

BURKINA CONNECTION



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF BURKINA FASO

2012 - No. 2



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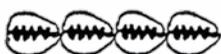
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LAPTOPS CHANGE LIVES AT KOUDOUGOU HIGH SCHOOL

by Tom Vollrath '67-'70, Chair of Projects Committee

In 2001, the Lycée Provincial de Koudougou (LPK) obtained 12 computers from a Canadian NGO. With the aim of imparting basic computer skills to high-school students, Allain Gnabahou spearheaded the development of LPK's computer-literacy curriculum. Its focus is on typing, mouse/keyboard exercises and fluency with the Microsoft Office Suite products (i.e., Word, Excel, Powerpoint, and Publisher), and it offers an introduction to internet research.

To help LPK with this program, the Burkina Faso government asked the Peace Corps to send the high school a volunteer to teach computer science classes and to help refine the computer curriculum. The Peace Corps obliged, assigning PCV Emma Hunter of Oak Park, IL, to the school. Last March, Emma submitted, on behalf of LPK's program, a proposal to FBF requesting assistance that would increase the number of computers available to students in the classroom.

Emma gained lots of insight from having

taught computer literacy to 110 students during her first year of service. Here are some of observations she shared with us when applying for the FBF grant: "I have personally seen students' self-esteem rise when they verify an English translation online that they had done by themselves at home. I have seen the end-of-the-school-year projects of students who have taken computer science and those who haven't, and those students who have invariably, have more and better information, as well as better presentation materials. I have seen students create flyers for group meetings, for family members' businesses, wedding invitations, etc using the skills they learned in my computer classes. In addition, the students who have a real interest in computers have asked for information that surpasses my own knowledge, and I have been able to help them find other Burkinabé who have the expertise they need. One of my former students told me he is going to

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



PRESIDENT'S YIRI

by Mike Lavoie, '75-'77

**“Rabeem yoka maam ti m kenge n ti tu boko n bus maam talentwa.”
“Fear took hold of me, I dug a hole and buried my talent.”**

Now is the time to think about FBF leadership! Under the new bylaws, FBF will be electing its new Board of Directors in April 2013. The Board is now expanding to nine members with eight officer positions, including President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership, Projects, Technology and Communications. Please consider whether you have the qualifications, experience and talent to make a meaningful contribution to FBF. If you do, and I believe there are hundreds of former Burkina Peace Corps volunteers who have what it takes, please consider bringing your talent to the FBF Board.

The path is clear. First, you must be sure that your membership is renewed between now and March 31, 2013. Membership renewal notices should come out with the annual project fundraiser letter in November and then again in January. Next, in early April 2013, all renewed members will be invited to consider and submit their nomination for service on the Board, without needing to specify a particular position on the Board. The election will follow from there. Once elected, the nine Board members will then convene to match each member with a specific office. The term of service will be 3 years.

Please don't let your prior level of FBF activity control what you believe



 FBF President Mike Lavoie, '75 - '77

you can contribute. Indeed, I can tell you that while I'd been active for many years with Burkina projects and activities, it wasn't until 2010 that I ratcheted up my formal involvement. With nine Board members, including eight modern-day officer positions, there's a wide range of opportunities calling out for your innovation and activism.

Whether or not you seek to serve on the Board, on behalf of FBF, I ask that you please accept our gratitude for your renewed membership, interest, and many contributions to FBF. Please contact me if you have any questions or suggestions about the upcoming election process. This is the first time we're doing this under the new bylaws, so your patience and understanding is appreciated. Thank you for making FBF great!



KOUDOUGOU LAPTOPS (CONT)

by Tom Vollrath, '67-'70

university for computer science as a result of taking and succeeding in my course. The LPK administration is well aware of the necessity of these courses, and has financed repair work and upgrades on these computers, even though they were not required to do so. Everyone involved with the computers at [sic] the LPK school see them as a huge benefit, and is extremely interested in expanding the scope of impact that these computers can and have had on the student population.”

