



BURKINA CONNECTION

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



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2022 FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN



A ni cé! Fos barka wusgo! Useko! Thank you!

We are thrilled to announce the results of our 2022 Fundraising Campaign. With your generous contributions, we raised \$71,500 to fully support seven grassroots initiatives in Burkina Faso.

Thank you for your trust in Friends of Burkina Faso and the organizations we have vetted to partner with, as well as your willingness to participate in a new fundraising process. We look forward to sharing the progress and impact these projects have over the coming months.

On the following pages, please find a summary of each project and partner organization in Burkina.



Board elections will be held this year. Contact any Board Member for more information!



Members of ADC-Delwendé set up the looms for weaving.

Training Center for Coupe-Couture and Pagne-Making

Location: Sourgoubila, Kourwéogo Province, Central Region

This project is sponsored by l'**Association Délwendé pour le Développement Communautaire (ADC-Délwendé)**, a prior FBF grant recipient. ADC-Délwendé will improve the socio-economic

status of women and young people through skills training in weaving, sewing, and traditional fabric-making. Funds will go towards the completion of a training center with a goal of training 1,400 students in the first year.

FOR UPDATES ON THESE PROJECTS
AND MORE, FOLLOW US ON:

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Members of Association Her Rising

Development of Women and Girls in Refugee Camps and Targeted Areas

Location: Hounde, Sabou, Koudougou

Association Her Rising, whose mission is to promote the social inclusion of women and young girls through entrepreneurship training and awareness-raising will provide training activities for internally-displaced girls and rural young women. Training will include awareness-building on women's rights, gender-based violence, sexual safety, leadership, and female entrepreneurship.

Scaling Up Menstrual Cups to Burkinabé Women and Girls

Location: Nationwide

The **BARKA Foundation** has been focused on poverty-alleviation and resiliency-building work in Burkina since 2006. The BARKA Foundation seeks to break the silence around the taboo subject of menstruation and has introduced menstrual cups – a discreet, cost-effective, zero-waste product – along with robust educational programming around menstrual health. Funds will support existing project expansion and scale-up, including comprehensive sensitization activities and the distribution of over 10,000 menstrual cups.



BARKA Foundation has been active in Burkina since 2006.



Impact4Life will build a library for at-risk youth

A Library for Disadvantaged and At-Risk Children & Youth

Location: Karpala Community, Southeast Ouagadougou

This project is sponsored by **Impact4Life**, whose mission is to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and youth in Burkina Faso by responding to their socio-educational, physical, and spiritual needs. Impact4Life is establishing a youth activity center, and will create a library to give youth a chance to acquire better literacy skills, life skills, and help reduce juvenile delinquency.

Agricultural Extension and Advice to Vulnerable Producers

Location: Zoundwéogo Province, Central Region

Appui aux Initiatives pour la Valorisation Durable du Potentiel Local (AIVDPL), with whom FBF has partnered since 2017, sponsors this project. AIVDPL builds the technical capacity of local producers, including women, with a goal of increasing agricultural production and combating food insecurity. Past efforts have resulted in increased yields and greater income generation, and funds will support training an additional 225 vulnerable households.



Long-time FBF partner, AIVDPL, pursues its mission



Clean water for IDPs in Gogo

Clean Water Access to Internally-Displaced Persons

Location: Gogo, Zoundwéogo Province, Central Region

The **Croix Rouge du Zoundwéogo** provides relief and assistance to those impacted by disasters and also permanently supports the elderly and persons with disabilities. Since a large number of IDP's now live in the province, the Croix Rouge seeks to build a well to provide clean drinking water for displaced persons and the host community, as well as provide a reliable water source for raising livestock.

