

September 2020 Update from REPT Board of Directors

Burkina Faso

The situation in Burkina Faso has deteriorated dramatically in the past several years. Jihadist violence that started a couple of years ago continues to be rampant. Different extremist groups have infiltrated the country and terrorist activity has led to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. The impact of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic worsened the already critical situation in the country. Sadly, children are among the worst affected.

A few articles from international publications linked below provide an idea of the situation – the news is all bad.

<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/07/07/Burkina-Faso-children-coronavirus-jihadists-Sahel>

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2020/8/5f3b84914/mounting-violence-forces-million-flee-homes-burkina-faso.html>

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6459271/jidahists-thriving-west-africa-explained/>

REPT Activities

General

Allyson & Brigitte have not been able to make their annual trips to Burkina Faso since 2017, as travel in the country has become much too dangerous. Fortunately, we have trusted and reliable local partners, and we have been able to continue to provide the care and educational support to the girls and young women we are sponsoring at Souman Nafaman, the orphanage in Bobo Dioulasso. We remain committed to the young people who depend on us for their education (and now safety).

Dozens of teachers that Allyson has trained to deliver effective preschool education by using building blocks in their classrooms (through the Building Blocks Burkina (BBB) program) now have the basic skills and with this, the means, to deliver a direct and positive impact on young children and preschool teachers. Here too, we have the opportunity to work with a trusted collaborator at the Ministry of Education to keep this initiative alive if we are able to raise the funding necessary to do so.

Souman Nafaman (orphanage in Bobo Dioulasso)

About a year ago (in late 2019) REPT made the difficult decision to close the Souman Nafaman Orphanage that we have been supporting over the past 10 years. This decision was made in conjunction with our local intermediary, Gwladys Bassole, in view of the fact that we could not ensure the safety of the girls who lived there given the increase in terrorist activity in the region. It took quite some effort but eventually we were able to arrange to place most of the girls in the homes of family relatives with REPT covering the costs of their education and daily living needs. Three girls who did not have family to take them in went to live with our

intermediary Gwladys. Gwladys remains on REPT's payroll as the primary contact/caregiver responsible for the 18 girls that we are currently supporting. REPT remains committed to providing these young girls in our care the opportunity to receive the education that will enable them to succeed in achieving their potential.

The past school year was marked by disruptions due to terrorist attacks and/or COVID-19. Most of the schools were closed in March and re-opened in June. In spite of closures, exams that were scheduled for the 2020 session took place across the country.

<https://fr.allafrica.com/stories/202008260507.html>

Exams went well for the girls sponsored by REPT and we are proud of how they are embracing their lives. Here's a general overview of what these courageous individuals have achieved this past year.

In a Career:

- ❖ One **Nurse** - employed by the state

In Higher Education:

- ❖ One **2nd year Law Student** at Universite de Bobo Dioulasso (she earned a bursary this year)
- ❖ One **2nd year Student at Teachers College**

Completed / Preparing for the Baccaulaureate Examination:

- ❖ **2020 BAC PASSED - Three Students:** still deciding on their post-secondary programs
- ❖ **2021 BAC Candidates – Two Students**

In Vocational Training:

- ❖ One **Baker** – completed, now in an apprentice program
- ❖ Two **Seamstresses** – two-year program followed by a one-year apprenticeship

In School:

- ❖ One **Grade 11 Top Student** – planning to go into engineering
- ❖ Two **Grade 9 Students** – one planning to go into agricultural technology training, the other will start hairstyling school, a two-year program followed by a one-year apprenticeship
- ❖ One **Grade 7**, One **Grade 6**, One **Grade 3** – all did very well this school year.

Building Blocks Burkina (BBB)

While not being able to be very active in schools at the present time, BBB is looking into working with our collaborator at the Ministry of Education to bring the building blocks to the many refugee centres that have opened up over the past few years in response to the violence. Whether or not we are able to do this in 2020/21 will depend on the success of our fundraising in Canada this year as supporting the young women & girls at Souman Nafaman is currently our highest priority.

What's Next?

The situation in Burkina Faso is dire as attested by the paragraphs below which were extracted from the August 29, 2020 CNBC Africa Report linked below:

“In Burkina Faso alone, over the past 12 months the number of internally displaced people rose five-fold, reaching 921,000 at the end of June 2020. The country is also host to nearly 20,000 refugees, many of whom have recently fled the camps – seeking safety in other parts of the country or even returning to their homeland.

Across the Sahel, millions have fled indiscriminate attacks by armed groups against both civilians and state institutions – including schools. According to UNICEF, between April 2017 and December 2019 the number of school closures due to violence in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger rose six-fold. By the end of last year, more than 3,300 schools were shut, affecting almost 650,000 children and more than 16,000 teachers.

In Burkina Faso alone, 2,500 schools had closed because of the violence, depriving 350,000 children of access to education – and that was before coronavirus closed the rest.”

<https://www.cnbc.com/africa/press-office/2020/08/29/coronavirus-africa-schools-caught-up-in-armed-conflict-sweeping-across-the-sahel/>

A UNHCR report published on September 3 warns:

“The twin scourges of COVID-19 and attacks on schools, targeting teachers and pupils, threatens to destroy hard-won gains in refugee education and destroy the dreams of millions of youngsters.”

https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/9/5f4cc3064/unhcr-report-coronavirus-dire-threat-refugee-education-half-worlds-refugee.html#_ga=2.66107501.293581886.1599679550-917714282.1599227531

Obviously, we can have no way of knowing what comes next for REPT and the work that we have done in Burkina Faso over the past 10 years. What we know for sure is that, at a minimum, we will continue our support of the girls and young women who we have been caring for, sheltering & educating - some for most of their lives.

Our promise is that ALL of your financial donation will be used locally in Burkina Faso to make a difference in the life of a least one young person.