By chance, Emma’s friend, PCV Katie Andreovich, spoke to her family back home in Michigan about the innovative computer program at LPK. Her Dad, Paul Andreovich, a computer technician at Lawrence Tech University, saw an opportunity to help out. Paul contacted FBF and informed us that not only could he obtain recycled laptop and All-in-One computers from the lab at Lawrence Tech, but that he was willing to refurbish these computers and install appropriate software.

Project Approval and Its Envisioned Impact

On May 15, 2012, the FBF Projects Committee met to discuss the LPK Computer Expansion proposal. We elected to support this initiative and to collaborate with the LPK faculty, PCV Emma Hunter, and Paul Andreovich in Michigan to address logistical and technical challenges. Committee-member Desiré Bansé agreed to assume leadership of this initiative, serving as FBF’s project manager. Funding was approved to cover the shipment costs of computer equipment to Burkina Faso. We also agreed to purchase needed hardware accessories (i.e., French keyboards, cables to attach the laptops to desks, etc.) and to buy French-version software,



 Project consultant Bony Porrogho

(i.e., Windows 7, Adobe, MS Office Suite). Fortunately, FBF forged an alliance with TechSoup, a non-governmental organization that provided FBF with software at greatly reduced prices.

On June 8th, FBF president Michael Lavoie accompanied Paul Andreovich to the local post office in Michigan and posted 24 boxes of computer equipment with installed software to Burkina Faso via the U.S. Postal Air. Interestingly, 20 of the boxes arrived in Ouagadougou on June 10, well beyond the July 7 estimated date of arrival but, fortunately, before Emma’s close of service in late July. It was not, however, until September that we were informed that the last of the four remaining boxes had arrived at LPK!

Reflecting on the likely impact of the additional computers added to the school’s inventory at the point of her departure in July, Emma wrote, “With the addition of these computers, in one school year (October to May), 560 students will be taught by the replacement PCV Ethan Heppner. If the school decides to formally hire a second IT teacher, this number can easily be doubled to around 1200 students a year. This means that the project will allow between 5600-8000 students to be taught this general curriculum over the lifetime of these computers.”

Fortuitous Developments That Presage Success

1. Allain Gnabahou continues to work at LPK, integrating the computers FBF sent to the school despite
- continued on next page*



 Emma with exceptional IT student, Casimir



PCV SOCIAL MEDIA PROGRESS

by Elijah LaChance, PCV, ICT Committee Chair

Dear Friends of Burkina Faso,

On behalf of the Information and Communication Technology Committee at PCBF, I would like to update FBF on several ongoing developments.

1) We have just launched our new Twitter feed! The feed is @PeaceCorpsBF. Please follow us and pass the word on to other RPCVs. The Twitter feed will be a continuous update on activities going on in sites around BF, especially larger events such as Camp G2LOW, the Bike Tour, etc. We will also share scenes from village life.

2) We are in the process of expanding our social media presence. A Facebook page and a Flickr account are in the works. Their arrival will be announced on Twitter and on our website, www.pcburkina.org.

3) Our YouTube feed will shortly be switching to Vimeo, a more professional platform that works more easily on computers here in BF. The new Vimeo account, like the old YouTube feed, will be accessible from the website.

4) Speaking of the website, feel free to send us updates for the page on the site dedicated

to Friends of Burkina Faso. We have not received anything since the 50th Anniversary Fair, and we would love to post updates.

5) Since our videos thus far have been of inconsistent quality, we have requested professional-grade video equipment with which to document future events and to produce training videos for new PCVs and villages (for example, a video showing all the steps of soap-making in local language). PCBF is supplying most of this equipment, but a computer for video editing is beyond their budget. The country director, Jill Zarchin, will soon put out an appeal for funds from the public in order to purchase this integral piece of equipment. Please let us know if you know anyone who would be interested in helping us capture the PCBF experience for the world and in facilitating the services PCVs provide their communities in this manner.

Sincerely,

Elijah LaChance, PCV
ICT Committee Chair
Diele, Burkina Faso



KOUDOUGOU LAPTOPS (CONT)

starting a new job at the university in Koudougou.

