



BURKINA CONNECTION

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



2020 Vol. 2

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YATENGA GIRLS ROCK IN EDUCATION

By Suzanne Plopper, '67-'69



Primary education teacher trainees (left) and university students (right) sponsored by FBF donors.

*There is no tool for development
more effective than the education of girls.*

Kofi Annan, former U.N. Secretary General

What a school year it has been (at the end of last year and so far this year) for children everywhere. According to Global NEEDED Burkina (formerly Association NEEDED), all schools in Burkina Faso closed in early April out of an abundance of caution when it became apparent that Burkina had cases of COVID-19. The Ministry of Education planned a phased re-opening, giving initial priority to students in their exam year to return in early June, followed by other years. For most students, the school year ended at the end of August. All 40 FBF-sponsored university and teacher training students (from 2017-2019) successfully completed their studies last year, contributing to the steady and superlative 98% success of these amazing scholarship recipients whose educational opportunities depend solely upon the scholarships they receive. Year-end evaluations of midwifery students will be completed in mid-November.

The current school year began in early October with in-class instruction. In keeping with Burkina Faso's goal of improving the quality of midwifery services and extending midwifery services to more rural clinics, Global NEEDED requested, and FBF agreed, to prioritize midwifery scholarships again this year. Thanks to our many generous donors, this year's scholarship recipients include: three university students (studying civil engineering, English and modern literature), six

Continued on p.2



young women studying midwifery, and four in primary school teacher training. We are most grateful for your continuing support for scholarships for young indigent women.

Classes have resumed at the Lycee Moderne de l'Amitie (LMA) with 792 students this year. Students come from rural and indigent families, with approximately 50% of students coming from nearby villages formerly covered by the Lambs Support Girls' Education Project which enabled young girls to enroll in primary school. Over the past six years, an average of 80% of LMA students passed year-end exams compared with 37% of middle/secondary students nationwide. As one student commented, "The Lycée Moderne de l'Amitié is an establishment that provides us with many important things in life, as well as in our learning at school. We learn respect for others, discipline, a sense of responsibility, success and self-control."

Donations to Friends of Burkina Faso designated to noon meals at the LMA continue to support school lunches for these students at a cost per student of only \$.45/day, \$9/month, or \$77/school year. This school year, thanks to generous donors, we are supporting lunches for 183 students.

Despite the disruptions caused by COVID, our postsecondary scholarship recipients and the students at the LMA have persevered and successfully completed the school year. We are proud to welcome the additional 13 young women beginning their postsecondary studies this school year.



Global NEEDED President, Lacine Sawadogo, pictured with midwifery students.



What's your story?

We are looking for content for our newsletter and blog.
Send your submissions to
newsletter@friendsofburkinafaso.org.

This holiday season you can support us when you shop!

Shop for everyone on your list at smile.amazon.com.
You shop. Amazon donates.

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STAY IN THE LOOP

Recent headlines about Burkina Faso

- L'Ambassadrice des Etats-Unis Sandra Clark est arrivée au Burkina Faso
- WHO provides a guiding light for Burkina Faso's COVID-19 pandemic response
- Surrounded by war, Burkinabé civilians have votes taken away
- These West African Herders Are Using AI To Find Food For Livestock
- Burkina Faso election: Opposition leaders Diabré, Zida register as candidates



Fall Fundraising Letter

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Deadline for submission is **December 20, 2020**

PLEASE SHARE WITH YOUR FRIENDS & NETWORKS!

The FBF Projects Committee is currently accepting proposals for consideration for 2021 grant funding.

Projects must be related to community development or humanitarian assistance.

For more details and application guidelines in English and French, visit our [website](#).

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS](#)

Member Meeting Survey

Our next virtual Member Meeting to be held in late January 2021*.

Please help us plan the agenda and content you would like to see by completing this brief survey:



ENGLISH



FRANCAIS

* Date, time, and connection details will be shared via email and Facebook in early January.

PRESIDENT'S YIRI

Mes amies,

I hope this note finds everyone in good health. The blessing 'wend na n kond laafi' (with apologies for any mis-spellings) rings very true today.

