

BURKINA CONNECTION



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

2011 - No. 2



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50TH ANNIVERSARY



PEACE CORPS
BURKINA FASO INDEPENDENCE



FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

Kwilga san golom, bi nyebhga golom.

Quand le marigot zigzague, le caïman doit zigzaguer aussi.

When the creek zigzags, the crocodile has to zigzag.



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PRESIDENT'S YIRI

by Mike Lavoie, '75-'77



 *Da sake ti a na yi zaalem ye. - Do not accept that it leads to nothing.*


The bookends of FBF's celebration of Peace Corps' 50th Anniversary were the Cross-Continental Tour in Burkina in February-March 2011 and the Washington DC celebrations on the weekend of September 23, 2011. You already know about the Burkina Tour from the last newsletter. Let me now touch on the special events which recently occurred in Washington:

The Friday reception was held at International Bar in the Washington Plaza Hotel. I'd like to share the insights of FBF guest, Jim Gehrke who is one of my law firm partners:

"I wasn't sure what to expect when I accepted the invitation of Mike Lavoie, my law partner, to attend the FBF reception. I knew it was a celebration of 50 years of independence (and of the Peace Corps) but I knew little about the country and less about the former Peace Corps volunteers who would be attending. Wow, was I in for a pleasant surprise. I now know that Burkina Faso is a poor country by some measures but immensely rich in others. It is a country of genuinely energetic people who are committed to seizing the opportunities presented to improve their collective lives. The former volunteers, ALL wearing wide smiles on their faces, again and again spoke of the tremendous people they had met and worked with in Burkina Faso. These volunteers offered stories of how these experiences were transformative, mostly for themselves,

and made them better people with a fuller understanding of what is, and is not, of real importance. Perhaps most striking was the warm feelings that everyone at the reception had for one another and the little country that had changed them so much."



 *Jon Berger, holding 50th celebration art work, with Bagassi Koura and FBF members, Friday night*

Saturday morning came with the Great FBF Gathering at All Souls Unitarian Church. First, special thanks to Tina Shaffer, 50th Committee chair, and Elizabeth Fox who organized the event. The esprit de corps and good cheer from some 70 RPCV's and guests was thrilling. John Sneed's and Denny Fitzpatrick's account of FBF's rich history got the fever started. Then came an exciting telephone Skype connection to current PCV's Kate Andreovich and Hilary Figgs along with PC Country Director,

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PRESIDENT'S YIRI *continued*

Shannon Meehan (be sure to read their articles in this issue). They were simultaneously celebrating PC's 50th with a Fair in Ouaga that featured a Story Wall of more than 50 PCV memories and photographs from 1967 to present. Thanks to recently returned PCV Tim Moss for saving the day by fixing the internet connection.

Then came a revealing account of how the civil unrest unfolded in Burkina during the last year from journalist Bagassi Koura. We concluded with Tom Vollrath's amazing report of FBF's major projects over the recent years.

The Saturday Evening Peace Corps GALA Burkina's Ambassador to the United States, Mr. Seydou Bouda and the Charge D'Affaires, Pascal Batjobo, attended with me and fellow well-digger and great FBF website master Guy Fipps. We shared the history of our relationship and the special connections that occurred that very morning. Our guests were also introduced to Peace Corps Director Williams and the Master


of Ceremonies, Chris Matthews. The Ambassador summed it all up in a message he sent a couple days later: "Many thanks. You (FBF) shall be always welcome in Burkina Faso and Embassy in DC."

The Sunday Parade of Flags


The NPCA hosted a memorial service in Arlington National Cemetery followed by a Parade of Flags across Arlington Memorial Bridge. Coordinated by Peg Hausman, FBF walked to the Lincoln Memorial to celebrate Peace Corps in Burkina Faso. Every FBF participant had a chance to carry the Burkina flag.

Throughout the weekend there were repeated offers from RPCV's to join in FBF activities. We will take them up on those offers. Thanks to that spirit and all those that participated in the celebration and activism of this 50th anniversary! We go on to the next 50 years recharged and more passionate than ever about the Peace Corps dream and our commitment to see it to reality.




