

BURKINA CONNECTION



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

2011 - No. 1



In this issue:

Tour Celebrates
50th
Anniversaries

FBF 50th
Anniversary
T-shirt

Project Updates

Stories from
Abroad

Learning the
Moringa
Markets

USAID Aids
Health in BF

Featured
Members



 FBF President Mike Lavoie with PCV Kathryn Siunaik in Meguet

TOUR CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARIES

by FBF President, Mike Lavoie, '75-'77

“Ned sa wobde yiu ka toogo yiim ybeog åsaag ye.”

“A person who savors the mayfly must not forget the morning rain.”

The Friends of Burkina Faso and I recently conducted a cross-continental tour with Peace Corps Burkina to celebrate Burkina Faso's and Peace Corps' 50th anniversaries. This self-funded tour occurred between February 7 and March 5, 2011. It could not have been better. The passion and determination of the current PCVs to carry out their work was impressive and inspirational, and even more so as they struggle through the challenges of recent troubles in Burkina. A thousand thanks to them and Country Director Shannon Meehan and the Peace Corps staff who were immensely welcoming and helpful. And even more thanks to the Burkina people who were everywhere gracious and giving.

The celebrations embraced not only Peace Corps' 50th, but also Burkina's 50th anniversary, intertwining their ideals of peace and independence. They included numerous audio and video connections between past

and present PCVs and Burkinabe friends of the Peace Corps, along with educational and other organizations in the United States and Burkina. The participation and exchanges between countless PCVs and RPCVs was awesome. Highlights of the tour included:

- A terrific celebration on March 1 hosted by the Mayor of Ouagadougou in cooperation with the Peace Corps, and the remarkable leadership and innovation of Shannon Meehan.
- A resolution from Central Michigan University recognizing the two anniversaries and donating \$1,000 to repair an ambulance in the Commune of Dargo where a celebration was held.
- A powerful Skype connection between pen-pal Brookside School kids in

continued on next page

TOUR CELEBRATES 50TH CONT'D



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To contact a member of the leadership team, please visit <http://fbf.tamu.edu>.

Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, and school kids in the village of Namtenga. Holding the laptop high to get a cell phone connection, we got a Skype connection that lasted less than one minute but long enough for the kids in each place to see each other and say, "Hi, I'm your pen-pal." Everyone said that this moment surpassed all the rest on the tour.

- A stirring "connection" with a retired Burkinabe colonel, named Daniel Sore Ouedraogo. In 1965, he received cross military training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. A judge named Fred Mester in Michigan, an ardent supporter of FBF, also had military training at Fort Bragg in the 1960s. To commemorate that "connection," a Fort Bragg coffee mug was presented to Colonel Ouedraogo.
- On March 3, in quiet commemoration of the Anniversaries, we "planted" a new swing set at an elementary school in the village of Meguet where PCV Kathryn Siuniak serves. She shared with the people of Meguet President Kennedy's 50 year old dreams for the Peace Corps.



 *The highlight of the tour, pen-pals connecting!*

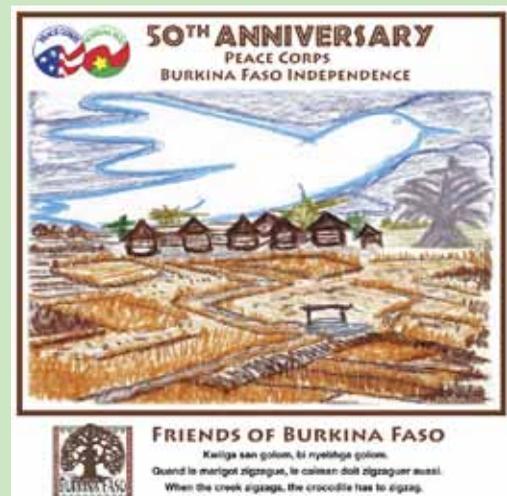
Please see the entire Report of the Tour on the FBF website. The 50th Anniversary celebration is not over. FBF and PC BF celebrations will continue through September 2011. We are involved in other Burkina events including preparation of RPCV surveys for information to go on the Ouaga Story Wall in September and for FBF activities in Washington on September 23-25. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will find information about these events. Please try to find a way to join us for the wonder and excitement of these historic events. 

