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President's Report

February 2020

My visit to Burkina Faso in January

The security situation in Burkina Faso did not permit me to leave Ouagadougou, although once there it did not seem as dangerous as the US Embassy estimated. A member of the Board of BWEF (France), Dr. Odile Pagezy, did not risk traveling to Bobo Dioulasso by car but easily made the trip by plane. While there looking after her own humanitarian associations, she met with our beneficiaries and candidates and sent detailed reports with photos.



Winnie proudly showing me her certificate as an assistant nurse.

In Koudougou, we recruited Lambert Djigemdé to call on our beneficiaries and file reports. (He went to school with Christiane Toé and married into the family of Noëlie Zongo.)

He pursued this energetically and contacted virtually all of them, sending us good quality photos as well.



Augustine and her Mom sitting on the mattress that we bought

with a donation by Anne Penketh. (Photo by Lambert.)

That left me to do Ouagadougou. I met individually with about 35 girls and had a variety of appointments, from the French Ambassador to the Imagine Institute, not to mention too many schools and universities to count.

I informed you of each and every one of them in my 13 daily photo reports, which I hope you all found time to read.

Our financial situation

2019 was a strong year for fundraising, thanks to three major donations from *Le Club Diplomatique de Genève* (10,000 CHF), the Austrian Government cooperation agency in Ouagadougou (nearly 10,000€) and, thanks to Nane Annan, *Féminin Pluriel* in Geneva (3,000 CHF).



Nane with Nicole Hochschild at the Féminin Pluriel lunch.

These subsidies permitted us to create a Reserve Fund of \$20,000 with the Edward Jones financial agency in New York while continuing to finance the educations of 24 young women in Burkina Faso. Tuitions for the current school year have been paid for almost all of them, along with half of their general support funds.

In France, despite a reduction in the number of fundraising activities, we continued to be quite active. We did the Good Friday fast at the *Collège Stella Maris*, a conference on the 19th century Breton sailors who rounded Cape Horn in search of trade, the annual Association Fair, a solicitation of local merchants, a joint meal with *Solidarité Goëlo-Burkina* and a bridge tournament. These raised almost 2.500€.



Receiving a check for 300€ from the kids at Collège Stella Maris.



100 people showed up for our conference on the Cape Horn sailors.



The eighth annual bridge tournament for the benefit of BWEF.

In the US, Chance for Change relied on the two annual fundraising events we've been doing for years. The luncheon at Pylos Restaurant in April had its best ever result of \$8,390.



Anne Penketh, who spent four days with me in Burkina Faso, sharing her experiences at the Pylos Restaurant.

The gathering at my sister's home in Connecticut in October generated \$3,175.



My sister Nancy (center, orange top) and her guests listening to my presentation.



BWEF (Geneva) had a good year, mainly based on the two big donations of *Le Club Diplomatique* and *Féminin Pluriel* mentioned above. There was also the luncheon at La Brasserie des Halles de l’Ile at the end of 2018 that generated over 1,000 CHF.



With Helen Calle Lin, manager of the Brasserie des Halles de l'Île.

So we're in good shape, but of course we have to start fundraising for the school year 2020-21.

Our programs

The Health Fund. Dr. Etienne Traoré is doing a conscientious job of managing the Fund. Since the 6,000 CHF initial grant from *Le Cercle Féminin de l'ONU* in Geneva ran out, we have been setting aside between 1.000€ and 2.000€ per year for the Fund out of our regular budget. Actual expenditure last year was 1.056€. Etienne lives in retirement in Bobo Dioulasso.

Michel Komi, a male nurse, is the Fund's representative in Koudougou.

In January of this year, we elected Djénéba Ouedraogo our representative in Ouagadougou. She is Director of Yerelon+, a private health clinic for women subsidized by USAID and several other governments, including Canada and Belgium, meaning that their services are less expensive than in most other clinics. She has on staff two doctors, one mid-wife, one nurse, one psychologist and one lab technician. Our young women can go there with any ailment.



Meeting with Djénéba Ouedraogo (center) at the Yerelon+ Institute, Ouagadougou.

Sexual Health Seminar. Safia Movannou, a member of the Board of BWEF (France), has been conducting annual sexual health seminars, assisted by Dr. Traoré, Michel Komi and her sister, Djénéba Ouedraogo. The presentation focuses on the reproductive system, contraception, sexually transmitted disease and the right of women to control their bodies. She will organize the next one in Ouagadougou at the Yerelon+ women's clinic.

Computer Skills. We ran our first session on computer skills at the offices of a company called Fasodia in Ouagadougou. Christine organized it; it was quite complicated. Our young women from Koudougou and Bobo Dioulasso were bussed into the capital and put up at a hotel. Meals were provided as well as transport to and from the hotel to the bus terminals and to Fasodia. The feedback from the girls was very positive.



At the computer seminar, July 2019.

We met with the General Manager of Fasodia in January and he said it was frustrating for his staff that the girls had such different levels of competence. He proposed doing two seminars in 2020, one for beginners and one for more advanced. This will be a financial challenge because the one last year cost about 2.000€.