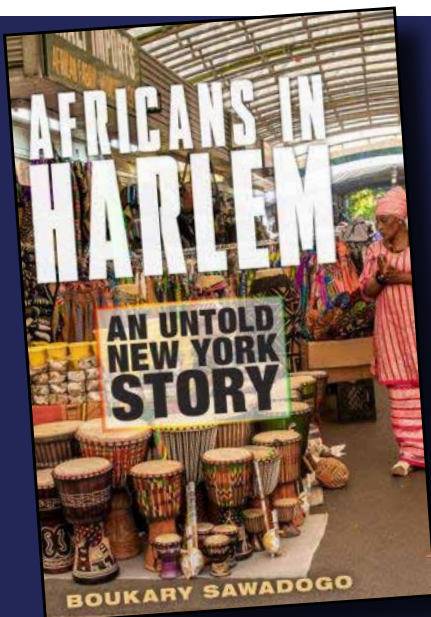


Long-time FBF partner, AIVDPL, pursues its mission

Improved Water Access for Rural Households

Location: Kirs/Yako, Passore Province

Association Beoog-Neere de Koussago is a local organization focused on improving the life of their community. The village lacks sufficient clean water access, leading to long waits in line to use the few pumps that exist. Funds will support the creation of a hybrid solar-powered well that will allow users to fill a 20 liter bidon in 3 minutes, greatly reducing wait times and encouraging accessing well water over contaminated sources such as marigots.



What Should I Read Next?

Check out **Africans in Harlem**, by Boukary Sawadogo, available June 7, 2022.

A blend of self-examination as an immigrant member in Harlem and research on diasporic community building in New York City, Africans in Harlem reveals how African immigrants have transformed Harlem economically and culturally as they too have been transformed. It is also a story about New York City and its self-renewal by the contributions of new human capital, creative energies, dreams nurtured

and fulfilled, and good neighbors by drawing parallels between the history of the African presence in Harlem with those of other ethnic immigrants in the most storied neighborhood in America.

Find out more information and pre-order [here](#).

SCAN ME 



DONATE TODAY
to support
FBF Projects!





- What Caused the Coup in Burkina Faso? [Link](#)
- Ex-President Kabore Released from House Arrest [Link](#)
- Compaoré Handed Life Sentence over Sankara Murder [Link](#)
- Burkina Faso Tries 'Dialogue' Tack in Search for Solution Against Jihadists [Link](#)
- Trapped Miners: Wives Heartbroken but Praying for Miracles [Link](#)
- Francis Kere Wins Prestigious Pritzker Prize [Link](#)
- Amid Coups and COVID, Africa Focuses on What's Most Important: Soccer [Link](#)

PRESIDENT'S YIRI

By Aaron Buchsbaum, President, RPCV '08-'10

Ne y windga, zaka!

(I'm writing this in the afternoon, so 'windga' seems appropriate.)

I hope everyone is well, staying healthy and relatively sane. These are not easy days to manage. Keep your loved ones close and of course stay connected to Burkina. As a Merriam-Webster article I just read alluded to, "worry" is a reactive state of mind, often addressed by taking a (thoughtful) proactive action.

In that spirit, let me share a spot of good news: **we did it!**

FBF, with all thanks to you reading this, **reached a \$70,000 goal** to fund all seven of the approved project proposals we received. This is a real thrill. I think we should do it again, and more often.

I want to especially thank our Board officers and committees who have done so much to make this happen. There have been individual thank-yous going out, strategizing, communication campaigns, new ideas for how to expand our FBF messaging, and more. It's a team effort, yes, but "underneath" that are committed and extremely talented individuals. Thank you all.

I also want to extend a **personal thanks** to FBF Member (and past Projects Committee member) **Anne Spear**, who has been training for an Iron Man race under her #IronBurkina campaign, driving publicity and giving. You can read her past blog [here](#); if you haven't already, I strongly recommend it. I'd love to see more of this kind of 'campaigning' for FBF (meaning, for community-led projects in Burkina) in the future. We no longer have incoming RPCV groups and so our outreach needs to break new ground.

I also want to thank all of our **individual donors**. Many have given donations for years, even decades. Some contributed for the first time. And some made this FBF campaign a focus of their major annual giving. Each of these pieces make up the puzzle, so again, thanks to all of you.

Read on for information on the projects we (you) funded and next steps from FBF.

The other big news: **FBF Board elections are coming up in a couple months**. My sincere thanks (again) to Caroline, Etienne, Faissal, Jennica, Kristen C-B, Kristin L, Leslie, and Suzanne for the 2019 – 2022 tenure.

If you have been thinking about ways to support Burkina, want to see FBF consider (your) new ideas, and are willing to work with a diverse group for common good in Burkina Faso, **please consider becoming a candidate**. I'll be setting up a special meeting for people who are interested to learn more about being a Board member. Please do reach out to president@friendsofburkinafaso.org in the meantime to discuss.