 Peace Corps 50th anniversary story wall in Ouaga




 MSNBC host, Chris Williams, addresses the audience at the Peace Corps 50th gala event



 Catherine Alston proudly waving the BF flag with a group of very happy FBF members



 FBF President Mike Lavoie, PC Director Aaron Williams, Burkina Faso Ambassador to the USA Seydou Bouda, Charge d'Affaires Pascal Batjobo

PRESIDENT'S YIRI



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SHANNON'S NOTES FROM THE FIELD

by Shannon Meehan,
Country Director

In 2011, the U.S. Peace Corps celebrates its 50th anniversary! From September 22 to 24, 2011, Peace Corps Burkina Faso celebrated this anniversary with a series of events held at the Maison Du Peuple in Ouagadougou.

We marked the opening ceremony of our three-day festival for the 50th Anniversary with a Swearing In Ceremony for our newest volunteers. This opening ceremony was honored by the presence of His Excellency the Prime Minister of Burkina Faso, Mr Beyon Luc Adolphe Tiao, who pledged to support Peace Corps Volunteers during their two years of service in community development. Mr Tiao stated that he is happy to be their godfather, *le par rain*.



 All the best to the newest Burkina PCVs!

During the opening ceremony, 48 trainees from the DABA (Developing Abilities in Business, Agriculture and Environment) sector and the Education sector took their oath of service. This ceremony marked both the end of 11 weeks of technical and language training as well as the beginning of their two years of service to Burkina Faso.

The Bike Tour “*Sur Nos Velo, Pour le Faso*”

From August 31, 2011 to September 22, 2011, Peace Corps Volunteers traveled 1875 kilometers on their bikes, from village to village. This bike tour was a springboard to raise funds in the United States for Gender and Development projects throughout Burkina via the Peace Corps HQ website. At key villages throughout the *Tour de Faso*, the volunteers performed trainings and awareness campaigns on: HIV/AIDS, malaria

prevention, reforestation, and hygiene, etc.

This cycling tour is called “*Sur Nos Velo, Pour le Faso*” which means “On Our Bikes, For the Faso”. The bike tour ended in Ouagadougou on September 22, 2011 at the Maison du Peuple. The cyclists had the honor of being welcomed their arrival at the Maison du Peuple by His Excellency, Mr Beyon Luc Adolphe Tiao, Prime Minister of Burkina Faso.




 The cyclists' arrival at the Maison du Peuple

Fiftieth Anniversary Fair

A three day fair was held in the favor of the 50th anniversary from September 22 – 24, 2011 in the big courtyard of the Maison du Peuple. Peace Corps staff and volunteers set up booths highlighting Global Peace Corps history and Peace Corps Burkina history, emphasizing the work and the achievements of the volunteers with their partners. More than 50 volunteers showcased



 Prime Minister, Bryon Luc Adolphe Tiao visiting booths at the PCV 50th Anniversary Fair

their work, with their community counterparts, on income generation, health, food security, and educational activities. There were also local

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SHANNON'S NOTES FROM THE FIELD *continued*

vendors who came to present their items for sale, local food, and local drinks. A carnival for kids provided a variety of fun games, interesting gifts to win, and washable paint on the face or arms. The fair was an opportunity for awareness activities on health, malaria, moringa, and soap making. There were dance performances, a fashion show with volunteers and their community members, sports activities, and more. Access to the fair was free for the public.

The fair gave the opportunities to United Nation volunteers, Burkina Faso National volunteer agency, Japanese volunteer agency and other volunteering groups to showcase and publicize their work to the people and inform people about the tenth anniversary of the UN Volunteering program.

The celebration ended successfully with the First Lady of Burkina Faso, Chantal Compaore, on September 24, 2011 at the Maison du Peuple.



