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Here a young student draws a map of Siberia from one of the only textbooks, so that the rest of the class can then draw the map in their booklets and study geography. He is part of the 8th grade class of the Micah Shea Watkins Academy of Dongorona.

Overview

In February our foundation of Empower Mali, was invited to join two other foundations as they were preparing to go on an expedition to Mali with the intent of 1) building a basketball court for the children of a school in downtown Bamako, 2) bringing students from America in personal contact with the students of Mali, 3) Playing against some of the basketball clubs of Mali and the national team, 4) Conducting a medical mission in Ouellessebougu for the villages round about, and 5) Documenting it all with a team of journalists from KSL who wanted to get a story on the work being done by Utahns on behalf of Malians. It was to support this documentary that the board decided it would be good to send a member of the foundation, since we are at the heart of much of the work being done in Mali. It was decided that I should attend and through the generosity of friends, my wife also secured a ticket and we made preparations to be part of the delegation.

Since we knew we would be in Mali for a week, we made a list of the things we hoped to accomplish while there. This included visiting several of the schools that were recently built, taking pictures, and collecting case studies of some of the students attending them. We also determined that, having received an initial donation for a vocational school to be built in Ouellessebougu that we would hold the groundbreaking ceremony while we were there. I personally hoped to have some time to spend with some of the villagers and spend some time discussing principles of entrepreneurship that might help in coming years, and then of course we wanted to support the other foundations in the good work that they were doing.

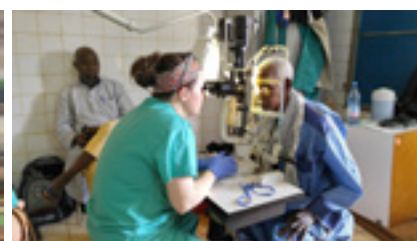
The trip was a tremendous success and ended up being far better and more productive than I had anticipated.



Children playing on the Empowered playground at the BYAW School of Ferekoroba



Members of HOOPS ASL interacting with villagers from Solo



Eye doctors providing glasses, and corrective surgeries for cataracts and glaucoma.



Mike Clayton's bus filled with students and parents from America as well as translators and guards. Without a working A/C this bus got to some pretty intolerable temperatures.

Joining Mike Clayton, KSL, and Hoops ASL

Shelby and I left Salt Lake City on Sunday April 3rd and Arrived late in the evening of Monday the 4th in Bamako. We were taken to the hotel Salam where we would be sleeping and eating for the week. Before we left there was quite a bit of discussion about the threats of terrorism in West Africa and Mali in specific, and we were quite concerned that we might run into some, but Yeah assured us that there was absolutely no threat and that we were probably in more danger in Utah. While that isn't likely accurate we didn't experience even a hint of threat and were pleased to return home only having experienced the goodness and hospitality of the Malian people.

Early Tuesday morning Shelby and I jumped on a bus with the other two organizations and were able to spend the day getting to know all of the basketball players and their escorts who had come on behalf of HOOPS ASL, a basketball program that seeks to instill principles of service and leadership through an athletic program. Each student was accompanied by a parent. Hoops ASL, led by Matt Sumsion, had been invited by Yeah Samake to come to Mali. Mike Clayton, whose son takes part in the Hoops ASL program, has been working with Malians for several years and became the expedition organizer and leader. He came with his wife and son. He purchased a bus, arranged for hotel and security, and acted as tour guide to the students, and later to the medical specialists.

On this first day, there were 30 of us crammed on a bus that Mike had purchased as part of an Impact business he is seeking to start up there in Mali. The bus was full of students, their parents, interpreters from



Mike Clayton led eye doctors and dentists on a Medical expedition to Ouellsebouyou.



Matt Sumsion, founder of HOOPS ASL interacting with villagers from Solo



Ray Boone and Ashley Kewish from KSL joined the expedition to report on Mali, the war on terror, the spread of Christianity, and humanitarian work in this hot land.



Young students in a primary school in Solo smile as the students from Hoops ASL teach basic English during their visit.

The Villages of Solo and Kelyadougou Dialakoro

the Ouellessebougou area, the KSL team, 3 black ops security personnel, and then we who were there on behalf of Empower Mali. We were preceded and followed by another 7 guards who would remain with the bus throughout the week.