I risked opening up the news as I sat down to write. In both the US and in Burkina, it seems one has to sift through many headlines before finding something positive. We are, unfortunately, too-fascinated by tension; I'd even agree with the old journalist adage "if it bleeds, it leads".

But FBF is not here to paint grim pictures of our world. If you're reading our newsletter, you know of the challenges, and I think you're also interested in ways to get people to a better spot than they're currently in.

So, let me take the opportunity to make sure you read the fruits of [our most recent fundraising efforts](#). If you've not seen our [Facebook posts](#), those are absolutely worth a look as well so you get a sense of who we (you) supported. And, as the brief *rappports* that have come back to us show, your contributions reached not only people who need *un coup de main*, but also a variety of organizations, some of whom have only recently been formed and are reaching very specific groups of people.

As a small organization, FBF can take the "risks" (in quotes because, let us be honest, most of us managing and/or contributing to these initiatives have stable and safe lives) of working with smaller or newer groups and hearing directly what they worked through or learned. I'm a big believer that project management skills are a huge asset for Getting Things Done in General. The idea that we are helping different groups flex their muscles does give a twang of pride.

Finally, with this humanitarian response work, I'm glad the Projects Committee has agreed to expand the types of programs FBF is willing to fund. It's what the times demand of us. More information on that front is available in a [recent project letter](#).

We'll have a lot more chance to discuss this and other thoughts with you directly in January, when we plan to hold an open Member Meeting. It's been quite a while since the last one, and we hope you'll take our survey in [English](#) or [Francais](#) to let us know how it should flow.

Toujours ensemble,

Aaron Buchsbaum, '08-'10
FBF President





Emergency Humanitarian Relief Fund

AN UPDATE

By Caroline Chambre Hammock, '02-'04
and Kristen Combs-Bicaba, '98-'01

In March, FBF launched a special humanitarian assistance fundraising campaign. This campaign came about after robust discussion on both the Projects Committee and Board levels about the increasing level of displacement and hunger taking place within Burkina, including first-hand reports received from project partners and contacts in-country. In order to move quickly, the Board decided to both raise funds and collect proposals simultaneously. A call for proposals went out with a goal of reaching grassroots groups on the frontlines addressing emergency needs, and FBF members were encouraged to spread the word to their networks.

At the same time, fundraising efforts began, appealing to members and friends through email, social media, and the Global Giving crowdfunding platform.

Friends, supporters, and other donors responded very generously to this special campaign, ultimately raising \$60,000 in just two short months! The Board also worked quickly on a parallel track to vet and review project proposals. Seven proposals were received, and five were subsequently chosen for funding. (One proposal was submitted after the submission deadline, and the other, while a worthy cause, was outside the scope of the campaign's purpose.) Funds

were disseminated quickly to the chosen recipients in order to get the resources on the ground as quickly as possible. Three of the five groups funded have submitted final reports to FBF, as well as photos depicting the impact of funds received. The remaining two are pending finalization.

The FBF Board is deeply grateful to all those who responded so quickly and generously to this special campaign. Read below and on the following pages to learn more about how the funds were deployed by these grassroots groups and how your support helped make a difference.

CROIX ROUGE ZOUNDWEOGO Gogo & Bindé

DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD AND NECESSITIES TO IDP IN THE VILLAGES OF BINDÉ AND GOGO



Challenges

- Rice in short supply when borders closed due to Covid. To manage the situation, boutique vendors negotiated with their suppliers to procure enough rice for distribution.
- Accessing villages for distribution during the rainy season, changed distribution site from Bindé to Kaibo to make it more accessible, asked recipients to meet in larger centers for distribution, coordinated with local government entities.

Lessons Learned

- In carrying out this project we learned that it is necessary to cultivate more solidarity between men.
- We also learned that **we don't need a lot of money to relieve a human being in difficulty**. We say this, because during the distributions the joy could be seen on the faces of beneficiaries and local authorities.
- Through this project, we have learned that being a humanitarian activist imports real meaning to the lives of Burkinabé.