 Volunteer food security committee at the fair

Peace Corps recognized by a song from the famous Burkinabe artist, Floby

The famous Burkinabe artist, Floby, generously accepted to honor Peace Corps fiftieth anniversary by composing a song about Peace Corps. Floby unveiled this song at our closing ceremony with the First Lady. All the invitees, especially Peace Corps Volunteers, were very much excited and moved to hear the new song. That same night at the Maison Du Peuple, Floby gave a large concert for the public to discover as well this song and celebrate the 50th anniversary of Peace Corps.



 First Lady Chantal Compaore at the closing ceremony

Peace Corps Burkina is very grateful to the authorities of Burkina Faso, the President Blaise Compaore, the First Lady Mrs. Chantal Compaore, the Prime Minister Adolphe Luc Tiao, the Ministers, the Mayor of Ouagadougou Simon Compaore, for their continuous supports to Burkina Peace Corps Volunteers and for making the celebration a success.



BELEHEDE LIBRARY UPDATE

by Tom Vollrath, '67-'70

Krystie Austin is a third year PCV who is working with the Friends of African Libraries (FAVL) in Ouaga. She visited a number of reading camps in Burkina this summer, ending with a stop in Béléhédé where FBF had provided financial support this year. Krystie reports that the summer camps were very successful. The children were given lunches everyday and each child received a t-shirt. Each participating library was given a couple of copies of an HIV/AIDS and maternal health book.



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BELEHEDE LIBRARY FIELD UPDATE *continued*

RPCV Charley Casler, who oversaw developments of the library in Béléhédé for FBF, describes his “whistle-stop tour” back to his work site, just prior to his COS:

I just got back from a whistle-stop tour of the northern villages, which allowed me to say some final goodbyes to friends in Béléhédé as well as to get a first look at their new library. Peace Corps has been requesting permission from the U.S. Embassy for months now for me to visit my former community in order to see the library that I've spent much of my Peace Corps service working on and to say goodbye to the village that welcomed me into their community as a Girls Education and Empowerment Volunteer two years ago. The embassy finally gave the go-ahead and I couldn't have been more thrilled by the chance to see my old friends and site one last time before heading home.

I left early yesterday morning with my friend Marita, a fellow Peace Corps Volunteer, and François, our FAVL driver who in another life would have been a NASCAR legend.


We arrived in Béléhédé in the early afternoon and were greeted by Alou, the librarian, and a library full of children and adults coloring, reading, and playing scrabble. While the library isn't even completely renovated yet, it is already operational and drawing enthusiastic crowds. I was thrilled to hear from my friend Pahitiba that she had checked out a resource manual on HIV/AIDS and has been showing it to all of the women who come into the community health clinic where she works. I also spied out on a table a copy of one of the children's books that we'll be using at the summer reading camps.

Outside under the shade of a large tree a group of adults, on break from work at the elementary school and health clinic which neighbor the library on either side, were playing scrabble. Alou had been asking me for a couple of weeks to send up a dictionary and when I handed him the one I'd brought with me he told me it would be of great use in their competitions - hopefully they'll also share it from time to time with students studying for exams.



 *Charley Casler in Béléhédé*



 *Béléhédé students hard at work in the library*



OUAGA 50TH ANNIVERSARY FAIR

by Hilary Figgs, PCV

In downtown Ouagadougou the Maison du Peuple was a melting pot of people and cultures as volunteers from all over the country gathered with their counterparts, local organizations, dance troops, theatre troops, friends and host families. A cross-continental collaboration, the PC Burkina Faso's 50th Anniversary Fair was an event showcasing the collaboration between volunteers and their Burkinabe counterparts, and the accomplishments that have been achieved in the years since the first volunteers arrived.

Rows of stands representing volunteer supported organizations sold items such as flip flops made of recycled materials, nutrient-rich Moringa supplement powder, local and organic mosquito repellent lotion made from shea butter and the leaves of a local tree, hand-woven fabrics, and homemade soaps. Among these stands were also informational booths, covered in project ideas (durable cloth picture books about malnutrition for illiterate women, HIV/AIDS Soccer Camps, etc.) that Volunteers had implemented in their villages.