We accompanied this group on the hot and sweaty bus as we went to two different villages: Solo and Keleyadougou Dialakoro. In each of the villages we went into the schools and interacted with the students, taught some basic English mostly just to have something about which to interact, and then conduct eye tests for the older population of the villages. They were giving out glasses and looking for candidates for Cataract and Glaucoma surgeries that would be performed on the weekend and during the following week.

In the village of Solo I was able, with the assistance of a translator, to have a discussion with some of the young men who were the future of farming in the village. Each of them had expressed dissatisfaction over not completing their education but had resigned to live out their days in poverty on the farms. I asked questions about hopes, desires, and optimal circumstances and it became apparent that their aspirations were something they had determined to bury. Their futures were as limited as their hopes.



Students and parents from Hoops ASL conducting basic eye tests to vet out potential candidates for glasses and eye surgery.



Villagers from Kelyadougou Dialakoro participating in eye tests.



Farmers from the village of Solo have settled on the idea that subsistence farming is all there is for them. Here, through interpreters we discussed the basic concepts of entrepreneurship.

It was during this discussion with the farmers and interpreters that I began to learn something very important about Malian work prospects and hopes. All had given up on the idea that other work opportunities would be available for them, so they settled for subsistence farming in their village. All had dropped out of school at some point and didn't know another way. They responded well as we brainstormed opportunities that they could create and I discussed with them basic concepts of entrepreneurialism, which they seemed to take very well. The interpreters responded particularly strongly to this and asked many more questions over the course of the week. I can see that such training could be very useful in Mali.

Most of the men in this picture work a couple of hours each day and then spend the rest of it sitting around. Entrepreneurialism, properly taught and implemented could bring a lot more activity and prosperity to these villages that have so little.



Children sharing a bike in the village of Solo



Women do much of the work, all day, every day.



Children often are watching one another while the mothers work to provide basic needs.



Elders from the village of Fonterila, Sikasso present a 20% downpayment to the foundation and request a school to be built.

The Elders of Fonterila, Sikasso

In the evening a most pleasant surprise took place. Yeah had received a final payment from the Village Elders of Fonterila, all the way down and over in Sikasso, Mali. They had been making payments for a year hoping to reach the 20% point at which they could request a school from our foundation. Yeah had quietly arranged for them to present this to me while we were in Mali. I was very honored and humbled by their excitement and determination to bless the children of their village. They understood, that there were many other good things their 5 million cefa could be spent on, but had determined that education was the most important. For this reason, we graciously accepted their down payment and told them we would seek to raise funds to have a school built for them. We are happy to accept this money from them because their investment ensures the future success of this school in their village.

Upon returning to Utah and sharing this news with our partners at Building Youth Around the World, they offered \$50k to initiate the building of the school and wish to add to it teacher housing and an empowered playground, modeled after their school in Ferekoroba.



James Arrington and Yeah Samake receive the 20% down payment from the Village Elders of Fonterila, Sikasso. Their 5 Million cefa equates to \$10K American dollars and is an enormous sum for these villages.



Sikasso is on the southern border of Mali, south east of Bamako.



KSL crew interview Ambassador Paul A. Folmsbee outside of the Embassy of the United States in Bamako, Mali

The Elders of Fonterila, Sikasso

The following day we joined the other two groups as we met with the Ambassador from the United States to Mali, Paul A. Folmsbee and his staff. He explained to us the importance of our coming to Mali at a time of such uncertainty, suggesting that any peaceful human to human interaction is good for the country. He described in great detail the conflict between the northern peoples and the southern peoples in terms that made me feel much safer to be there. In essence, the Tuareg peoples from the North identify first with the Arab Muslim world and look to the east for their methods and ideology. The Bambara peoples from the south on the other hand identify first as South Africans with Islam being their primary religion. They are much more welcoming and peaceful. We never felt any threats among the Bambara.

In regards to humanitarian work being done in the country, Ambassador Folmsbee also made it clear that he was most supportive of groups that saw the bigger, long-term vision of building infrastructure into Mali, and not necessarily bringing American solutions to a West African people, but rather helping them learn, grow and find their own solutions that work within the context of Islam and West Africa. This is very much in line with what we have been doing as a foundation.