Discussing the computer program for 2020 with Fasodia General Manager

Moumouni Sawadogo.

French language skills. For all our beneficiaries, French is a second language. Some are more proficient than others, but if they are to blossom as young professionals, many of them are going to need to brush up on their French.

In January, I met with French Ambassador Luc Hallade to ask for his help. He introduced me to the Director of the *Institut Français* in Ouaga, Dr. Yannick Le Roux. We then met with the Director of the language center, Chiara Sponga. She confirmed that the Ambassador agreed to offer us preferential rates. They can fashion the course to the needs of the students in terms of level and timing. As an example, she said that a 23-hour course for five students would cost 750€.



With Chiara Sponga, head of language programs for the Institut Français.



The recently renovated library of the Institute.

WhatsApp and Smartphones. I only learned last year that everyone in Burkina Faso communicates by WhatsApp. It's free. I thought it would be useful for us to create a WhatsApp group of our beneficiaries so that they can stay in touch with each other, share information on job openings and even warn each other of security concerns. Ursula Bado, in her first year of a Master's degree in communications, offered to set up the group. During my stay in January, she spent a day and a half in a Cyber Café calling all 70 of our past and present beneficiaries. Surprisingly, she found that most of them already had smartphones. She identified only nine that did not, although she wasn't able to reach everybody.

She and I then consulted Clément, the brother of one of our beneficiaries, who financed his law school study by selling used smartphones. He said he could get used I-Phone-5's for about 35,000 Eco (about 53€ each). To be safe, we could buy a dozen of them for about 700€ and supply every one of our girls with one.



Meeting with Clément and Ursula, Ouagadougou, January 2020.

Assistant Treasurer of BWEF (Geneva), Suzanne Mesli Petalas, is looking into funding sources for several of these programs.

Other activities

Student exchange We organized an exchange between primary school students in France and their counterparts in Ouagadougou. The teacher in Ouaga is a member of Christian Toé's university women's organization (now defunct). The teacher in Plourhan (the next town over from us in Saint-Quay-Portrieux) was recommended by the Principal of the *Collège Stella Maris* in our town. I brought drawings from France, distributed them to the students in Ouaga, and then brought back with me drawings by the Burkina students.



Student holding a drawing by a student in France.



Students in Plourhan, France, looking at a video I shot in Ouagadougou.

Soccer While visiting Brigitte, a primary school teacher and one of our beneficiaries, we were introduced to her brother-in-law, a policeman who runs a humanitarian association that teaches boys how to play soccer while encouraging them to stay in school. (He's also coach of the police soccer team.) He told us he needs soccer balls—used ones would do. I mentioned this to our Treasurer in France, André Orhan, and, no sooner said than done, he came up with balls and T-shirts to boot. (André is a retired gendarme.) I attached a condition to the gift, though. I told him he should start a girls' team.



Brigitte with her brother-in-law, coach of the police soccer team.



Brigitte told me she thought that a girl's team was a good idea.

CEMEF. For several years now, we have been paying Noëlie Zongo 20,000 f CFA a month so that she could pay social security benefits to her assistant. She's hoping this assistant will take over for her when she retires. We also paid tuition and support to Zénabou Yameogo, one of her students at her dressmaking school, CEMEF. Noëlie hopes that Zénabou will be the assistant to the new Director, when she takes over. At CEMEF, about 35 dropouts learn dressmaking as a trade.



Nicole with Noëlie at CEMEF, January 2019.

On a visit to CEMEF with Nicole in 2019, we saw that the four-room building needed work—there was a hole in one ceiling, the place needed painting, several of the sewing machines needed replacing. Noëlie suggested that installing solar panels would significantly reduce her operating costs and make CEMEF more viable.



Back in Geneva, Nicole and I met with Sylvie Pichelin of the UN's 1% Fund. She assured us that these funding objectives fall within the Fund's criteria. Nicole put together all the paperwork for an application and just met the deadline. We'll get an answer in July.

Our young women (See annex 1)

Number of girls helped thus far:	70
Number who have finished their studies	41
Number who are still working toward their degrees	24
Number of exceptions	5*
Of the 14 who graduated before 2017, percentage who have found work	86%
Of the 21 who graduated before 2018, percentage who have found work	71%
Of the 27 who graduated before 2019, percentage who have found work	59%
Of the 41 who have graduated to date, percentage who have found work	48%**

*Exceptions: Estelle, an AIDS patient, dropped out of CEMEF after three months; Marie-Thérèse entered a convent and will continue her studies paid for by her religious order; Sonia and Aïcha won government grants which paid for their educations and guaranteed them employment; and Pascaline failed, but then continued her studies with aid from another association.

** The number of those graduated does not include Clarisse, who died suddenly and unexpectedly after getting her Master's in informatics. When considering this figure, you must bear in mind that many young people in Burkina Faso are expected to work in unpaid internships for two years before being considered eligible for a salary.

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