Funding Received

\$5,150

Population Reached

197 host families,
including over 800 women and
children

The Croix Rouge Zoundweogo contributed approximately \$600 to the implementation of this project for incidental expenses not taken into account in the original budget, thus ensuring that all funds received from FBF were used to support the target populations.

GLOBAL NEED

Ouahigouya

DONATION OF FOOD TO IDP IN OUAHIGOUYA

Funding Received

\$25,150

Population Reached

422 households, including 641 women, 536 men, and 1777 children

Challenges

Global NEEDED noted populations who did not receive supplies were upset at being left out of the distribution, highlighting the extensive need in the area.

Lessons Learned

With the implementation of this project, Global NEEDED Burkina has further consolidated its knowledge in the field of humanitarian assistance and the management of people in distress. It was a matter of providing them with support while ensuring that we did not commit any act capable of undermining their dignity. The preservation of the dignity of these people is fundamental.

Global NEEDED partnered with a wide range of decentralized government entities. The Governor's representative presided over the ceremony to distribute the donated supplies.

Global NEEDED is a long-term partner of FBF, overseeing our Girls' Education programs since inception.



The final report for the activities in Sebba is still pending. A change in village-level partner at the start of implementation caused a delay in execution. Information from the final report will be included in the May 2021 newsletter. In the mean time, here are a few pictures from activities in Sebba.

ASSIST 50 YOUNG GIRLS IN OUAHIGOUYA

Association Impact Jeune's proposal was unique in that it not only aimed to donate food items to IDP, but also included awareness training on two important themes: personal hygiene for young women and gender-based violence.

Each of the 50 girls benefited from a mat ("natte"), a bucket, a toiletry kit, and a kit of reusable sanitary napkins for menstruation. In addition to these materials, the girls received an allocation of food (rice and sugar).

Funding Received

\$1,175

Population Reached

50 girls from 48 households

Challenges

The change in costs and/or unplanned costs were the principle challenges encountered. Impact Jeune was able to negotiate costs with vendors and received contributions from the local Action Sociale office and school to complete the project.

Lessons Learned

- Our association has strengthened its experience in the execution of projects financed by donors. We followed the whole process from the drafting, submission of the proposal, the planning and implementation until reporting, all with a focus on the deadlines at each step.
- The association has improved its internal system through various monitoring, reporting and archiving tools. This will help ensure better capitalization of our achievements.
- In addition, the realization of this humanitarian project allowed us to improve our experience in humanitarian assistance. We had run a small internal fundraiser which was limited in the past, to handing over our donations to local government departments for later distribution to the IDP. However, with this current project funded by Friends of Burkina Faso, we went further by having direct contact with IDP, and this allowed us to learn more about the realities of the humanitarian world.
- We learned a lot of the procedures to follow to get buy-in from local and government partners which are oftentimes inexplicit.



PROGRESS & CHALLENGES AT BILINGUAL SCHOOL IN SINGOGHIN

By Tom Vollrath and Désiré Bansé



(Left) A CEP classroom, (Right) Mr. Rene Millogo and some Singoghin students

These are tumultuous times in Burkina Faso. The country is struggling to contain a growing jihadist insurgency that has stoked ethnic tensions. Burkina Faso is also trying to stem the spread of the COVID-19. The government imposed travel restrictions in early March and closed schools to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus. On May 11, it ordered school administrators, directors, and teachers to assemble in their own jurisdictions to discuss and develop plans for re-opening schools for the remainder of the 2019-20 academic year and to adjust curriculum plans for the 2020-21 academic year.

Complicating matters is that the country is in the throes of launching national elections in accordance with the Burkina Faso Constitution. Elections are to take place on November 20. Unfortunately, large segments of the population will not have an opportunity to vote, as areas in the North and East are effectively in lockdown mode due to terrorism concerns. As a result, the next government may not be viewed as legitimate in villages where citizens did not have an opportunity to cast ballots.