James and Shelby Arrington and Yeah Samake join the 30 member expedition on a visit to the Embassy of the USA to Mali

Threats of Terrorist Attacks

Following our visit with the embassy we all received a warning of potential terrorist attacks. This was unfortunate because it caused a lot of worry when we were already taking all necessary precautions to avoid problems. Below is the email that was sent out to us.

Sent: Friday, April 8, 2016 8:38 AM

Subject: Security Message for U.S. Citizens: Potential Terrorist Attacks Targeting the International Community

U.S. Embassy Bamako, Mali
Security Message for U.S. Citizens
Potential Terrorist Attacks Targeting the International Community
April 8, 2016

The U.S. Embassy in Bamako has received information concerning threats of potential terrorist attacks targeting locations associated with the international community throughout Mali.

Although the U.S. Embassy has not made any changes to its operating procedures at this time, the Embassy will continue to review its security procedures and its recommended advice to citizens and will inform U.S. citizens of any changes. U.S. citizens are reminded to keep a low profile and maintain good situational awareness. The U.S. Embassy encourages citizens to have strong communications plans in place and, should the need arise, be prepared to quickly and safely leave the immediate area of an attack.

The U.S. Embassy continues to advise U.S. citizens to:

- avoid restaurants, bars, clubs, churches, theaters, shopping centers, museums, public organized events, and any location where a significant number of westerners gather.
- reduce exposure to places frequented by westerners. If you must go to these venues, or be in close proximity to these venues, carry redundant forms of communication and advise someone where you are going and when you plan to return.
- use the buddy system by partnering with someone when travelling in and around the city for practical reasons, such as to go food shopping or visit recreational facilities. We remind all U.S. citizens that movement during daylight hours is preferred and far safer than at night.
- ALWAYS: exercise caution, remain vigilant, maintain situational awareness at all times, vary

Ultimately all was well and there weren't even any near misses. It ended up being a very peaceful visit for all involved except for the anxiety of the unknown.



Ray Boone and Ashley Kewish from KSL Utah interview Ambassador Yeah Samake in the village of Ferekoroba where he organized the building of the BYAW School.

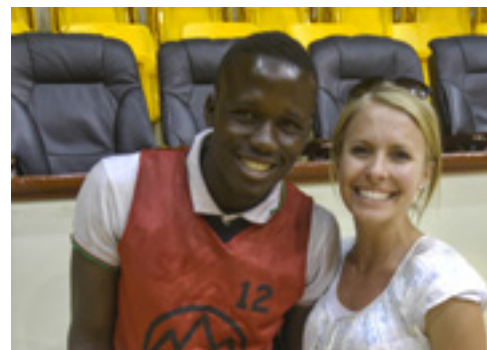
KSL Documentary

After our visit to the embassy, Ashley Kewish and Ray Boone joined Shelby and I in our 4x4 with Zou and Moktar for the remainder of the week. One of the main purposes for joining this expedition was to make sure that KSL was able to put together a quality documentary with as few hinderances as possible.

Up to this point we didn't realize how tied their hands were being in the bus. While they were grateful the other groups provided for them, they found that they were completely immobilized for the majority of each day and had been unable for several days to get any of the footage they came to get. By this time, they were desperate for the autonomy they needed to travel and film and develop their story.

We were privileged to be there just as they needed us and provide them with the transportation and interpreters they needed to travel in Southern Mali and get their story.

Here are some of the pictures from our time together. Many of these Ray took with his personal camera and have been donated to our foundation for our free use. I am including them all so that you can see what kinds of materials we have to work with for our upcoming social media campaign.

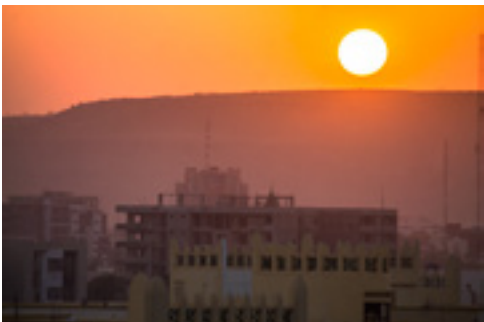
















James Arrington with Awa Karime Samake, a 7th grade student in the middle school of Ferekoroba. She stands on the Empowered Playground that supplies power to 50 lanterns they children can check out from the school and use each night for their studies.