FBF is only as good as its Board and members make it. If we have nine Board members who are engaged, actively seeking to support community-led projects, and willing to work together, it can energize the membership and yield real impact for community organizations in Burkina. **If you have the energy, commitment, and collaborative spirit, we hope you'll become a Board candidate.**

Wend na ko d laafi,
Aaron



Did you catch some of Africa's Cup (CAN) 2021 in January 2022? Burkina played its heart out and came in 4th Place, losing to Cameroon in its final match. But the fans came in first place, showing up for Burkina in Twitter feeds and the NY Times!

BLOG POST: FBFER SWIMS, BIKES, RUNS, AND SWEATS FOR DONATIONS

By Anne Spear, RPCV '08-'10

It's 4am on December 15th, 2019. I am in Daytona Beach, FL, putting on a borrowed wetsuit. As I start to warm-up for the Challenge Daytona triathlon, I am taken back to a time I was awakened at a similar early morning hour in August 2008.

I had just arrived in a medium-sized rural village of Tangaye, in Northern Burkina Faso. A family had agreed to host me for the two years of my U.S. Peace Corps Service. Even before the sun was up, I heard pots boiling and the shuffling of feet across a dusty courtyard. I barely knew how to ask for some water to take a "bucket bath", whatever that was.

I had one thought: What have I done?

11 years later on that December race day, that same thought ran through my head. Only instead of being in the middle of the Sahel, I was in open water, in full panic attack, during the beginning of a half ironman distance (70.3 miles) triathlon.

What have I done?

While I had planned to go in to the Peace Corps, I hadn't planned so much to do a half ironman. It all came to be through some shocking events. In September 2019, I was in my comfortable, dry bed when I received a What's App message that Tangaye, my host village, had been attacked by terrorists. The two schools there were burnt down, along with the health clinic.

It had been unsafe for me to visit Tangaye for quite some time. Even when I was in Burkina Faso for two months during 2018 doing my dissertation, I was told not to return to the northern region for a visit. By 2019, I followed even more restrictive advice, to stay put in the capital, Ouagadougou.

This was especially hard, to stay away from people I cared about so deeply. During my two years in Tangaye, I had become "bien intégré", a third mother to the four children in the family, eating and sleeping on the same mat with the women and children. I shared everything, and in return everything was shared with me.

Ramata and Abibou, the two wives of Saibou, knew me. We had gone through our share of misunderstandings, frustrations, and miscommunications. Yet we persevered through patience and, I dare say, love. Even after returning to the U.S., and despite the bad phone reception, I did not have to say much for them to understand how I felt and what was going on in my life.

Aissata, the second child of Ramata, who was five years old when I came into her life, was my constant companion for those two years. I will never know what it was like for her when I left – to show up a stranger, uninvited and then to leave, without much of a good reason, having become family. Motivated by the promise to see me again, Aissata was first in her primary school class. In fulfilling my promise, she moved to the regional city, Ouahigouya, where to this day, she continues her schooling. She is in 3eme.

So, you can imagine my distress upon learning of the attack on Tangaye. What if someone had been killed? Ramata had died in childbirth in March – needlessly. And I did not want to feel I failed to prevent another preventable death. There is only so much a RPCV can do as they read news articles and read messages from friends that they no longer feel safe in their village. Yet, I knew that day in September, I had to do something. There is so little any one person can do. But I can do



a small part. I can teach one person about the reality in Burkina Faso. I can raise a few dollars that will go directly to a local association to provide rice for recently displaced families. I can do something.

The next day I signed up for a half ironman (70.3) triathlon – 1.2-mile swim, 56-mile bike ride, and 13.1-mile run. Never, had I ever done a triathlon. Never, had I ever swum laps, much less in open water. Never, had I ever ridden a road bike or even heard of a tri bike.

#IronBurkina was born.

I made a pitch to my family and friends – I will swim, bike and run and sweat to prepare [Continued on p.6](#)

#IRONBURKINA *Continued from p.5*

for this triathlon, if you learn about Burkina Faso, and if you can, donate. I raised over \$4000 for displaced families through a GoFundMe campaign. I felt proud of being able to raise awareness of a country I hold dear and that I would show my gratitude to everyone who helped me get to the starting line – from borrowed tri-bikes and wetsuits to TYR support to free swim lessons in the pool. So, when a mere 2 minutes into the Challenge Daytona 2019 race on that December day, when I was hanging on to a paddle board having a full-fledged panic attack, I thought of Ramata.

