

September 2021 Update from REPT Board of Directors

Burkina Faso Situation

The situation in Burkina Faso which started to deteriorate a few years ago, is unfortunately continuing along a path of rapid decline. Different extremist groups have infiltrated the country and terrorist activity in the form of widespread indiscriminate violence has escalated. This has led to Burkina Faso becoming the world's fastest growing displacement crisis in the past two years with more than one in every 20 inhabitants forced to flee the violence. Sadly, children are among the worst affected. A couple of excerpts from the Human Rights Watch and UNHCR are copied below. If you are interested, a quick internet search will yield a picture of the situation – the news is all bad.

From the country page on Human Rights Watch:

...Violence and atrocities committed by armed Islamist groups, state security forces engaged in counterterrorism operations, and pro-government militias have exacerbated the humanitarian and security situation in Burkina Faso. Of particular concern are the gravity and number of attacks against teachers, students, and schools by armed Islamist groups. Few efforts have been made to hold those responsible for these abuses to account.

From the country link on the UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency) Website:

...Widespread and indiscriminate violence are likely to persist in Burkina Faso in 2021, forcing growing numbers of people to flee. In addition to more than 1,650,000 IDPs - Internally Displaced Persons, the country continues to host more than 21,700 refugees and asylum-seekers, mostly from Mali. Further instability in Mali and the political situation in Côte d'Ivoire may lead to new arrivals in 2021. The socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are adding to an already dire humanitarian situation, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and needs among the host community and displaced populations...

REPT Activities in Burkina Faso

Although Allyson Tache & Brigitte Roussel have been unable to visit Burkina Faso in person for the last few years, REPT remains committed to making a difference to the lives of children in the country especially during this current crisis. We are utilizing our network of trusted local partners in order to continue to deliver support and programs.

(i) Sponsorship & Education for Girls / Young Women

We are ensuring the safety, health and education of 17 girls and young women that we support. Our “kids” can no longer live together in a communal home due to safety concerns however thanks to our long-time local partner, Gwladys Bassole, we have various arrangements in place to continue to provide for them. This year, all but one of the girls did very well at school or in their chosen educational programs. We are very proud that we

now have a couple of girls in university (law, nursing, teachers college); and a couple in vocational school (hairdressing, dressmaking). REPT remains committed to providing the young women in our care the opportunity to receive the education that will enable them to succeed in achieving their potential.

(ii) Building Blocks Burkina – Refugee Camps *NEW*

We have launched Allyson’s new initiative for the Building Blocks Burkina (BBB) program through which we supply building blocks and training to informal teacher volunteers in some Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps to support the children living there.

702,713 children are presently living in 270 IDP - Internally Displaced Persons Camps throughout Burkina Faso.

In November 2020 REPT teamed up with NGO’s working in the camps.

Allyson has been working with a dedicated, trustworthy and extremely competent local partner, a Ministry of Education Inspector who was trained in the BBB Teacher Trainer Workshops. He also has experience working with child-related projects funded by local and foreign NGO’s. Through him, REPT has financed the training of 28 informal teachers in 10 IDP camps –We have supplied 15 blocks kits and have engaged a local carpenter to produce more. We have attached a few photos taken in the camps. Approximately **1,100 children of all ages** (a tiny drop in the bucket) are inspired and engaged – learning through play, the best way!

– We hope to expand this work to more IDP camps in the coming year.



(iii) Building Blocks Burkina - Preschools

Dozens of teachers that Allyson has previously 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. At this time, REPT's support is limited to providing additional blocks kits, if needed, to facilitate their continued use in preschool programs.

What's Next?

The paragraphs below give an indication of the grave situation in Burkina Faso.

Extract from July 23, 2021 CNBC Africa Report:

The speed of internal displacement shows no sign of slowing as attacks on civilians and security forces continue unabated. In the first half of 2021, 237,000 people fled their homes to other parts of Burkina Faso, a sharp increase compared to the 96,000 registered during the second half of 2020.

Full article:

<https://www.cnbc africa.com/2021/record-numbers-forced-to-flee-ongoing-violence-in-burkina-faso/>

From CNBC Africa on 07Jun2021, the following words were spoken by the Director of Save the Children in Burkina Faso:

...“The attacks are leading to the closure of schools and the displacement of children who are left without an education, and even more vulnerable to abuse. Already 2,235 schools, more than 10% of the country's total, have closed, affecting more than 300,000 children.

“If nothing is done and attacks continue, a whole generation of children could be at risk in an area where the recruitment of children into armed groups and the serious violations against children are increasing.

“We stand with the people of Burkina Faso in this difficult time. This is the time to act decisively to stop attacks on children.”

Full article:

<https://www.cnbc africa.com/2021/save-the-children-shocked-by-recent-killings-of-children-in-burkina-faso/>

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 13 years. What we know for sure it 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.