Our School at Ferekoroba

We drove out to the village of Ferekoroba, about 4 miles past Ouellessebouyou to inspect the school and collect case studies of some of the students. The headmaster met us and showed us the school, the playground, the teacher housing, and introduced us to the students.

One thing that became apparent when visiting this village after visiting Solo and Kelyadougou Dialakoro was that it is very difficult to get teachers to stay and teach in the villages because there is no pay. Our schools, on the other hand have teachers paid by the government, so they are eager to renew their applications each year. Teaching at an Empower Mali school is a steady job, a huge boon to teachers, and a great blessing to our villages. Below is the school report for Ferekoroba:



Various pictures from the village of Ferekoroba: (L-R, T-B) children on the empowered playground, Headmaster Adama introduces us to his wife and newest child, 3 young mothers carry water back to their houses. 2 older women carry out chores in the village.

School children see themselves with delight on James' phone. Many, we suspect are seeing themselves like this for the first time.

BUILDING YOUTH AROUND THE WORLD - SCHOOL AT FEROKOROBA

School Report



The Middle School at Ferekoroba is just over 3 miles away from Ouellessebouyou the center of this region of Mali, West Africa. That 3 miles is how far each of these students here would be walking each morning, home for lunch, back from lunch and home at the end of the day, making 12 miles total.

Because of the distance two-third of the children in this school would drop out by the time they reach ninth grade. (This is the class of ninth graders pictured above).



This child, no older than the rest of the other students is now a mother and has likely ended her education to see to the needs of her now-growing family. We do not discourage the building of families, but encourage it happening at the right time with the right foundation.

The schools that are coming to these villages are doing much more than just providing a place where the children of the village can continue their education, they are putting these villages on the map. They are becoming destinations where service-minded foreigners are travelling to lift in other ways. These villages will be on the forefront of the work we are doing to empower Mali.

The villages will be opened to ideas such as entrepreneurship, commerce, economics, trade, agricultural and farming techniques, better hygiene and medical care, water treatment, and more. These concepts will be demonstrated to them over the course of the next decade as different groups interact with them each broadening their perspective and helping them develop their own solutions to their own problems.

That is what Empower Mali is about. Long term, sustainable solutions that are developed by the Malians for the Malians, with a little helping hand from their friends abroad.

BUILDING YOUTH AROUND THE WORLD - SCHOOL AT FEREKOROBA

School Report



Our headmaster Adama has been diligent in making sure that all of the children attending the Middle School at Ferekoroba have a clean environment in which to learn and a well-rounded curriculum to prepare them for their next grades.



The Middle School in Ferekoroba will do more than give these bright-eyed youth an education. It will bring them into regular exposure with groups seeking to bless the Malians, placing them on the front lines of interaction with service-minded foreigners. The potential for these children to go on and do great things for their country has increased profoundly. They have a reason to be smiling.

BUILDING YOUTH AROUND THE WORLD - SCHOOL AT FEREKOROBA

School Report



Awa Karime Samake is a 7th grade student in the middle school of Ferekoroba.



Oumar Samake is a 7th grade student in the middle school of Ferekoroba.

BUILDING YOUTH AROUND THE WORLD - SCHOOL AT FEREKOROBA

School Report



Mariatou Samake is a 7th grade student in the middle school of Ferekoroba.



Niana Sangare is an 8th grade student in the middle school of Ferekoroba.

BUILDING YOUTH AROUND THE WORLD - SCHOOL AT FEROKOROBA

School Report



Dafa Samake is a 9th grade student in the middle school of Ferekoroba.



Fatoumata Samake is a 7th grade student in the middle school of Ferekoroba.

BUILDING YOUTH AROUND THE WORLD - SCHOOL AT FEREKOROBA

School Report



N'tio Samake is a 9th grade student in the middle school of Ferekoroba.



Kiatou Samake is an 8th grade student in the middle school of Ferekoroba.