2. Julian Sanou, the principal of LPK, hired Mahamadou Ziba to replace Allain to lead the IT program at the high school.

3. The Peace Corps assigned Ethan Heppner to replace Emma Hunter at LPK.

4. FBF established good relationships with both Mahamadou and Ethan following arrival at their new jobs. The most recent report from the field informs us that LPK is nearing completion of the computer setup and that computer classes are scheduled to begin at the end of October.

5. Desiré continues to cultivate connections with the Burkinabé community in D.C. He has orchestrated meetings with the Ambassador at the Embassy involving FBF Committee members. He has also enlisted

participation by his friend Bony Porrogho.

6. Bony Porrogho comes to the project with very valuable experience and knowledge, having installed computer networks in Africa and worked with internet service provider Onatel in Burkina Faso. Currently, he is designing IT security systems for the International Monetary Fund in Washington D.C. Bony is providing valuable insight about how to optimize high speed and broadband connectivity to the internet at LPK, given the financial and constraints.



FBF project manager Desiré Bansé provides additional insight into the LPK project on page nine.





PCVs PROMOTE LITERACY WITH FAVL

by Krystle Austin '09-'12

Throughout the months of July, August and September 2012, 14 Peace Corps volunteers helped run a series of reading camps organized by the Friends of African Village Libraries (FAVL) at 11 village libraries in Burkina Faso. Two PCVs, Krystle Austin ('09-'12) and Antoinette Yost ('10-'12), helped organize, seek funding for and recruit fellow volunteers for the camps. Volunteers acted as camp counselors and joined teams composed of FAVL activities coordinators and librarians, local elementary school teachers and library assistants. Before the camps began, the PCVs took part in a one-day training at the Peace Corps office in Ouagadougou, where they learned how FAVL reading camps work and studied the role of volunteers in the activities. At least two PCVs were able to participate in each week-long camp.

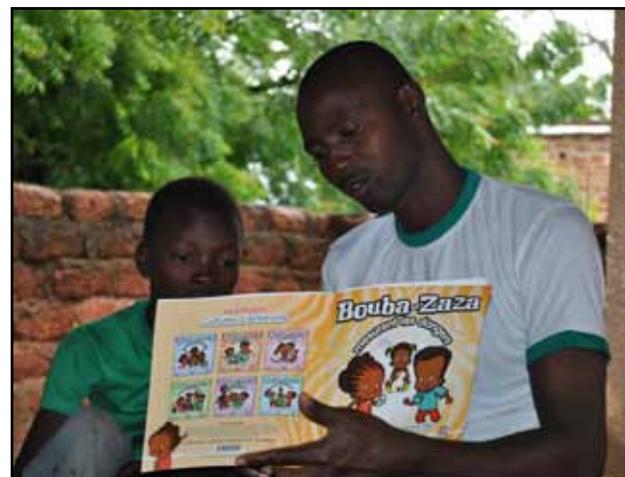
FAVL was created in 2001 by Michael Kevane and Leslie Gray, both professors at Santa Clara University. The organization helps to both establish village libraries and manage them in the long term. There are currently 11 FAVL-established or -affiliated libraries in Burkina Faso, 3 in Ghana and 1 in Tanzania. FAVL also works with the Uganda Community Libraries Association (UgCLA) in Uganda. Reading camps have been an annual event at village libraries since 2008. In 2011 and 2012, with the help of generous donors, FAVL was able to hold camps at all 11 libraries in Burkina. This year, 25 CM1 (4th grade) students were invited to each of the camps, for a total of 275 campers.

The camps address two major problems in Burkina Faso: extremely low literacy rates and overcrowded classrooms. The low student-facilitator ratio lets students receive individual attention that it is impossible for them to get at school. Students who are about to take the middle school entrance exam get a chance to develop their reading skills before the new school year starts. The schedule also includes arts and crafts activities, which are designed to foster the kids' creativity and to show them that reading can be both educational and fun.

Each participant receives a free one-year subscription to the library in order to encourage

them to keep reading even after the camp is over. Librarians often invite the 25 students to follow-up activities to reinforce those that took place during camp.