FBF 50TH ANNIVERSARY T-SHIRT

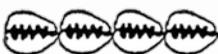
Our new 50th anniversary t-shirt celebrates the 50th anniversary of both the Peace Corps, and Burkina Faso independence. The white shirt features a sketch by RPCV Jon Berger, including a dove inspired by Picasso's *Blue Dove* floating in the clouds above, the FBF logo, and a Burkina proverb.

Show Your Support

All proceeds go to FBF and vital project work in Burkina. We encourage FBF supporters to wear their t-shirts proudly at the upcoming 50th Anniversary Peace Corps celebration in September.



T-shirts are \$21 including shipping. Purchase online with PayPal at <http://fbf.tamu.edu/shopfbf.php> or by check to Diane Fergusson at 912 Bonnie Blue Dr., Oxford, MS, 38655. Please make checks payable to FBF.



FBF PROJECT UPDATES FROM THE FIELD

SHEA A RICH RESOURCE IN THE PROVINCE OF SANGUIE

by Tom Vollrath ('67-'70)

The karité trees are part of the natural landscape in the savannah belt in West Africa where they have flourished for thousands of years. Traditionally, shea nuts have provided a source of sun protection and treatment for the common cold and arthritis in Africa. Today, karité butter, known as shea butter in the United States, is a highly prized ingredient found in many cosmetic creams in western markets. The karité tree is a rich, undertapped source of wealth in Burkina Faso. It provides an opportunity to empower women in rural areas to harness local resources and participate in the global marketplace.

The FBF Projects Committee recently agreed to fund a shea butter project in Tiogo, thanks to the success of the 2010 Fall Fundraising campaign! Suzanne Plopper, FBF treasurer wired \$4,825 to NOWON, enabling this Burkinabe non-governmental association to purchase a hydraulic press for the village of Tiogo. The mill will benefit members of the local shea-butter cooperative, called Zuna Dwa. The mill will also most assuredly benefit virtually all households in the community, as grinding millet and corn by hand for meals is an activity that consumes an inordinate amount of women's time and energy. It is possible that

an adjacent village will also reap benefits in the longrun from FBF's capital investment because the final proposal contains a provision for the establishment of a revolving trust fund based upon fees obtained from the use of the Tiogo mill. Proceeds from this fund will be used to purchase a second hydraulic press for the village of Bow.

FBF is very fortunate to have NOWON as a partner overseeing Tiogo mill project. This association has a cadre of intellectuals committed to promoting economic, social, and cultural development in the province of Sanguié. Cyr Olaf Bassolé, president of NOWON, and his colleagues shall be providing expertise and guidance to all aspects of the project, including identification of marketing opportunities for shea butter. Jean Baptiste Tondé, a local professional with eight years of experience working with a Belgium NGO, has graciously agreed to provide third-party feedback. Fortuitously, Drissa Dao (FBF manager) is a close friend of Jean Baptiste.

Click on the following You-Tube link to see why shea is considered to be the "light of West Africa," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqctZrJkFA8>.



 *Shea butter at a local market*



 *Shea nuts from the Karité tree*



FBF PROJECT UPDATES FROM THE FELD, CONT'D

Vegetable Gardening in Darigma

Last year, FBF provided funding (\$8,400) enabling APRODES, a Burkinabe non-governmental organization to purchase a pump and PVC pipes for a women's garden cooperative in Darigma near Lake Bam. Financing arrived after the rainy season. This presented a problem because the pipes, which had to cross neighbor's fields to reach the Darigma gardens, could not be installed while the sorghum was growing. The irrigated infrastructure was built following the harvest, but completion was too late for the women to establish their gardens. This year, the story is different. Boukary Kinda, président of APRODES, reports the garden cooperative of Darigma is a grand success. Members of the cooperative planted vegetable seeds in nurseries immediately after having harvested grains this past Fall. Fortunately, rain fell in abundance. The end result was bountiful production this February/March!