The Fair provided an opportunity to connect with local motivated counterparts, with other Volunteers, with local organizations and resources,



as well as with those people in the United States who helped support this Fair and make it possible.

On the final day of the Fair we were able to have a phone conference with Country Director Shannon Meehan, Fair Committee Chair Kate Andreovich, Volunteer Action Committee Member Hilary Figgs, Friends of Burkina Faso President Mike Lavoie, and over 60 RPCVs who were attending the celebration in Washington D.C. It was amazing to be able to share the result of fifty years of hard work and service across international lines. The volunteers currently in country and the RPCVs at home share a powerful link, and the mutual work and support that went into the celebration of this hard work, service, and personal connection makes me proud to be a current PCV in Burkina Faso.



SHARE YOUR STORY



The *Burkina Connection* is a biannual newsletter and a great way for members to share information and stay up to date on all things Faso. One way you can contribute 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. Photos are welcome and must be 300 dpi and include a caption.

OUAGADOUGOU 50TH CELEBRATION




THE CELEBRATION CONTINUES!

by Kaitlyn Brown, '08-'10

As a recently returned Burkina volunteer, I was thrilled to experience the dynamism of Friends of Burkina Faso. The FBF Board and 50th Committee's leadership and enthusiasm for Burkina were apparent through the wonderful weekend of events. Hats off to Mike Lavoie and the committee for spearheading the successful gatherings and to FBF leadership for your continued dedication to FBF committees!


At the Great FBF Gathering at All Souls Unitarian Church, we were honored to hear from Bagassi Koura, a Burkinabe journalist



 Mary Kay and Kaitlyn at the 50th celebration in DC

living in Washington DC, who explained the recent turmoil in Burkina. The audience welcomed the insight of such an expert.


The FBF events over the weekend provided unique opportunities to exchange with other BF RPCVs about the evolution of our beloved Upper Volta/Burkina Faso. I particularly enjoyed meeting the dynamic Upper Volta 1 cohort and learning about PC life in Burkina at the beginning.

On a personal note, the most valuable aspect of the weekend was spending time with my good friend Mary Kay Landis and seeing her continued enthusiasm for the Peace Corps. Mary Kay and I served in Burkina together; I began at the age of 24 while Mary Kay kicked off her lifetime goal of Peace Corps service at age 67. Mary Kay was an exceptional Peace Corps Volunteer who quickly earned the respect of her community and fellow volunteers. Before I met Mary Kay, I felt that joining the Peace Corps was a "now or never" decision. Now, I am inspired to re-enroll in many years to kick off my retirement. I continue to admire her determination to make the world a better place and support of the Peace Corps. 

FBF IS HERE FOR YOU

by Josh Gwinn, '08-'10

Upon arriving on at the International Bar on a wintry rainy day (at the time, I had returned from Burkina a month earlier, so all days of September were wintry), I stepped into a bar, not knowing what to expect. Sure, I had some expectations such as the "international" bar selling ice cold Brakinas or So b. bras. Alas, there was no reunion with those friends, but I did meet Mary Kay Landis, which was the first time I had seen her since she left B.F. in 2010. This is the beginning of what became a wonderful night of reunions and meeting new faces. I met folks that served during different times that spanned Peace Corps's 50 years. Whether it was Denny FitzPatrick, Ouargaye '68-'69, or Guy Fipps, near

Dori, '75-'77, a PCV who served in Nakaba or someone who served in Koudougou, the bond that we all had was to have a passion for our Burkinabe brothers and sisters and a great admiration and respect for all 150+ current volunteers. This is what I learned FBF was all about, which is something, regrettably, I did not know as a PCV a short time ago. To the current PCVs: Friends of Burkina Faso is a group you can look to for assistance with projects or for support. They admire what you do, though in some cases there is a hint of jealousy, and they have all done what you are doing. They are always eager to help you in all the work that you do, so please, reach out to FBF and invite them to share in your success. 