The PCVs who participate in the camps bring a lot of ideas and enthusiasm with them. The activities and games they contribute to the camps often become a part of the libraries' weekly activities and the methods teachers use in the classroom in the coming year. For example, in 2011, Julie Ryan ('10-'12) showed the kids at the camp in Boni how to make an anti-mosquito cream out of cheap local products, an activity she had learned in her Peace Corps training. The librarian in Boni later demonstrated the process for the seven other librarians and two coordinators in the region, who did the activity with groups in their own villages. It has now become an income-generating activity in the area for women who learned how to make it and have begun selling it in their communities.



 FAVL participants enjoying a good book together

Children in the reading camps are split into groups based on their reading levels. Separate activities are planned for the students with the weakest reading skills, who often cannot read the alphabet or write their names. Alison Wallace ('10-'12), a volunteer in Béréba, where the very first FAVL library is located, worked closely with Regional Coordinator Dounko Sanou on techniques for kids with extremely low reading levels. She showed him how to use flashcards

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PCVs PROMOTE LITERACY WITH FAVL (CONT)

to teach the alphabet and to show kids how to break words into syllables to make reading easier. Dounko continues to demonstrate these approaches to camp counselors and encourages their use with the lowest-level readers at the camps.

Volunteer participation is beneficial not only for the Burkinabè participants, but for the volunteers as well. PCVs often return to site after camp, armed with new knowledge and techniques, and begin literacy clubs at local elementary schools.

PCV participation in the reading camps is part of an ongoing partnership with Peace Corps Burkina Faso. FAVL worked with volunteers in the villages of Niankorodougou (2009), Bougounam (2010), Pobé-Mengao (2010) and Béléhédé (2011) to help them establish community libraries, and PCVs often consult FAVL staff on how to manage their own library projects, from buying books to training librarians to setting up account books. Since 2011, FAVL has had several PCVs working full-time at its headquarters in Ouagadougou and Houndé to help organize activities and to seek partnerships with the Burkinabè government and other local organizations.

The reading camps have a big impact on the participants. In his camp evaluation, the librarian in Béléhédé commented that he wished all kids in CM1 could participate because each year, the kids who participate pass the entrance exam at the end of next school year. A volunteer who participated in the camp in Dimikuy remarked, "It's sometimes difficult to see an immediate change in the students' reading levels, but I noticed certain behavioral changes. For example, Fataf [a camp participant] learned to write down difficult words while he reads to look them up later. One day, he even came in with a list of three words to look up. This habit will help him a lot to improve his reading skills. I also noticed an increase in the self-esteem of many students."

In 2013, FAVL hopes to find enough funding to organize camps at 12 village libraries in Burkina (a 12th FAVL library is near completion in the village of Ouargaye). This will enable FAVL to help another 300 elementary school students to develop these priceless skills. To learn more about the reading camps, see more photos or contribute to next year's edition, please visit the FAVL website at www.favl.org.



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.

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-Burkina-Faso/244815659456>

EMAIL LISTSERV

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

<http://fbf.tamu.edu/listserv.php>



NEEED: GIRLS CONTINUE TO EXCEL

by Suzanne Plopper, '67-'69

Young girls enrolled in school through the **Lambs Support Girls' Education Project** continue to excel, demonstrating their intellectual capacity, determination and hard work. In the 2011-2012 school year, **89.1%** of these girls passed the exit exam at the end of primary school and qualified to go on to middle school, compared with 63% of all primary school students in the northern region of Burkina Faso. This is the highest level of achievement for "our" girls since FBF began supporting them in 2002. This year, FBF was able to support 300 6-year-olds entering school in 13 villages. Eight other partners are supporting another 300 girls from 13 additional villages. All of these villages are new to NEEED's Lambs Support Girl's Education Project.