Members of Darigma

Pobe Mengao Library

Hamidou Konfe, Pobe Mengao's librarian, reports that despite security concerns in northern Burkina Faso, the Pobe Mengao library is functioning well and is fulfilling its promise. He notes that more students than ever are using the library since the opening of the new lycée this year. He also reports that adults come to play a card game, called lido. The library is turning into a heavily used community center.

NEEED

The girls whose education is supported by FBF are doing very well at all three levels:

primary, middle/secondary and post secondary. With continuing demand for girls' education in the region, NEEED is looking to increase the number of girls it supports next year at all three levels.

Primary School Pump: Koukouldi

The pump is primarily used by the school children for drinking and hand and feet washing. Roughly 610 students, across 7 classes and with 9 teachers, use the pump on a daily basis, Monday - Saturday. According to Moise Bado and PCV, Kerry Kelly, the community has assumed responsibility for the pump; and holds in high esteem Stephanie Slater, the volunteer who played an instrumental role in bringing it to the school.

Moise and Kelly hope to incorporate the pump into hygiene trainings and to use it to water the school garden in October 2011. The future garden on the school grounds will be used to produce nutritious lunches for the students throughout the school year. The pump is locked when the school is not in session, to prevent overuse and misuse.

The Besazuli Sulu Theatre Group

Funding from the Friends of Burkina Faso was used to pay for malaria and HIV/AIDS "debate theater," which uses humor and hyperbole based on real, village life experiences to engage the community through an interactive debate. Funding was used for food, travel, professional clothing, lodging, and musical equipment.

According to Lacina Bakoun, FBF's contact person for the Besazuli Sulu project, the 18-member theater troupe continues to create and perform skits, which focus on health and women's issues. The troupe is currently doing a theatre tour in three villages on prenatal health. They plan on doing an 18-village tour on malaria prevention.

The Moringa Enterprise

Nineteen members of the Moringa Network of Tenado continue to grow, harvest or buy, and ultimately transform Moringa leaves into powder and sell it in the Koudougou and

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FBF PROJECT UPDATES FROM THE FIELD, CONT'D

Ouagadougou markets. Under the direction of Joseph Bationo with assistance from PCV Chris Davis who replaced Ryan Gallagher, the Moringa plantation that was planted three years ago continues to serve as an income generating activity for the Moringa Network members. Bags are sold for 500CFA each and bulk orders are often sold to Peace Corps employees, the Tenado community, and a few individuals in Koudougou.

Davis is helping the group to diversify their product line by creating a Moringa powder salé, which includes salt, chili powder, and onion powder with the Moringa leaves, in an effort to sell the powder to a wider audience. Since Chris' arrival, the Bationo family has sold over 200,000CFA of powder, which equates to approximately 400 units. The young adults in the Bationo courtyard have started to conduct marketing research and type up their results. They are currently estimating price per sachet, and mixing the powder with other ingredients to increase the ease of consumption. They are also looking to place Moringa sachets in local health centers (CSPS) in the region.

Thanks to PC volunteers Emile Crofton and Andrew Lala and to FBF project managers Suzanne Plopper, Shenandoah Sampson, and David Noyes for providing information from the field about the above projects.

Notes:

- Emilie Crofton, who secured FBF funding for the Pobe Mengao library last year, decided to extend her Peace Corps service for another year. She relocated to Ouagadougou to work with FAVL and is coordinating reading camp activities in village libraries throughout the country. The aim of the camps is not only to improve literacy and writing skills, but also to show students that reading is fun and important.
- Andrew Lala is a PCV in Koudougou working with an association called VAREK (Valorisation des Ressources en Eau de Koudougou). VAREK's principle objective is to promote market gardening in 9 satellite villages spread from 30km south of Ouahigouya to 40km north of the Ghana border.



BELEHEDE LIBRARY OPENS

by Tom Vollrath ('67-'70)

PCV Charley Casler has proven to be effective in mobilizing resources for the Friends of African Libraries (FAVL). He had been instrumental in helping FAVL raise money in support of reading camps in Burkina last year. To learn more about these summer camps, visit <http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/summer-literacy-camps-in-burkina-faso/>.