I thought of Aissata. I thought of Abibou. I thought of my dear Burkina. And I collected my breath, gave myself a stern talking to. And I swam.

Since that day, I learned two things 1) The IronBurkina Campaign is here to stay – as, it seems, is the violence in Burkina Faso, and 2) I am kinda good at this 70.3 triathlon thing.

Starting in February 2022, I am raising awareness and funds for the seven local associations' projects that Friends of Burkina Faso have chosen to support. In June, I will race the *Ironman 70.3 Eagleman* in Maryland, USA to see if I can qualify for the Ironman 70.3 World Championship. To offer perspective of this massive challenge, as I write this (March 15th 2022), I swam without having a panic attack in a 70.3 race for the first time. If I do not make the time needed to qualify in June, I will keep going until I do. Just like all the men, women, and children in Burkina Faso are doing each day. *Ca va aller*.

I swim, bike, run, and sweat for donations.

If one more person learns about the work these amazing organizations are doing in Burkina Faso – all of the sweat and time has been worth it. And please, if you read this blog and you feel inspired, use that motivation to support Burkina Faso: www.friendsofburkinafaso.org/donate. Mention #IronBurkina when you donate so I'll know I've made a difference.



This post originally appeared on the FBF Blog on March 29, 2022.

*Please follow **Anne Spear** as she trains for the [Ironman 70.3 Eagleman](#) in support of Burkina Faso.*

Instagram: @dr.ironroots

Email: aspear@leaderself.net

Share her journey with your networks and help her raise funds for community-led projects via FBF.



FBF PARTNER NAMED AG MINISTER

By Leslie Berger, Secretary, RPCV '81-'83

In his capacity as Soil Scientist at Institut de l'Environnement et de Recherches Agricoles (INERA), Dr. Kiba provided support to FBF's agricultural project, AIVDPL.

During 2019 and 2020 he made several field visits to meet with the project team, with farmers and with local government officials. He provided invaluable advice to the project team and directly to farmers on the importance of improving soil health as a means to increasing crop yields. His presence provided an important boost to morale at various times when farmers were faced with disease and pest pressure and erratic rainfall.

Dr. Kiba collected some soil samples from farms to carry out soil analysis and gain a better understanding of the nutrient content of different types of manure that farmers were applying to their crops. This information helped to improve the efficiency of the crop trials year on year.

Friends of Burkina Faso wishes Dr. Kiba well in his new position as [Minister of Agriculture](#), and hopes that we may be able to work together to extend this project into new regions of Burkina Faso so that others may benefit from the new techniques that have been adopted by the farmers in Zoundweogo. We look forward to continued collaboration with Dr. Kiba.

Learn more about the AIVDPL Ag Project and others on our [website](#).

MIDWIFE DELIVERS QUADRUPLETS + A FUTURE GENDARME

by Suzanne Plopper, Treasurer, RPCV '67-'69



A rare delivery: FBF-sponsored midwife, Marguerite Dama, assisted in the delivery of quadruplets in April 2022. At right, Marguerite Dama consults with a patient.

In the world of “good job!” and “much to be proud of!”, we cite midwife Marguerite Dama. Marguerite reports that in April, she and her colleague delivered quadruplets in the Centre Medical in Diapaga, and that the mother and infants are healthy and well. She adds, “J’étais heureuse d’avoir pu réaliser cela, une expérience enrichissante que je n’oublierai jamais” (I was happy to have been able to do this, a rewarding experience that I will never forget).

Marguerite grew up in a family of 11 children. Her parents are subsistence farmers. She always dreamed of being a midwife and in 2013 she received a Friends of Burkina Faso scholarship through our partner, Global NEEED, to study midwifery. After completing her three years of training, Marguerite joined the government service and was assigned to the Centre Medical de Diapaga.

Marguerite describes her work as attending to the health needs of women during their pregnancies, at delivery and postpartum, and attending to the health of newborns; providing family planning services, vaccinations and health education; testing for and treating urinary infections and sexually transmitted diseases; and participating with the head nurse in the management of the health center. Her health center registers an average of 120 births per month.