We're beginning the third year of the **Post Secondary Education/Training Project**. All 20 students we have supported in the past two years have successfully completed their coursework to date. One student completed her second year of law school at the top of her class. Others are studying medicine, midwifery and nursing, or are in primary school teacher training. This year, thanks to continuing and generous support of our partners, we are able to support 13 additional girls in post secondary education and training. NEEED just received scholarship funds from German donors for university educations for six recent graduates of

the *Lycee Modern de l'Amitie!*

In August, the FBF Projects Committee agreed to support a new project proposed by NEEED: the **Construction (replacement) of Village Primary Schools** in the Northern Region. The Provincial Director of Primary Education has stated that the government is unable to replace more than a very few of the over 300 village primary school classrooms in the region built by villagers out of banco and thatch. Many are in very poor condition. NEEED's goal is to replace up to ten schools over the next several years. The choice of schools will be based primarily upon the condition of the existing village school, the number of students attending the school and community commitment to an in-kind contribution to the construction of a new school. The total cost of replacing a village primary school, including the construction of a 3-classroom building and office/storeroom, a deep-bore well, a small canteen and latrines (as per government policy) is approximately \$73,000. FBF funding for this project will depend entirely upon our ability to raise funds designated specifically for primary school construction. Thanks to a donation from an FBF member, we are able to partner with another NEEED donor to fund the construction of two village primary schools, in Dougouri Ouidi and Koeneba, this season. We will continue to seek funding for the replacement of additional village schools.



 NEEED seeks funding to construct a primary school in Koeneba, replacing the current banco-thatched roof building

NEEED UPDATE



ASHOKA FELLOW'S YOUTH PROJECT NEAR PABRÉ

by Tom Vollrath, '67-'70

Last spring, FBF financed the launch of René Christophe Ouedraogo's youth project focused on nursery and forestry plantations. FBF member Kaitlyn Brown, who worked with Ashoka fellows during and after her term of service with the Peace Corps, is overseeing this initiative for FBF.



 Ashoka Demonstration Plot

Now back in the States, Kait recruited PCV Emily Forsyth Queen to help monitor developments of this project from the field. Emily inspected Christophe's records and reports that 150 youths (120 boys and 30 girls) have planted tens of thousands of trees within the Bendatoege zone. She noted that Christophe's action plan was not strictly followed in terms of the variety of trees he had envisioned the youths to plant. The majority of saplings planted near the nursery and on youth plantations were eucalyptus trees. Relatively few jatropha, acacia, and fruit trees were planted. The shortage of seeds available in the market following the arrival of FBF funds constrained implementation of the plan.



 Project leader René Christophe Ouedraogo



 First cut of a eucalyptus tree

Despite this shortcoming, the project has gotten off to what appears to be a reasonably good start, as is evident from a reading of Christophe's annual report. Moreover, Emily's informative site visits and numerous Skype conversations Kaitlyn has had with Christophe instill confidence in the project.



 Left, no fertilizer. Right, organic fertilizer

In Kaitlyn's view, "Christophe is doing great work with the youth and they are planting a lot of trees. There is no question as to whether FBF's grant was used wisely or provided the critical resources to make this happen."



UPDATES FROM THE FIELD



COMPUTER EXPANSION AT KOUDOUGOU HIGH SCHOOL

by Desiré Bansé, FBF Project Manager

The Computer Expansion Program at the Lycée Provincial de Koudougou (LPK) is a very, very exciting project! It is my hope that once the students at LPK become computer literate, they will be able to gain reliable access to the internet. This will enable them to become more aware of the outside world, improve their ability to communicate, and become more productive citizens.



 FBF Project Manager Desiré Bansé

Unfortunately, narrow bandwidth connections, unreliable connectivity, malware, and misuse are well known problems, constraining internet.



 LPK Professor Allain Gnababou

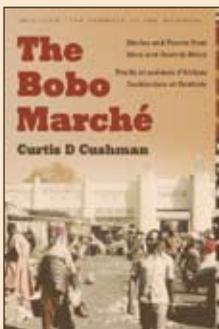
The FBF/LPK team is keenly aware of these technical issues. We are also conscious about financial constraints inhibiting their resolutions. Nevertheless, our team is hopeful that a higher-speed and more secure connection to the internet will be installed at LPK. With this goal in mind, we are developing an implementation strategy, called *Best Practices and Policies*, to be followed whenever LPK computers are connected to the internet.

I can assure you that the computer expansion project at the Provincial High School in Koudougou has gathered much enthusiasm in our community. All want the project to succeed!