Yet another area of concern is the long-rising tension between farmers and herdsmen due primarily to land becoming increasingly scarce. In

1965, the population of Burkina Faso was four million. The Burkinabé population has grown more than five-fold since then and now is 21.5 million. With the decline in the availability of land per person, competition for usufruct rights to land use is increasing, most notably between traditional pastoralists (i.e. nomadic ranchers) and farmers who till the soil. In some communities, herdsmen and their families have become quasi-sedentary. As a result, societal norms and behavior are changing.

Today, for example, Fulani herdsmen in the government-designated pastoral area Singoghin are not only raising cattle but are also developing an ambitious dairy enterprise. They hope that their children will be able to go to school, become literate, and gain an education. According to Father Maurice Oudet, who has spent the last 55 years living in Burkina Faso, the Fulani have changed their outlook. After working in the periphery for centuries due to their herding activities, the Fulani are increasingly interested in becoming more fully integrated into the larger society.

FBF helped fund construction of the (Fulfulde/French) bilingual school beginning in 2017. The school opened its doors to its first class of students in the 2018-19 academic

year. As additional funding became available, construction expanded, enabling a second class of students to be enrolled for the 2019-20 academic year. In October, a third class of students was enrolled in the school for the 2020-21 academic year, despite concerns about safety given threats of terrorism and the coronavirus.

The first of two envisioned school buildings is now complete, with the exception of an electric lighting system for one classroom. Installation is scheduled to begin November 23rd. The foundation for the second building, modeled after the first, has also been completed. The construction goal for 2021 is to build one classroom in the second building to accommodate a third class of students the following academic year.

We applaud the courage and fortitude of efforts to forge ahead and complete the originally envisioned learning center within the next two to three years.

Désiré and I are hopeful that FBF will again be willing and able to lend a helping hand with additional financial support in 2021!



2020 PROJECT SUMMARY: NEW CROP PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES TRAINING

By Leslie Berger, '81-'83

The AIVDPL project targets women farmers ensuring that over 50% of the participants are women in an effort to improve women's access to training in improved farming techniques.



Friends of Burkina Faso has continued to develop its relationship with the grassroots non-profit organization Appui aux Initiatives pour la Valorisation Durable du Potentiel Local (AIVDPL) working together to train farmers in improved crop production techniques. The aim of this project is to engage and train rural farmers on the potential yield benefits that may be achieved using improved crop inputs (a combination of improved seed and locally produced manure), and training in crop management techniques. The project targets women farmers ensuring that over 50% of the participants are women, in an effort to improve women's access to training in improved farming techniques. The project has focused on four crops including maize, rice, cowpeas, and soybeans, with trainers meeting with farmers at selected points in the crop year to advise on best practice techniques for planting, fertilizing, and treating pest and disease.

Since the start of this project in 2017, the AIVDPL team has worked with more than 1,000 farmers across 48 villages in the Zoundweogo province. Yield calculations taken in each year from the demonstration plots and from a selection of farmers' own fields have shown significant increases. This past year, the program reached nine villages and 225 farmers, with nearly 60% being women farmers. The farmers participating in this project produced 165,517 tons of food, thus boosting their household incomes and improving food security in their communities.

A recent development this year has been the participation of Mr. Delwendé Innocent Kiba, a Soil Scientist from the University of Ouagadougou. Mr. Kiba has taken part in several training sessions in the villages and has been meeting regularly with the project team, farmer participants, and local officials. We are currently exploring options to work with Mr. Kiba on a research project to assess the nutritional value of the manure being used by the farmers and its impact on soil properties.

The work of the AIVDPL team on this project is gaining a certain notoriety in the regions of intervention, which is leading to increasing demand for the expansion of this project into neighboring villages and municipal authorities. FBF Board Members are exploring new sources of funding to finance further expansion.





PEACECORPS.GOV

You Never Know Where Peace Corps Will Take You

Kom ka ye, teng ka ye (no water, no village) was a common prov...

"You Never Know Where the Peace Corps Will Take You" is a short essay written by George Hutchinson ('75-'77) for Peace Corps in celebration of its founding in 1961. To read Mr. Hutchinson's essay, click [here](#).