Local leaders in Béléhédé approached Charley, requesting that he assist them to obtain funding needed to complement local resources for an envisioned library.

Village leaders agreed to repair an old storage facility to house the library and they designated

one of their own, Alou Koundaba, to be the librarian should the library become a reality.

Charley sought funding for the Béléhédé library from the Peace Corps Partnership Program as well as from the Friends of Burkina Faso. Once it became clear that a sponsor had been found to pay for Alou's salary for the first year of operation, the FBF Projects Committee chose to provide \$2,000 to equip the library with books. The library opened its doors this past April. FBF member, Drew Gower, will be closely following developments, including ongoing efforts to obtain additional funding from local resources to pay for the librarian's salary in future years.



STORIES FROM ABROAD

BLACK & WHITE

by Josh Shade, '76-'78

Joy Greenidge lived in our compound on the other side of the mango grove. She was an African American who had stayed on after her PC term was up. At that time she was dating Upper Volta's Ambassador to the UN. One couldn't go much higher on the social scale in Ouaga.

We liked Joy; she had a good sprit about her and was knowledgeable of local customs and life. One day we asked if she was ever going to go back to the States. She tilted her head and said, "Well, I could go back and be a poor, fat, black woman. Or I could stay here and continue to be a rich, beautiful, white woman; what would you do if you were me?"

She had made her point. She was staying!

We dropped by sometime later and she had company, a local woman with her 1-year-old son. Even 35 years ago my fingers itched to hold a baby and I asked if I could. Sure no problem, thanks and she thrust him into my arms. Rosa sighed and said, Whew, glad that went well, sometimes

Josh scares the kids. (The old "the nasara's going to get you" story come to life).

The young woman replied, Oh no, Yakuba is used to white people; we are over here with Joy a lot. We looked over at Joy who had a tight-lipped smile on her face and a twinkle in her eye that said, "See, I told you I was white." And we all laughed, but with only the 3 of us knowing why.

Africans didn't see color, they saw culture.

PostScript: We recently found Joy. She is well, living on the East Coast and taking a writing class. She edited this story.



 Josh Shade on a trip to Costa Rica

WHERE GENEROSITY HAS NO LIMITS

by Amanda Sweeney, '05-'07

Whenever I am witness to an act of generosity, I am reminded of the person who taught me the true meaning of the word. Just a handful of years ago I lived and worked with a Burkinabé family in Réo, Burkina Faso. Epema Kamouni took me in as a member of her family, and as partner to develop her tailoring business and non-profit association for the education of young men and women in the profession. I taught her how to set prices, and how to produce western quality products - she taught me everything else. As a widowed mother of five boys, Epema supported her young sons, aged nine to nineteen, with a her tailoring business. She too had been the recipient of

incredible generosity from a French woman who had taught her the art of tableau making. With a driving passion for her work, and an incredible degree of creativity, Epema turned her new skill into a marketable product. Her sons provided her with sketches from their schoolbooks, and Epema transformed them into colorful woven scenes of everyday life in Burkina. Her talent extended into her successful tailoring businesses in which she mentored three young women.

Epema, like me, called another village her home. She frequently visited her hometown a few miles west of Réo, and on one particular day she returned with an ill-looking young man who she introduced as our new guest. The next

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GENEROSITY Has No Limits, CONT'D

day I accompanied her and our guest to the regional hospital eight miles away for a medical consultation. The doctor recommended surgery. A few recovery days and sizable bill later, we returned to our compound where our guest spent his days doing small hand tailoring tasks under the shade of a tree. I gradually learned that Epema had never before met this young man she had brought into her home. She had seen him sitting alone, suffering under a tree day after day, and resolved to help him. I remember her justification for the growing medical bills, for her overwhelming generosity: "no one should have to suffer or be alone," she said, "not when I have the means to help." Our guest spent his last days in relative comfort in the presence of a loving family.