FBF MENTORING



Do you remember returning to the states and feeling a little out of place? Would you like to help recent RPCVs learn about the field in which you work? As we all know, entering back into the states can be an intimidating process. FBF is collecting information on prospective mentors to help our newest RPCVs. Please send Kevin Sweeney an email at kevinsweeney23@gmail.com for more information if you are interested in mentoring.

THOUGH FBF, SERVICE CONTINUES



A ceremony for the distribution of scholarships to girls in the Yatenga region was held October 15, 2011, in the presence of national, regional, and local leaders. NEEED was hailed by government officials for all it has contributed to the promotion of girls' education in the region, particularly for village girls whose families have no other hope of sending their daughters to school.

The Regional Director of the Ministry of Housing and Urbanism, who sponsored the ceremony, declared that there is good reason to maintain hope for the attainment of millennium development goals if other organizations and communities would undertake activities such as those taken by NEEED and villagers in the Yatenga.

A representative of the secondary school girls proclaimed, "Without this assistance from Association NEEED and its partners, many girls would be destined to domestic work, field work and to be given in marriage at a young age. Many girls, women of tomorrow, would have no possibility to contribute to the development of Burkina Faso."



 Traditional King of the Yamtenga people, with cane

In closing the ceremony, Lacine Sawadogo, Program Director of NEEED, declared that "In this 21st century - a time of globalization - the education and training of children is proving to be indispensable. It is essential to give them the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute efficiently, effectively and responsibly in the struggle against poverty and social exclusion. We must undertake innovative initiatives to provide access to education for all children of Burkina, to

ensure progress toward sustainable socio-economic development."

NEEED's 2011-2012 student enrollment

We are proud to be partners with NEEED in supporting the following educational endeavors this school year.

At the primary level

600 girls were enrolled in first grade in 26 village primary schools this year, thanks to scholarships (first-year school materials and a lamb) offered by Friends of Burkina Faso (300), Rotary Club International in collaboration with Rotary Club Ouagadougou (120), and partners in Germany and Austria (180).

At the middle and secondary levels

850 students (76% girls and 24% boys) began the school year in 17 classes at the Lycee Modern de l'Amitie, with lunches supported by Friends of Burkina Faso and the Stern Stewart Foundation in Germany. Problems for rural girls finding lodging in town has led to NEEED building and equipping 3 municipal combined middle/secondary schools in the region to enable some girls to attend school closer to home.

At the post secondary level

For the second year, FBF is honored to partner with the Milton and Beatrice Wind Foundation and with the Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas Foundation to support the post secondary education of recent secondary school graduates. Collectively, we are supporting 7 girls this year: a university student studying medicine, a midwifery student, 2 nursing students and 3 primary teaching students.

Bonus Day

In support of the Lambs for School Project (for the enrollment of girls into primary school), FBF participated recently in a Bonus Day fundraising campaign with GlobalGiving (www.globalgiving.org). All together, donors contributed \$3384 that day which earned us \$1015 in bonuses for a total of \$4399 for the day. Given that it costs us over \$25,000 to help 300 girls start school each year, everyone's participation in this Bonus Day was greatly appreciated.



NEW DECADE, NEW POSSIBILITIES

by Tom Vollrath '67-'70

The FBF Projects Committee will enter its second decade in 2012. To date, we have collaborated with 12 non-governmental organizations and provided assistance in support of 23 different kinds of projects. These achievements would not have been possible without your financial and moral support. FBF family and friends have raised more than half-a-million dollars for community-based projects in Burkina Faso, thanks to the generosity of project donors. Special tribute is also due to all who have served on the Projects Committee. The commitment, time, and energy Committee members have devoted to FBF's outreach program has truly been remarkable and is critical to the future success of this program.

