

Day 10
Saturday, 18 January 2020 - Ouagadougou

Brigitte, Noëla, Adissa, Rajaa

Here's a story for you. Brigitte failed her Bac exam twice and *Solidarité* dropped her. On a hunch, we paid for a third try—again a failure. But she came to us and said that she could enroll in a teacher training program without the Bac, so we took a gamble. Well, she finished first in her class and passed the test for government service.

We drove to her home this morning, not knowing what we would find.



She greeted us at the gate.



Here's what she told us today. She was sent into the north into a Red Zone, worked for free for a year, then started earning her salary. But Jihadists attacked the school next to hers, taking two teachers hostage. She and the kids ran for it. The Government then assigned her to another school in the same zone. (She never stops smiling.)



She met her husband Nebilababu there, also a primary school teacher. Then I noticed a little bundle on the couch next to her. It was her son, Stéphane, one month old.



Nebilababu just left to return to teach in the Red Zone. She will soon follow with Stéphane.



Her stepbrother Boubie came in and took the baby on his lap. We gave them a book for Stéphane.



Boubie is a policeman and speaks perfect French; hardly an accent. He's coach of the police soccer team (soccer trophies were all over the house); he has an association to teach kids how to play while staying in school. He said they need soccer balls, could I help? Not with our association, I said, but maybe privately I could do something—if you started a girls' team.



Here is a photo from 2013 of two of Brigitte's sisters doing homework on the grass mat that her widowed mother and six children slept on together. Now she owns her own home. What a pleasure.



When Christiane visited last night, she said she had a candidate to recommend to us for 2020-21—Noëla. We set off to visit her school; we'll visit her home before we leave. On the way, we passed two huge reservoirs, interestingly not fed by rivers but by rainfall three months a year. Intensive farming takes place on its banks.



Noëla's school was just getting out.



We found the school Secretary, Adeline Some, who knew who she was. She looked up her first trimester grades, just out: 8.72/20 average. Hmmmm.



She was graded “very weak” in Math, Chemistry, French and Philosophy. Mme. Some wasn’t discouraged, though. She said she was convinced that Noëla would pass the Bac exam. She just needed a little tutoring on the side. Oh, and by the way, she’s behind in her tuition payments by 35,000 Eco (about 55€). I said we’d pay the 35,000.



In the afternoon, we went to see Adissa, a *Solidarité* candidate who was repeating her senior year. Her father died in 2009; her mother lives in Koudougou, supported by her brothers, and

Adissa was farmed out to her sister and brother-in-law in Ouaga. You might remember her from our visit last year.



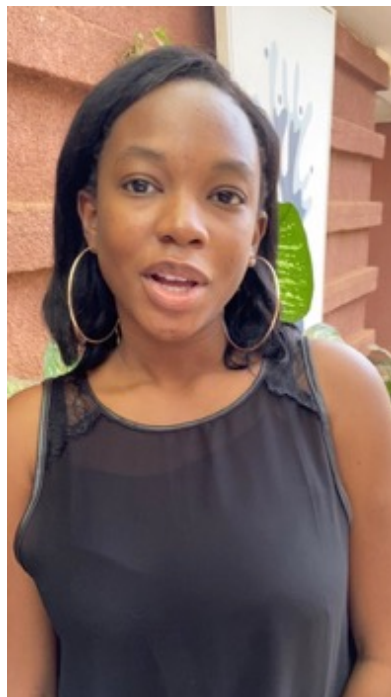
Her first trimester grades were just in—8.21/20 average; not good for a repeat year. Her brother-in-law recently renovated his house, which has electricity and running water. She shares a bedroom with a 16-year-old cousin; a 22-year-old cousin who is at university in Koudougou joins them during school holidays. The 16-year-old gets the mattress; Adissa gets a straw mat.



We told her, frankly, that 8.21/20 wasn't good enough. Either she got her act together or both *Solidarité* and we would pull the plug. We told her sister to give her a push.



At the end of the day, Rajaa came by at my request. I wanted her to star in a video. Anne, a member of our Geneva Board, joined me for four days in Burkina a year ago. A friend of hers who teaches high school in Baltimore, USA, got excited about it. She has a French Club and got the kids to do a video. We need to do a video in exchange. The kids in Baltimore are raising money for our association, so we owe them one.



Rajaa doing a video.

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