It was after Friends of Burkina Faso contacted me out of the blue about helping to complete funding the project that I realized that a community of former Peace Corps volunteers and other individuals in the United States remain concerned and interested in the welfare of Burkina Faso and its people. My "village" isn't just Kaonguin-Sanrgo. My village is my family, my friends, Peace Corps volunteers from all groups and countries, and the people of Burkina Faso.

A MESSAGE FROM MELISSA

Thank you all so much again for your support. Now people have safe, private, and hygienic places to relieve themselves. A comfort so normal here, we forget that others do not have the privilege.



Melissa Sieffert served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Kaonguin-Sangro June 2016 through the closing of the Peace Corps program in September 2017. She graduated from Harvard University in 2014 with a Bachelors in Neurobiology and a Secondary in English. She will be attending University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School to earn her MBA. She wants to learn how to manage the development of new new medical technologies in a way that ethically places humans at the center of scientific progress. Learn more about Melissa via her [website and blog](#).



THE LAMBS ARE BACK & OTHER EDUCATION NEWS

by Suzanne Plopper, '67-'69



Beneficiaries receive solar lamps and school materials

Interest in, and commitment to, girls' education is on the rise again in villages in the northern region of Burkina Faso. In 2015, after 16 years of supporting the entrance of young village girls into primary school (on a one-time basis in each interested village), including 14 years with FBF support, Association NEEDED informed Friends of Burkina Faso that NEEDED had responded to nearly all villages in the region that had requested their support in order that parents be able to provide the basic necessities so that their daughters could go to school. As NEEDED had reached its goal of introducing and supporting education for primary-school-aged girls on a one-time basis, FBF terminated fundraising efforts for this project.

NEW NEEDED FOR LAMBS

Late last year, NEEDED received requests from 14 new villages to help enroll approximately 200 young girls into school. NEEDED submitted a request to FBF to once again lend its support to the enrollment of young village girls into primary school, and our Projects Committee and Board voted in favor of this support.

For our newer FBF members who may not be familiar with this project, for a one-time cost of \$80 per girl, the *Lambs Support Girls' Education Project* provides a t-shirt and skirt, basic school materials, a lamp to facilitate studying at night, and a lamb which the parents are responsible for raising. Each year thereafter, parents sell their

daughter's lamb, purchase and raise a new one and use the profit for the purchase of their daughter's school materials for the new school year. In this way, an initial \$80 investment sends a girl through 13 years of primary – secondary school.

These girls have done amazingly well in school. 84% of girls enrolled in primary school through the *Lambs Support Girls' Education Project* have passed national exit exams at the end of primary school, qualifying them to continue on to middle school, compared with 64% of their peers throughout the northern region. These girls have continued to excel far beyond their peers in middle and secondary school and a number of them have qualified for scholarships for postsecondary education/training. All it took was an initial investment of \$80 and the girls and their parents took it from there. FBF continues to support school lunches for village girls attending the Lycee Moderne de l'Amitie (NEEDED's middle-secondary school for girls); and scholarships for postsecondary education/training in primary school teaching, nursing, midwifery or a university education.

Such a successful girls' education endeavor and such a simple concept: raising awareness of the importance of girls' education by providing modest encouragement with a great multiplier effect.

BUILDING BETTER SCHOOLS

Beyond the academic success of the girls who have entered village

primary school, the project has been instrumental in causing a sea change in the attitudes of villagers who had not previously taken girls' education seriously. More villages have built primary schools out of local materials. Understandably, many of the older of these village-built schools are in serious disrepair (see photo). Both the Regional Office of Education and NEEDED have said that the only hope of replacing most of these schools with concrete structures is with contributions from outside partners. In the past seven years, FBF has contributed to the replacement of five of these schools. In at least two other cases, Burkinabe living in Europe have raised funds for the replacement of primary schools in the villages in which they grew up. It's a "heavy lift" – each school costs approximately \$75,000. However, FBF is a proud partner in this endeavor.

To contribute to one of the girls' education projects, visit our [website](#) or the project's [GlobalGiving.org](#) page. If you would like to contribute to primary school construction, simply let us know.

DONATE NOW



PC FOUNDATIONS GUIDE STATE REPRESENTATIVE BID

by Kate Larose, '02-'04



Kate Larose & friends parade for support of State Rep Bid

I was 20 and vividly aware I was the youngest person in my group. As we grabbed our bags at the Ouagadougou airport and boarded the Peace Corps-branded Land Cruiser in the dark, my misgivings began to surface. The people around me were giddily taking in our new home with chatter and laughter; they seemed so sure of themselves. Maybe I shouldn't have pushed to graduate college in three years so that I could celebrate my 21st birthday surrounded by intoxicated college friends. Maybe I should have attempted to learn French before moving to a country where my only language would be of no practical use to me. I moved to a seat in the back, riding to out SIL [where we spent our first night in Ouaga] in silence.

