

OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER

MATT & JULIE WALSH—SERVING IN BURKINA FASO

SEPTEMBER 2011

Open Door Development—Service in Motion

ODD is up and running, and we are trying to keep up. We planned on starting slowly because of our imminent departure, but it has been difficult to turn down many of the opportunities that the growing season provides.

Foundations For Farming

This is a farming technique that uses a combination of small pockets with compost for planting, on-time and precise applications and a mulch cover to protect and improve the soil. We tested this simple method side by side with traditional methods for both corn and sorghum. Initial results show a 58% improvement by weight for corn. The sorghum will be harvested later.

Rice Fields and Threshing Machine

The lack of rain has severely hurt all crops this year. We will still be able to harvest some rice from our 20 acres, but it will probably be less than half of what we hoped for. The rice threshing machine is up and running and a huge help for the community. We can thresh 20-30 sacs per day, which used to take a week. It is a mobile unit pulled by a donkey to each farmer's field.

Compost

Soil quality is an ongoing problem, and the use of chemical fertilizers is both expensive and harmful long-term to the soil. We have started to model a couple of different composting methods this year. One method makes a large above-ground pile that is over 6'x6'x6'. This creates ideal conditions for a "hot" compost with temperatures reaching 158+ degrees. This helps speed up the decomposition and kills seeds and diseases in the compost.



Well Drilling and Water Pumping

We continue to develop and improve our well drilling tools and techniques. Brendon Earl has taken over this area and has already installed several new wells. The wells are needed for the survival garden project, and some funds have been provided to help out several local communities with wells and pumps.

Fence Making

Two guys have been learning how to make chain link fences using a simple machine produced in Burkina. These fences are sold to the survival garden project. Local demand has also begun to increase for fencing. We have sold to several local farmers and have orders for many more.

Village Water Project

We have been collecting materials and making preparations for over a year now for a village water system for Mahadaga. We still hope to have the pilot phase operational before we leave. A local association was just created to manage the water project, and we are constructing two water access points.

Workers Bible Study

My biggest joy has been the opportunity to share with our workers about Christ. We have had between 6-18 people working on the various projects, and we provide them with three Bible study sessions per week. For some it is their first time to hear the gospel. For others it is a chance to grow and to share their faith. For me it is an opportunity to share God's love in word and deed!

Home Assignment 2012—Update

December 10th, our departure date, is getting closer and closer, and some of our home assignment plans are starting to become clear.

Rough Schedule

We will be spending most of December in PA with our families. In January, we will make a trip to SIM USA in Charlotte, NC for our debrief and begin connecting with people in PA. We have a trip to Florida planned for the end of February. We will be visiting supporters along the way and spending several days at ECHO (an agricultural training center for missionaries). March and April will have trips around the north-east visiting supporters and churches. Mid-May to mid-June will include a cross-country trip to visit people in the north-west and then return through Michigan. After that we will spend our last few weeks preparing for our return to Burkina.

Goals

We need to rest and recharge as well as to reconnect with our supporters. We also plan on taking advantage of many opportunities for the kids to experience life and culture in the US. We would like to add at least 5 new support partners and 1 new church.

Finally, we have had a number of vehicle adventures over the last 4 years, including two engine replacements, so we are now going to try to raise enough funds to purchase a new ministry vehicle. We plan to get a Toyota Hiace, which will help with all of our teams. A new one costs \$40,000 USD. We will have about \$5,000 when we sell our existing vehicle.



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News & Notes

Team Housing Construction

In 2011 we welcomed 5 teams to Mahadaga, and for 2012 we already have 7 possible teams coming out. These trips are great opportunities to advance local ministries while exposing people to missions. We benefited greatly from being on teams and want to provide others with the same experience. In order to accommodate the growth, we are building a multipurpose space for station activities and team events as well as additional sleeping quarters.

Handicap Centre Update

The rainy season provides a short break for the Centre as the therapists can't travel as easily and the school is closed. October brought a return to full activities as well as the start of the fiscal year. The Centre managed to end the year positive, but the poor harvest will increase the costs for many of their activities

Survival Gardens

In November, we received a visit from our ministry partner and donor CBM (Christian Blind Mission) to review the progress of the existing 20 survival gardens and to officially confirm a gift for 40 more gardens over the next four years. This will be an amazing blessing for several families in our region.

Kids Corner

Thomas and Tessa have been talking excitedly about going to the United States for weeks. They can't wait to see all of our family at Christmas and to meet all their new cousins. We are hoping for lots of snow.

Thomas enjoys lots of different projects. For science, we made a reptile wall where we measured strings to be the length of various reptiles and hung them on the wall down the hallway. So now he has a frame of reference. For example, when he wants to know how long a blue whale is, we can say it would be about three pythons. His latest project, as he watches Daddy run some construction projects, is making mud bricks to build a house. He has some friends coming by to help with this, and he has a bunch of bricks sitting out to dry right now.

The girls are always busy with their babies. At any given moment in our house, you might see babies tucked into beds that were made for them in random places, eating at a table that has been set for lunch, lined up side by side for church, or sitting on the swing. Tessa even tucks little cars into beds and has conversations with them. In the bathtub they have rubber ducks to wash and feed and scold and comfort and put to sleep.

We just had two families from Ouaga here to visit for a few days. We had a costume party and candy hunt for all the kids. Here are our Three Little Kittens.

Prayer & Praise

- We are spending four days this week in Fada with all of the other SIM Burkina missionaries at our annual Spiritual Life Conference. Pray that we would be able to use this time away from our normal activities to be refreshed and renewed. Pray for the SIM Burkina family as we spend time encouraging and praying for each other.
- After conference we have two weeks in Mahadaga to pack up our house, pack our bags, finish up certain tasks and hand off others, and say goodbye before leaving for home assignment. Pray for direction and for energy through the next few weeks of transition for our family.
- Pray for Brendon Earl, who will be running a lot of the development activities while we are gone. Pray that he would gain wisdom and cultural understanding through the work and the relationships.
- Pray for the Burkinabe men who are working with Matt. This is a great opportunity for building relationships and for discipleship. Pray that they, as well as the local churches, would grow to have a vision for making a difference through their work.