It may be time for changes in the membership, leadership, and possible orientation of FBF Projects. There is so very much latent talent and good will within our community! The challenge is how to make good use of the accumulated knowledge, expertise, and energy of our members. Acting collectively, there is much that FBF can accomplish to provide new opportunities for Burkinabé in Burkina Faso and to improve the quality of their lives. During the celebratory weekend of the Peace Corps' 50th Anniversary, several individuals identified innovative ideas

about how our organization could further assist development efforts in Burkina Faso. Some conveyed interest in participating in FBF's outreach program. I would, therefore, like to issue a call for new and renewed membership to FBF's Projects Committee.

If you have an interest in serving on the Projects Committee in 2012, let your views be known! Send an email to fbf.projects@gmail.com. Let us know what interests and talents you could bring to table, what ideas you would like to see materialize this next year, and what role(s) you would like to assume. Shortly after the new year, I'll arrange communications with all current as well as prospective Committee members who express an interest in FBF Projects.

FYI, the Projects Committee will be making funding decisions in February, following our end-of-the-year fundraising campaign, about incoming proposals using criteria outlined in our updated project evaluation manual. The manual identifies guidelines and directives for grantees developing proposals and for Committee members selecting projects for FBF support. English and French versions of the project manual can be found by going to <http://FBF.tamu.edu/projects.php>.



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.



PROJECTS COMMITTEE UPDATE



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2011 TREASURER'S REPORT

Project contributions and Disbursements

Contributions	
Unrestricted donations	\$ 3552.50
NEEED Lambs Support Village Girls' Education (Includes \$8988.65 through Global Giving)	\$11,759.32
NEEED Lycee lunches (includes \$20,436.67 through GlobalGiving)	\$20,587.39
NEEED Post secondary training project (funded by two partners)	\$21,085.00
Total	\$56,984.21
Disbursements	
Belehede village library	\$ 2,000.00
NOWON grain mill	\$ 5,450.00
NEEED Lambs for School Project	\$25,667
NEEED Lycee lunches	\$25,000
NEEED post secondary education	\$15,333
Total	\$73,450
Project expenses	
Wire/Western Union charges	\$140
Photocopying and postage	\$ 34.52
Total	\$174.52
Balance (2011 to date)	-\$16,640.31

Organizational Income and Expenses

Income	
FBF memberships	\$1674.33
NPCA memberships	\$1155.00
Newsletter donations	\$ 164.33
General organizational donations	\$ 310.00
T-shirt sales	\$ 822.53
Total	\$3816.20
Expenses	
Membership letter	\$ 137.46
NPCA affiliation	\$ 90.00
NPCA rebates	\$1960.00
T-shirt production and postage	\$ 307.30
Peace Corps 50 th – Burkina PCV events	\$1025.00
Peace Corps 50 th – FBF brochures	\$ 121.92
Peace Corps 50 th – gift certificate for event speaker	\$ 150.00
Peace Corps 50 th – FBF meeting refreshments	\$ 255.07
Other	\$ 26.71
Total	\$4073.46
Balance 2011 (to date)	-\$256.26

2011 TREASURER'S REPORT



2011 TREASURER'S REPORT

continued

Explanatory notes:

Organizational Income and expenses:

- The difference between NPCA incoming memberships and membership rebates to NPCA: in January of each year, we rebate NPCA for memberships paid through FBF in December of the previous year
- The excess expenditures vs income will be met by a reserve from previous year


Project income, disbursements and expenses:

- The three NEEDED projects (Lambs Support Village Girls' Education, Lycee lunches and post-secondary education) are supported only by funds donated specifically for these projects.
- So far, more has been spent on projects this year than we have received during the year. Fortunately, we have reserves to cover the expenditures we have made.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



 *Congrats to Meg (Kronberg) and Bobby Hart!
Joined by a group of RPCVs from '04-'08*

CELEBRATE WITH FBF!

Land a new job? Getting hitched? Is a future PCV on the way? Please share your celebrations in the Burkina Connection. It's a great way to stay in touch. Submit your big news, great successes, and all things sharable to: fbfnewsletter@gmail.com. We'd love to hear from ya!

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.