Hopefully, the LPK project will serve as a pilot model for others to emulate in schools and cities throughout Burkina Faso!



CURTIS CUSHMAN'S *BOBO MARCHÉ* - YOUR PURCHASE BENEFITS FBF!



FBF member and RCPV, Curtis Cushman, a geologist and writer, has published a book, *The Bobo Marché* - a collection of sensitive and diverse stories and poems about his time as a young man in Africa. (See samples on the next page).

Mr. Cushman has graciously offered to donate all proceeds from the sale of his book to the Friends of Burkina Faso between now and January 15, 2013!

Please consider purchasing this book—both for the chance to reconnect with Burkina Faso and to support the work of our organization. Please visit one of the websites below and support FBF by making your purchase today!

Rose Dog Bookstore: <http://www.rosedogbookstore.com/bobomarch.html>

Google Books digital copy: <http://goo.gl/3720g>

Amazon.com: http://www.amazon.com/The-Bobo-Marche-Curtis-Cushman/dp/1434972712/ref=tmm_pap_title_0

If you decide to purchase this book, please email Kristie McComb (kristie.mccomb@gmail.com), Community Liaison Chair, with your name, date of order, and how many copies you ordered. This way we will be able to determine how much FBF will receive as a result of Mr. Cushman's generous offer. FBF thanks you in advance for your interest and support!



EXCERPTS FROM THE BOBO MARCHÉ BY CURTIS CUSHMAN

Marigots

There was a surprise of thunder over the city,
With a nasty, noisy bolt of lightning
So close to the cathedral bell tower
That the hour-ringer,
Hammering destiny into crying metal,
Lost count, and thereby
Threw off the tempo of the universe.
And the Americans looked up
(Americans, who seem never to be silent
When a tempo is threatened)
And said:
“Kee-rap,
“That means the power will fail again,
“The drinks will warm,
“And we’ll have to put the party off.”
And the merchants grumbled
As they folded up their goods
Into tarp-protected piles
Weighted by torn tires,

Then fled, flapping, on bikes,
Scribbling tire tales
Upon the slickening streets.
And the barman
Barred the windows, and
Watched the drops arrive
In busloads to sit at his courtyard tables
Until the sink-berthed bottles,
In secret ceremonies,
Launched fleets of labels
Upon their springtime Arctic seas.

But, in the village to the south,
The women look to the coming clouds
And tell the children to hurry to sleep,
For tonight it will be cool,
And the men nod as they stare back
Upon the city’s sadness;
For this year, they say,
Perhaps,
The grain will grow.

Taken from *Why Dogs Chase Cars*

As told by
M’Ba Kouma to
Curtis D. Cushman

...One day in the dry season, the Cow, the Goat, and the Dog took a “taxi-brousse,” a bush-taxi, from Bobo up the Ouaga road. The day was warm and there were no other passengers. Konaté, the driver, was a sly young man from Bili-Bam-Bili.

They drove down the cliff road heading into the wide Mossi Plateau. The kilometers rolled behind, and all were content.

When they came to the first village, the Cow climbed slowly down and paid the driver for the ride. She had exact change, and everyone was satisfied.

The taxi-brousse drove on to the next village. Here the Goat jumped down. But since she knew she didn’t have enough money to pay the fare, she ran instead, going behind the huts

and into a millet field. Konaté was furious, but what could he do? Chase a goat across the fields? Besides, he was a chauffeur and wore the tight clothes of a Ouagadougou dandy. He drove on.

Finally, the taxi came to the next village. The Dog jumped down and trotted to Konaté’s door to pay. Here he gave the driver 1,000 francs and waited for his change. But Konaté had planned to make up for the money the Goat had cheated him out of, so, instead of giving the Dog change, he suddenly drove away, leaving the Dog in the dust.

As I told you, the driver was sly, but to this day, the animals remember him:

When you drive past a cow, she does not move and watches calmly. She paid her fare. When you drive near a goat, however, she always runs away. She never paid her fare.

As for dogs? Well, as you see, they come running alongside your car, barking and barking. And those barks are nothing more than dog-talk for “Give me my change! Give me my change!”