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LET'S BE BRAVE ABOUT WHO WE ARE

By Etienne Yonly

I don't know about you, but no matter your racial background, it's hard to not feel on trial in America these days. Let me start by saying that I am Black because it may color my views. Let's be brave about who we are.

These days, it's tough to not feel that one's race is constantly on trial, no matter your place on the spectrum. For me, the trigger is the BLM signs. I see them left and right when I am walking or biking in my neighborhood every day. I know, I have a nice neighborhood! I do tell myself though: This is about me! My life matters to someone? I say thank you in my heart and I keep going. I even wonder...am I supposed to get a sign for my lawn too? Then, I remind myself that I don't like to talk about myself. Seriously, I can talk about myself on Facebook, but I always feel like I share less when you are actually in front of me. It feels like bragging, although I know it's just socializing for most. I actually share certain information on Facebook so I don't have to say it to you in person when you are in front of me. This way, I am not bragging.

I always finish my walk by telling myself that BLM signs are more than just about me. But before that conclusion, I also ask myself how many people really mean the message on the signs or how many people are actually implementing the message in their lives? And wouldn't it be great if they are all living up to the message on their signs? It's nice and interesting to hear everyday that your life matters. No more pressure to buy expensive cars, shoes or clothes to raise your profile for some. Maybe money can be saved for education, health...

It should be nice and interesting to see your race on people's bedroom windows and lawns. I have never lived in a place where racism and discrimination are on that many lips, shirts, lawns, screens and speakers. I know it's luxury from where I am and I feel grateful. But I also know that we all have a lot to do.

--

Etienne Yonly is a Burkinabe-American who lives and works in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. He is originally from Tansarga in eastern Burkina Faso in Tapoa province where Etienne's father is the village chief. Etienne is a long time member of FBF who is currently serving as Membership Officer on the FBF Board. He previously served as the President of ABURWA (Association des Burkinabé de la Région de Washington, D.C.). In his professional life, Etienne works at USAID as a Senior Contracts and Grants Specialist. Etienne believes in and promotes diversity.



ADD THESE BOOKS TO YOUR READING LIST



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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MARAHABA

By Miriam Cahill

Thank you moon
For teaching me that your light
is magical
And makes for the best
flashlight on a dark night
Especially while eating mangoes

Thank you mountains
For teaching me to appreciate
every breath in my lungs
And the muscles in my legs
pushing me up
And showing me that no
mountain is too tall

Thank you ocean
For teaching me to always keep
a friend beside me
In case of big waves or riptides
And for me showing the
wonders of the world beneath
the waves

Thank you sun
For teaching me that no matter
how hot the heat is
I can stand it
And for always making me smile
with your warm touch

Thank you rain
For teaching me that if there is
no rain there are no flowers
And for making me appreciate
how utterly important
And lucky we are to have water

Thank you taxis and buses
For teaching me that you can
build a community anywhere
Even inside a mode of
transportation
And for showing me to be
patient with the never ending
marriage proposals

Thank you market
For teaching me the importance
of quality time
And the beauty of watching life
move along
And how food can always always
bring people together

Thank you food
For teaching me the beauty of
spending long hours preparing
a meal together
And for putting real meaning to
"mula weke ufa weke" (if you
eat alone you die alone)

Thank you fields
For teaching me that every
single body, no matter how
small, has a vital role to play
And that no matter what, work
goes on
But it should always be done
together

Thank you people of Comoros
For teaching me the real
meaning of selflessness,
generosity, and community
And for showing me endless
love and joy in anything you do.

--

Miriam Cahill is a Hanover College graduate with a degree in Elementary Education and Spanish. She spent 3 months as an Education Volunteer in Burkina Faso, before being evacuated when the Peace Corps program closed in 2017. Miriam reapplied and began a new Peace Corps journey in Comoros as a secondary English teacher. She was nearing the end of her service when Peace Corps Volunteers were evacuated due to COVID-19. To read more about Miriam's Peace Corps journey, visit her blog at <https://miriamcahill.wordpress.com>.

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