Marguerite is most grateful to have been given the opportunity to train for this field which was always her goal. As is reported routinely by former scholarship recipients, with her newfound financial independence, Marguerite is proud to be able to support the studies of her younger brothers and sisters. Marguerite adds that it is her honor to share her profound gratitude to Global NEEED Burkina and to Friends of Burkina Faso

for having been offered the opportunity of a lifetime.

To quote (and feminize) the Chinese proverb: If you give a woman a fish, you feed her for a day. If you teach a woman to fish, you feed her, and many others, for a lifetime. Investments in women’s education not only provide them financial independence AND a role in serving their country. This investment also has a multiplier effect felt far beyond the immediate needs of the individual woman.



Meet another FBF-supported student, Ouedraogo Raketa, age 18, and a student at the Lycee Moderne de l’Amitie (LMA). Raketa comes from a family of five children and is the only one sent to school. Her father is a farmer and her mother washes clothes for others. During vacations, Raketa sells boiled eggs and oranges at small street bars and kiosks. Raketa lives three kilometers from the LMA and walks to and from school. Her biggest motivations to attend the LMA are the quality of instruction and the canteen. As other village girls attending the [Continued on p.8](#)



LMA report, Raketa is most grateful for a noon meal and the opportunity to study during the hot 3-hour noon break. Raketa's goal is to become a military policeman (gendarme) and contribute to the security of her country.

As was reported in the November 2021 Burkina Connection, as of January 2022, sponsorship for 1) Postsecondary Education for Girls, and 2) Noon Meals for village girls attending the Lycee Moderne de l'Amitie moved from Friends of Burkina Faso to the new 501c3: the Burkina Faso Girls' Education Fund (EIN # 85-3020769). Because funds are disbursed to these two projects on a yearly basis and the FBF board voted to fully support them in 2021, FBF funds received in 2020 and 2021 have been earmarked for the remaining one - two years of scholarships for students who began their postsecondary education/training in 2020 and 2021.

The Burkina Faso Girls' Education Fund is committed to continuing to fundraise for and support scholarships for deserving young women like Marguerite and Raketa. Check us out on Facebook and on our website: <http://www.bfgef.com>. As this school year comes to a close and next school year will soon be here, we ask you to invest in the postsecondary education, and lunch support at the LMA, of bright young village women whose only request is an opportunity to earn an education and to contribute to their society.

Many thanks for your continued support for the education of young village women in Burkina Faso.

All donation information is on our [website](#).

To Donate, by mail:

Burkina Faso Girls' Education Fund
c/o Suzanne Plopper,
PO Box 395
Chester, CA 96020

Via [PayPal](#)

Via GlobalGiving:
[Secondary Education for Girls](#)
[School Lunches](#)



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2021 Project Update: Association Yanbuama



Association Yanbuama was a 2021 grant recipient. This group works with displaced women on shea nut transformation and micro-enterprise development.

WHY WE WONDER: THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF SOUTH SUDAN

By Bethany Woodson, RPCV '15-'16



As I write this I am approaching one month in the field – the weather is hot and a couple of brief rains this week have given us all some hope. For those of you who followed my Peace Corps adventures in Burkina Faso, I thought it would be interesting to compare and contrast a bit between Maban and Moussodougou.

My first thought when my plane landed in Maban was, “wow, this looks just like Burkina.” The dirt is the same rusty red and the horizon is lined with palm and mango trees. The small town we live in is very much like my village, Moussodougou, though the market is more frequent and a bit better stocked.

As I’ve gotten more familiar with Maban, I’ve realized there are countless similarities and of course many differences between it and Moussodougou. I thought I would share a bit about how all my senses have been affected by my new post.

Sights

The landscape in Maban is very similar to Southern Burkina Faso – lots of mango and neem trees, and lots of shrubs on a very flat horizon. This area of South Sudan is near the Yabus River – closer to a water feature than most of Burkina, though still landlocked. Maban has more pigs and fewer goats than I ever saw in Burkina (I know goats are here somewhere, because the meat is available, but I don’t hear them screaming outside the compound,

which is nice for my ears). Speaking of animal sounds...

Sounds

The endless cacophony of village animal noises is alive and well here in Maban – I’m talking packs of wild dogs, roosters crowing at all hours... Speaking of this, why are American children taught that roosters only crow at sunrise? That is just factually inaccurate – these little demons crow at 3am, 3pm, and whenever else they want. There are some new sounds as well – planes landing, and the occasional helicopter flying around.