Looking back, I realize now that my reaction was more a function of my introversion than my age—something that played out the rest of my time in country. When we were greeted by Peace Corps staff on the first day of training with music, I fled to find a bathroom while most of my fellow trainees jubilantly joined in the dancing. During our first site visit, I struggled to find ways to make connections as others nonchalantly picked up and proceeded to carry around babies. And I never felt more homesick than in the panic-inducing moments when we were asked to perform skits.

That's why I was surprised to find myself in a parade last month, walking behind a 10-foot banner with my name on it, joined by 20 of my dearest friends, family members, and co-workers—all in matching "Kate Larose" t-shirts—marching through the rain on a 42 degree Vermont day in my bid for a house seat in the Vermont State Legislature. How did I get here?!

My journey to this moment began with my service in the village of Tioyo. As a community health volunteer, most of my days were initially spent hanging out at the clinic. While I was jealous of my education PCV colleagues and the concreteness of their roles, I eased into my

service nicely once I had a hammock, and an armful of novels "borrowed" from the Ouaga house.

My etude de milieu gave me the permission needed to get out into the community. My language facilitator suggested: "Just meet people, talk to them, and listen." In his mind, I'm guessing this was an easy and informal task. But for me, this took a week of advanced prep as I mapped out my route (cabaret, market, well, shade tree, village boutique) and my list of compound questions. I would walk up with my notebook, decline offers to sit down, and launch straight into my questions in terrible French. I sadly never learned Loberi, but I wouldn't be surprised if my village nickname became something like "awkward white woman who asks long questions we don't understand." I completed the worksheet and sent it back to Dr. Claude, and then I went back to hanging out at the clinic.

One day I arrived to find 30 people silently standing outside the clinic steps. I greeted them with the hand throwing clap I was taught in training, but I only received a few mumbled responses. I walked into the building and found the major hooking up a little boy to an IV. With his sunken eyes I almost didn't recognize him. I had seen him playing sticks and bike tires near the well the week before. He died a few hours later from dysentery.

This was the moment that everything changed for me. No longer would I observe quietly (though thoughtfully) from the sidelines.

I graciously got permission from the primary school director to begin to lead health lessons. The students mostly forgave my bad French during the lecture, and came alive when we got to the finale. (Singing a song about hand washing to the tune of "Row, row, your boat".) Exhausted afterwards, I collapsed in my hammock, but a few hours later, a child's voice awoke me. Jonas, one of my favorite



Jonas clearing brush near Kate's PCV home



Jonas and sister, Tene, with Kate in 2010

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neighbor children, was walking on the rutted path to my hut, singing "Lave, lave, lave, tes mains."

Filled with gratitude, I knew then I could push further and further outside of my comfort levels.

Flash forward 14 years to this February. I was attending a community forum in my Vermont town about raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, where I had planned to sit in the back and silently listen. The forum was organized by my elected official, who immediately turned it over to a lobbyist for Walmart. The lobbyist hands out a "fact sheet" devoid of any facts or citations. Members of the audience begin echoing the carefully crafted talking points: "Those people don't deserve more than \$10 an hour"; "Drugs addicts and felons don't deserve it"; "All you need to do is be alive and breathing and you will make more than \$10 an hour now."

I again came to the realization that I cannot observe quietly (though thoughtfully) from the sidelines with so many in my community in such need.

That's the moment I decided to run for office.

In April, as we lined up for the parade to begin in the freezing rain, I looked to my left. There was Jonas alongside me, holding up the banner, and dancing to the music. The image of him walking down the rutted path to my hut, singing "Lave, lave, tes main" flashes into my mind. And I start dancing a little.

The primaries are in August, and the general election in November. Between now and then, I know what I have to do: "Just meet people, talk to them, and listen."

Kate Larose is the Director of Financial Futures Program at the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity in Burlington, Vermont. She lives in Saint Albans with her husband, son, and Jonas. Kate was a Community Health Volunteer in Tioyo. To learn more about Kate's State Representative journey, follow her on [Facebook](#) or visit her [website](#).



AMBASSADOR YOUNG VISITS FBF/ABURWA

Members of FBF and ABURWA (Association des Burkinabés de la Région de Washington) were honored to meet with Ambassador Young, the current U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso, during a recent visit to Washington, D.C. FBF invited members to participate at the meeting held on May 16, 2018.

Among the topics discussed were U.S.-Burkina relations and FBF's AIVDPL program. Ambassador Young confirmed the strength of U.S.-Burkina relations and mentioned an interest in visiting FBF's AIVDPL Agriculture project upon his return to Burkina.

We were honored to have this time with Ambassador Young!



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FBF is an organization for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) and all friends of Burkina Faso.



