

Day 8
Thursday, 16 January 2020 - Ouagadougou

Josiane, Fasodia, Winnie, Zalissa, Adjarata, Deborah

Each year there is an old bumpy dirt road being turned into a paved boulevard. We took one to Josiane's house.



She received her three-year nursing certificate in 2015 with good grades from a very good nursing school. She married Alfa Sankara and they had a daughter Christelle in 2016 and another, Marie-Aurelle, in 2018. She met us in front of their house.



Yes, Alfa is part of the family of the former President, Thomas Sankara, the Che Guevarra of Africa, who stood for education for all, equal rights for women, development of the economy without aid or loans from abroad, living simply, standing proud. It was he who changed the name of the country from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso, which means Land of the People of Integrity. He was assassinated by his friend Blaise Compaore, who then ruled the country for 27 years before being ousted by a popular uprising in 2014. Now Sankara's legacy is in full bloom. His statue was unveiled in Ouagadougou in March of this year.



Josiane said, "We don't talk about that." They live in a simple two-room house that they rent. Alfa is a male nurse.



She was too busy raising her daughters to seriously prepare for the test for government service. She failed it three times. But she's done a few internships at hospitals, leaving the kids with their grandmother, and she's going to take the test again on the 19th of this month. If she passes, she's ready to take the children with her to wherever the government sends her, even if it's into the remote bush.



We gave the kids each a book published by the UN, Geneva.



We wished Josiane good luck with the exam on Sunday.



We launched a new program last year with the help of a private firm in Ouagadougou called Fasodia. Their offices are located behind this truck carcass.



We offered a three-day course for 18 of our beneficiaries in computer use run by the firm's technicians on a *pro bono* basis. It was a big success. We asked the general manager, Moumouni Sawadogo, if they would do it again. "Sure," he said.



The problem with last year was that all different levels were mixed. This year, he said, he would like to do two seminars, each three days, one for beginners and one for more advanced. Sounds good, I said.



In the afternoon, we visited Winnie at home. She was recommended to us by Michel Komi, the male nurse who is representative of our Health Fund in Koudougou. She had three children by three different men and never married. “She realizes it’s time to get serious,” Michel said. When I first met her, she seemed depressed. Her life was going nowhere. What a joy to see her today looking so confident as she greeted us outside the gate.



She successfully finished a two-year program to become a nurse's assistant. She's been preparing for the 19 January test for government service. Her grandma is very proud.



She wants to do an internship but is too shy to ask. We said we would ask our friend Djénéba at the Yérelon+ clinic.



We gave each of the kids a book, first, the eldest, Zalissa, 16, then to Anicet, 13, and finally to Ibrahim, 6.



We messed up. I misunderstood what Michel Komi told me; I thought he said someone else would pay half. But no, we under-funded Winnie by a long shot. She never said anything, but she pulled Zalissa out of school for lack of funds. When I discovered the error, I offered to pay Zalissa's tuition too. We also bought her a bicycle.



We then visited Zalissa's school to see how she was doing. It's called Ecole Wend Panga.



We asked an administrator about Zalissa's grades. "What? She didn't tell you? She got a report card this morning." Whoops, a bad sign.



We went back home and Zalissa pulled out the report card. Pretty terrible. I told her this was the decisive year of her life, because we were not about to pay for a repeat year. She either pulls herself together and gets a passing grade, or she sinks in the swamp.



We then went to Sainte Edwige nursing school to meet with Adjarata. She was in her second of a two-year program to become a nurse's assistant.



From inside the courtyard we could hear blaring, thumping music. Some kind of dance exercise was taking place. The guy leading the exercise seemed like a dancing Olympian.



We met with an administrator, Mr. Harouna, who told us Adjarata was doing fabulously. He cited some grades from this semester: 14.5, 15, 16, 19! Her parents will be so proud. She has

a slew of older brothers all unemployed. The family was counting on her. That's a lot of pressure to put on a little girl, but she's shouldering it well. I'm so proud of her.



Our last appointment of the day was at the home of Deborah, the girl presented to us last night by the teacher Armata. We waited for her at the water tower.



She guided us to her home on her motorbike.



She didn't seem particularly needy. She has three brothers and a sister. One of the boys was doing homework on a chalkboard in the courtyard.



Her Mom sat with us to chat.



Deborah dropped a bombshell on us. Yes, she's in first year law school and doesn't like it; yes, she told us yesterday she wanted to be a journalist but actually she wants to be a nurse.



Her Mom backed her up. I explained the downside—government job in the bush, unpaid the first year. She was aware of that.



I asked to see the house. There were two bedrooms; the five children slept in one, on the floor on mats. The parents had a proper bed in the other.



There was a separate room for the kitchen. Well, you couldn't say this was luxury.



I said we would think about it.



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