In the last few years, I have found that generosity has a sort of perpetual quality. On

a recent trip to Burkina Faso, FBF President, Mike Lavoie, acted in the same spirit of generosity that Epema so naturally embodied. Mike met with Epema's eldest sons Rodrigue and Jonathan, delivered photos from my recent wedding to a fellow Peace Corps volunteer, and facilitated a call between me and my host brothers. Through Mike's representation, I felt as if I too were there visiting with Rodrigue and Jonathan. It is difficult to express my gratitude for the opportunity to reconnect with members of my host family, but it's easy to see that generosity has no limits.



 Mike Lavoie, and Rodrigue and Jonathan Kamouni in Ouaga and on the phone with Amanda Sweeney



 Amanda with Epema and three of her sons in Réo

STORIES FROM ABROAD



SHARE YOUR STORY



The *Burkina Connection* is a biannual newsletter and a great source for information about FBF projects, updates from the FBF President, PC/BF Country Director and U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso, and a chance for RPCVs to reconnect.

One way you can contribute to the commemoration of Peace Corps' 50 years of service is to write an article about your experience as a Volunteer in Upper Volta/Burkina Faso for an upcoming issue of the *Burkina Connection*. If you are interested in sharing a story, please contact fbfnewsletter@gmail.com for more details. The deadline for the next issue is September 1, 2011. Photos are welcome and must be 300 dpi and include a caption.

LEARNING THE MORINGA MARKETS

by Chris Davis, '10-'12

The green branches have emerged again; circular green leaves peek out from barren trunks. With the arrival of the rainy season our Moringa fields have sprung back to life. When first arriving to my site of Tenado in September 2010, I didn't know much about Moringa aside from its highly nutritious content and ease of planting. Thanks to FBF, a giant field of Moringa trees sits in my backyard, tempting me to go out and stare.

During my first few months at site I jumped into research of Moringa, and found myself asking, "why aren't these trees planted everywhere in Burkina?" I began by attending a few Moringa information sessions in neighboring villages, testing their knowledge of the tree, and seeing if they'd be more willing to use it as fresh leaves or in powder form. Most people had heard of Moringa but were stumped as to where they could find it. They were surprised to find that trees had been planted for years in their village already, and it was up to the local volunteers to help emphasize the use of these leaves over the less nutritious ones.

The FBF project in Tenado was initially for propagation of a dried powder made from the

leaves as a source of revenue. The powder works well in the more health-conscious urban market, but at the rural level it has proved difficult to convince someone to purchase the value-added product. The market has been split into two, urban and rural, and it's been exciting to adjust marketing strategies for each. Burkina's regular use of "sauce" leaves led us to adapt our Moringa



marketing to fit their demands. It's a winning situation even if people in Tenado are using the fresh leaves more often, and they'll most certainly pluck the leaves if they're

available in their own courtyard.

With the new rains come 1,000 new Moringa seeds planted in portable containers to be given as gifts and prizes within the local community. Powder production is also ramping up again. We'll be working with another Peace Corps volunteer in Ouagadougou to distribute the powder in urban environments, and by the end of the year we'll have established direct sales connections between the Tenado producers and retailers in the capital. The Tenado Moringa field has been a wonderful opportunity to spread the word of this extremely healthy product with those that could most benefit from it.



LET'S STAY CONNECTED!

'LIKE' US ON FACEBOOK

Check out our new Facebook page for updates on FBF activities, projects, and events. "Like" us and join in on conversation, information and photo sharing, and keep up-to-date on Burkina news.

EMAIL LISTSERV

Receive the latest news, RPCV information, and take part in conversation on the FBF email listserv. This forum is a great place to look for travel partner, and information for planning return trips to Burkina, sharing interesting articles about Burkina, and engaging in discussion with other FBF members.



USAID AIDS HEALTH IN BURKINA

Although the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) does not have a full Mission in Burkina Faso, USAID has been providing important funding and technical assistance for health activities to improve health outcomes for the Burkinabe population. USAID's primary health activities cover malaria, reproductive health and family planning, and neglected tropical diseases.