SEBBA LIBRARY PROJECT UPDATE



The Sebba Library was, in part, funded by FBF support. In March, the library received a site visit by FAVL (Friends of African Village Libraries), which oversees the management of the library and training of library staff.

The Sebba Library Project was the idea of Ethan Greeley, son of David & Sali Greeley. Ethan developed the Sebba Library as his bar mitzvah project in 2013.

To learn more about this project, watch the video Ethan created sharing his experience.



SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUTH: SHOULD WE EXPOSE OURSELVES?

by Marie-Angèle Sorgho

Nowadays, with the emergence of social network websites such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc., billions of people are exposing their lives to the general Public. Does this necessity of appearing (or the element of "have you seen me?", as one might say) create more anguish than happiness?

Self-overexposure is very popular today. This phenomenon has grown on social network sites so much so that the saying "to live hidden is to live happily" seems very remote. There is less discretion, and the saddest part of this story is that most of us end up falling into a trap without realizing it, whereas for others, it's a godsend to be noticed even more. Nowadays, for some people, a successful life has to be visible and flashy, with lots of bling-bling. For others, they must solicit the envy, the jealousy of others. Free to everyone (as long as you have a smartphone), to communicate about his or her professional or intimate achievements by making a more-or-less embellished image on the network, by exposing one's daily activities as if they could suddenly make sense to readers. With this little game of "self-display", we compete to show others that we have a better life than they have. This often leads to frustration when we do not reach a certain number of "likes", and soon feel shabby.

I call on the youth to be more conscious and to work in silence. As I often say to my little brothers and sisters, "work hard until you no longer have to introduce yourself". This should be the motto of each and every one of us. We live in one of the poorest countries, where there are many diseases and critical problems such as extreme poverty and food insecurity. Many things need to be done, and if we want the world to change, we need to change some habits.

This advice came from a simple observation: When you post a good thing that happened--like getting a diploma, a promotion, a new job, or getting married)--very few people will "like" your photos or congratulate you. However, just post a photo in a heavenly place, with food all over, and the number of likes will explode.

Distancing oneself from social medias is a sign of maturity. It , but it also helps us to be discerning and able to distinguish the true from the false. Most



importantly, it's a good way to recognize those who care about us and those who claim to love us. I do not advocate self-erasing, but rather filtering what we share on social network websites. To know how to show oneself when it is appropriatenecessary, and also how to disappear when the time has come to do so, is very important.

I'll end by saying that "people do not interfere with you, just with what you do". Never forget that!.



Marie-Angèle Sorgho participates in a English Club at [Université Aube Nouvelle](#) in Ouagadougou. Marie-Angèle is passionate about macroeconomics and reading. Her motivational quote is: "There are no limits to what you can accomplish, except the limits you place on your own thinking."



MY Peace Corps Story

My Peace Corps story is a podcast and blog produced by Tyler Lloyd. While often cited as a positive, life-changing experience, service in the Peace Corps is not easy. This show strives to portray Peace Corps service as it is, both the good and the bad. The host of the show, Tyler Lloyd, served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Burkina Faso from 2012-2014 and would "gladly and proudly do it all again." The difficulties and risks of serving abroad, however, should not be understated or taken lightly. To learn more about My Peace Corps Story, visit the [website](#) or subscribe to the podcast via your favorite streaming service. My Peace Corps Story is reprinted with permission from Tyler Lloyd and the individual interviewed.



WHERE AND WHEN DID YOU SERVE? WHAT DID YOU DO?

I served as a forestry volunteer in Orodara and Dinderesso, Burkina Faso. The nearest other volunteer was in Bobo Dioulasso, 50 miles away by motorcycle over an unpaved washboard road and the Peace Corps office in the capital, Ouagadougou, was a very long-day's journey so I didn't have much support. The isolation was difficult for me.

I was supposed to start a tree nursery in Orodara with money from World Bank, but there were two coups d'état while I was there, and each time the World Bank suspended the funding. Also, my counterpart was to retire before my stay was up, and although he and his family were very kind and welcoming to me he had no interest in working with a naive 23-year-old foreign woman!

I spent a lot of time reading, watching birds and socializing with my neighbor women. I was waiting for work to do, and it took me a long time to figure out that I needed to make it happen on my own.

Eventually, I started a project with traditional beekeepers in several small villages, introducing a more productive kind of hive and encouraging them to market beeswax (which had previously been thrown away) to bronze casters and batik artists in Bobo Dioulasso.

My last 6 months I got myself transferred to Dinderesso National Forest and created work for myself that I loved. The forest boundary came right up to the limit of the second largest city in the country (Bobo Dioulasso) and human pressure on forest resources was tremendous. The national forest policy in 1984 was to blade the naturally biodiverse forest and replace it with eucalyptus plantation. Local people living in and around the forest were forbidden from gathering anything. Nevertheless, much of their food and household needs came from native plant species growing within the forest boundaries.