Smells

The combination of dust and open fire cooking leaves a really specific smoky smell in the air – Burkina has this and Maban does too. It’s something I haven’t encountered elsewhere, but it made me feel right at home when I arrived. People cook with garlic here more than they did in Burkina, so I’m often smelling delicious meats and savory dishes when I’m walking around.

Tastes

Just like in Burkina, there is a version of tô and lots of rice. Vegetables are limited, but there is plenty of okra sauce (I’m still not a fan of okra). Unlike Burkina, there is a wide variety of beans here, including lentils (and I don’t know how they are prepared, but they are the best lentils I’ve ever had). They have cans of popcorn here – I’ve never encountered that before! In village, I can get my hands on (vegetable!)

ramen noodles which is pretty awesome – a nice quick alternative when I’m feeling too hot to eat.

Touch

The climate in Maban is nearly identical to Southern BF. It is extraordinarily hot most of the time (think 109F/41C) though it does cool down more at night than it ever did in Burkina, which is refreshing. Because of all the dust (and sweat) it feels impossible to get clean, a sadly familiar feeling.

Housing and Amenities

When I lived in Moussodougou I had no electricity and no running water, but here we have electricity (meaning I have a fan in my room) and satellite internet – still living that latrine life though. Due to sometimes-scarce food and the busy schedule that comes with field work, meals are provided for staff, so I haven’t been doing too much cooking. It will not surprise anyone who knows me to hear that I miss cheese every single day.

Transportation

You may remember from my last post that there are no roads into Maban, so I arrived by plane. Flights are provided by the United Nations Humanitarian Aid Service, which transports aid workers and cargo for non-profits as well as local institutions. I spent a majority of my time in Peace Corps either biking around in the bush or on a bush taxi. Here, we mostly travel by car (although I still walk

Continued on p.10





around village) because some of our field sites are a bit far. I haven't encountered too much local transport yet, but I know there are motorcycles and some buses for local travel.

Work

Similar to my time in Peace Corps, I'm still getting to know the staff and the community, pretending I can learn Arabic, and assessing programming opportunities. Unlike Peace Corps, I have an office, and work with a lot of amazing staff who are dedicated to two primary sectors of programming: education and psycho-social support (mental health services).

Part of the reason I was brought in was to evaluate our programming. My job is to see what is working well, where the gaps and opportunities are, and make recommendations about the direction of our work. The last few weeks have been a great introduction to programming:

I got to assist with several trainings for home visitors. This is one of the main pieces of our psychosocial programming – our home visitor team is made up of both refugees and community members who visit with folks who need assistance with mental health and well-being topics of all kinds.

I was a guest lecturer for the teacher training program (all about adjectives with Bethany – a lot of our teacher training program involves teaching content and the teachers love to have guest speakers especially for English topics).

I also visited two of the refugee camps to check out community centers, and assist with program planning and attended the graduation for one of our English programs at Doro camp – where some of the graduates performed a song for their teachers.

As is often the case with working and traveling abroad, things have been a whirlwind but I'm loving every minute of it. I didn't realize until I got here how much I missed being in the field. Every day is an exciting adventure and I'm learning more from the people around me than I could ever teach them.

À bientôt!

Bethany

This post originally appeared on Bethany's Blog [Why We Wonder](#) on April 19, 2021.

Bethany is a WI native, social change advocate, and humanitarian currently living in Washington, D.C. She holds a BA in Economics and a MA in International Affairs and currently works as a technical expert on issues of democratic access amongst displaced populations. She is an aspiring world traveler, podcast junkie, nature lover and is regularly pushing the boundaries of acceptable coffee consumption.

Follow along in Bethany's travel and work adventures by subscribing to her blog.

2021 Project Update: ADC-Delwendé



ADC-Delwendé completed its first training in coupe-couture and pagne-making in their newly built training center in December 2021.

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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HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT BURKINA FASO?

Join the
Friends of Burkina Faso
Board of Directors!

Elections will be held this fall for all Board roles. If you would like more information on a position on the Board, reach out to Board President, [Aaron Buchsbaum](#), or any other member of the Board for more information.

PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS RETURN TO HOST COUNTRIES



FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM



We've joined the Instagram community!

Please follow our page for pictures and updates from our 2022 projects and some throwbacks throughout the year.



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