Malaria

In 2010, its first year of malaria funding in Burkina Faso, USAID provided \$6 million for malaria activities. USAID implementing partners conducted activities to reduce morbidity and mortality due to malaria through four key interventions: distribution of insecticide treated bed nets (ITNs), indoor residual spraying (IRS), intermittent preventive treatment of pregnant women (IPTp), and efficacious treatment for malaria case management. USAID's implementing partners developed an integrated malaria training package and trained 165 district-and regional-level trainers, who in turn trained 390 health care providers. This training covered IPTp, malaria laboratory diagnosis, and case management. With USAID support, IRS was conducted in Diebouyou District, protecting more than 118,000 people. USAID also contributed technical assistance and 150,000 ITNs to a mass distribution campaign, which began in September and aims for universal coverage of the population. In addition, 950,000 rapid diagnostic tests were purchased and delivered in July 2010 and 1,100,000 doses of sulphadoxine-pyremethamine for IPTp were purchased and delivered in May 2010.

Reproductive Health/Family Planning

The international conference, "Population, Development, and Family Planning in West Africa: The Urgency for Action," held in Ouagadougou on February 8 - 10, 2011 represented an unprecedented government-private collaboration on population and family planning issues in West Africa. The President

of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, officially opened the conference, which provided a forum for governments and donors to identify jointly concrete solutions to meet the need for family planning in the region and to further understand the links between population and sustainable development. Delegations attended from eight Francophone West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo). The conference was hosted by the government of Burkina Faso and was funded and organized by the French and U.S. governments. Other donors included the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Major outcomes of this historic conference included:

- **Extraordinary high-level political support:** President Compaoré not only opened the conference, but on the second day he invited a select group of U.S. and French government representatives, donors, and country team representatives to meet at the presidential palace. President Compaoré pledged his continued strong leadership in Burkina Faso and at the regional level.
- **Strong financial and technical support from a new partner in family planning:** the French government pledged 100 million Euros for family planning over the next 5 years and committed to putting health specialists with skills in family planning programs in each of the countries where they will be working.
- **Concerted action:** each country delegation developed an action plan for strengthening family planning programs and policies in their countries, focusing on the priorities that will most rapidly advance their programs.
- **Strong statement of commitment:** the country participants also issued a call to action, called the *Ouagadougou Declaration*.

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USAID AIDS HEALTH IN BF, CONT'D

Highlights include systematic integration of reproductive health and family planning into national development plans and strategies for economic growth and poverty reduction, and; reduction of maternal mortality and unmet need for family planning by 25% by 2015 for the West African Francophone region.

- **Formalization of donor commitment through creation of an active partnership:** the donors also issued a joint statement of commitment and devoted a fourth day to develop plans for improving donor coordination and providing support at the country and regional levels. They also are finalizing joint guidance to countries for action and developing a country matrix showing donor contributions.

Neglected Tropical Diseases

USAID has supported the government of Burkina Faso to implement its National Integrated Neglected Tropical Diseases Control Program (National NTDCP) since 2006, which covers schistosomiasis, trachoma, onchocerciasis (river blindness), lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis) and soil-transmitted helminthes (three types of intestinal worms). In recent years, Burkina Faso has made significant progress and achieved nationwide coverage for each of these diseases with the exception of trachoma. In 2010, approximately 12.6 million people were treated through USAID support. In March 2011, Helen Keller International (HKI) was awarded a USAID-funded \$2.5 million two-year project to support the Ministry of Health in Burkina Faso (MOH/BF) to implement the National NTDCP. 

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



 *Eitenne Yonhy, Member & Drissa Dao, ABURWA Liaison*



 *Shenandaob Sampson, Projects Committee Member*

MEMBERSHIP

PCVs JOIN FREE FROM BURKINA

PCVs, you are invited to join Friends of Burkina Faso before you even leave the country! We want to help you stay connected before, during and after your return to the states. Visit the FBF website at <http://fbf.tamu.edu/join.php> to sign up for free.

THE NEW E-NEWSLETTER

Burkina Connection is now an E-Newsletter! To support the elimination of mandatory membership dues, the bi-annual newsletter will now be published only in electronic format. Please visit the FBF website for the latest edition of Burkina Connection.

SUBMIT A PROJECT PROPOSAL

Are you looking for funding for a project in Burkina Faso? The FBF Projects Committee encourages proposal submissions early for consideration at the beginning of the year.