I carried out ethno/economic botany research and built a case for for the Forest Service to managing the natural forest with cooperation and participation from local people. In my isolation I was unaware at the time that I was part of a global movement to foster biodiversity. Interestingly, the national forest policy in Burkina Faso did, in fact, put an increased focus on management of the natural forest.

WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE PEACE CORPS MEMORIES?

Many evenings I walked with my neighbor Mariam and her oldest daughter at dusk when she went to deliver her husband's dinner to him. He worked as an overnight security guard a little bit out of town, over a small river and through some trees. We would keep him company while he ate, and walk back together in the dark. They were a happy couple and very kind to me. I enjoyed just being with them, and the walk there and back was peaceful and beautiful.

WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR LEAST FAVORITE PEACE CORPS MEMORIES?

I went to work a honey harvest at night in a village about 30 minutes away, so I stayed the night in the home of the family of the local man I was doing the project with. In the night he tiptoed into the room where I was



Continued on [page 13](#)

sleeping, expecting a place in my bed. I was scared and angry and started yelling at him, waking the household, and he left the room. In the morning in front of his family, he made some really flimsy excuse about how he heard someone trying to steal my motorcycle and came to alert me. He was trying to save face.

I regret that I abandoned the project in that village, but was so freaked out that it was the best I could do at the time.

WHAT DO YOU MISS ABOUT THE PEACE CORPS?

I always felt safe in Burkina, anytime, anywhere I went. When I came back to the US and moved to an American city, I had to relearn to be street smart again.

WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU LEARNED IN THE PEACE CORPS?

Living in Burkina taught me to live in a village, which taught me to live in a neighborhood. I have lived in the same neighborhood of same city since my return. In Peace Corps I learned that relationships with fellow villagers/neighbors are like arranged marriages: you don't get to choose your neighbors but making the best of those relationships can be rewarding. Peace Corps trained me to do community forestry work, something I didn't actually do during my service. But once I settled back home, I started a tree planting project in the neighborhood where I live, and over time we planted over 500 street trees. You can see the boundaries of my neighborhood now in satellite images, defined by its tree cover.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE QUOTE OR LOCAL SAYING?

Djula has so many wonderful blessings for every occasion. "Alla ka here bana", a blessing for when you see the sliver of new moon; it means "may it end in peace". "Alla ka aun kelen kelen wuli", a bedtime blessing that means "may we wake up one by one" (as opposed to an awakening where everyone bolts out of bed in response to some alarm).

AN UPDATE FROM JANET

I returned from Burkina and settled in Tucson Arizona, choosing that city because of its Burkina-like climate, rich cultural history, creative community and affordability. In the years since my return in 1984 I have been a truck driver, a food bank program manager, a historic home remodeler, an urban forester, a farmers market grower/vendor, a landscape gardener, a fine artist, a street artist, a landlord/property manager, and an instigator of pop-up interactive events in public spaces. I continue to reinvent myself.



Ambassador Kolker selects Raffle winner

RAFFLE WINNER ANNOUNCED

Former Peace Corps Country Director, Bob Siegel, offered FBF a one-of-a-kind vintage map of Burkina Faso to be raffled off during our Fall Fundraising Campaign.

This map, drawn by Robert Toé and based upon field research conducted by Guy Le Moal, outlines in impressive detail the various ethnic and language groups across the country.

The names of donors who made a donation of \$500 or above during our fundraising campaign were entered into a hat at the Projects Committee's February meeting.

Joy Mallory's name was selected. "I'm thrilled and honored. I look forward to its arrival and to showing it to guests since it will be displayed in a prominent spot chez moi!"

Lets congratulate both Joy and and Bob for their donations!



ABOUT US

Friends of Burkina Faso is a 501(c)3 nonprofit affiliated with the National Peace Corps Association. We maintain a **network** of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) and friends of Burkina Faso. We provide funding and assistance to **support projects** in Burkina Faso. We strive to **improve social interaction**, communication and information exchange. We **educate** others about the country and culture of Burkina Faso.

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Did you receive your membership letter?

Members should have received a membership letter in early April. If you did not receive yours, please contact our Membership Committee at: membership@friendsofburkinafaso.org



It takes a village (and perhaps a little wine): Membership Chair, Sali Greeley, recruited fellow Board members Kati McDonald and Aaron Buchsbaum, and true FBF partners, David Greeley and the wonderful Rose, to complete the Membership letter mailing. Thank you for all of your hard work!

Projects Committee



(Back Row L-R) Bony Porrogho, Tom Fox, Desire Bansa, Mead Over, (Middle Row) Suzanne Plopper (attending virtually from California), Katie Gehron, Anne Spear, Ambassador Jimmy Kolker, (Front Row) Drissa Dao, Bagassi Koura, Tom Vollrath

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