BUILDING YOUTH AROUND THE WORLD - SCHOOL AT FEREKOROBA

School Report



Koni Samake is a 7th grade student in the middle school of Ferekoroba.



Nataly Camara, Worokia Samake, and Gnele Samake are each 9th graders in the Middle School at Ferekoroba.

BUILDING YOUTH AROUND THE WORLD - SCHOOL AT FEREKOROBA

School Report



The Empowered Playground at the Middle School keeps 50 lanterns charged and ready to be checked out by the students of the school.



Some of the 8th grade boys of the Middle School at Ferekoroba out for a recess while we are visiting with the teachers and collecting information about the school.

BUILDING YOUTH AROUND THE WORLD - SCHOOL AT FEROKOROBA

School Report



The small 7th grade class of Ferekoroba. These students are few in number but very blessed to have a school that is accessible. The next nearest school is more than 3 miles away. Over the years this class will swell, but for now having a small class means more focus and learning for each one of them.



Yeah Samake sitting and chatting in the front of the Middle School at Ferekoroba



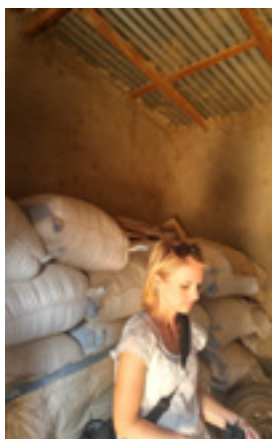
James Arrington with Awa Karime Samake, a 7th grade student in the middle school of Ferekoroba. She stands on the Empowered Playground that supplies power to 50 lanterns they children can check out from the school and use each night for their studies.

Our School at Dongorona

We made two trips to the village of Dongorona, about 7 miles north of Ouellessebouyou to inspect the school and collect case studies of some of the students. We met the chief of the village, were given a tour of a few homes and then were able to inspect the school and meet many of the students.

This school was built by the generous donation of the Watkins family from Alpine in behalf of their late daughter Micah Shea.

After business we were able to engage with the children in a fun game of keep-away. Below is the school report for Dongorona:



Various pictures from the village of Ferekoroba: (L-R, T-B) children on the empowered playground, Headmaster Adama introduces us to his wife and newest child, 3 young mothers carry water back to their houses. 2 older women carry out chores in the village.

School children see themselves with delight on James' phone. Many, we suspect are seeing themselves like this for the first time.

THE MICAH SHEA WATKINS ACADEMY OF DONGORONA

School Report



Here a young student draws a map of Siberia from one of the only textbooks, so that the rest of the class can then draw the map in their booklets and study geography.

The Middle School at Dongorona is just over 7.5 miles North of Ouellessebougu the center of this region of Mali, West Africa. More than 60 children would walk the 12 miles each day to attend the neighboring middle school in Simidji. The road they walk is a main road which is continuously busy with many buses, cars, and trucks traveling dangerously fast. Many parents in the village had previously withdrawn their girls because of fear of having them walk that long distance alone.

The Micah Shea Academy at Dongorona now provides a clean and closer environment for these middle school students to study and advance their education.

The school in Dongorona is doing much more than just providing a place where the children of the village can continue their education, it has now put the previously invisible little community of Dongorona on the map. It is now a destination point where service-minded foreigners are travelling to lift in other ways. This village has been brought to the forefront of the work we are doing to empower Mali.

The villages will be opened to ideas such as entrepreneurship, commerce, economics, trade, agricultural and farming techniques, better hygiene and medical care, water treatment, and more. These concepts will be demonstrated to them over the course of the next decade as different groups interact with them each broadening their perspective and helping them develop their own solutions to their own problems.



That is what Empower Mali is about. Long term, sustainable solutions that are developed by the Malians for the Malians, with a little helping hand from their friends abroad.

Here a young student poses outside the Micah Shea Watkins Academy of Dongorona

THE MICAH SHEA WATKINS ACADEMY OF DONGORONA

School Report



The villagers and students work to make sure the school provides a clean environment in which to learn and a well-rounded curriculum to prepare them for their next grades.



The Middle School in Dongorona will do more than give these bright-eyed youth an education. It will bring them into regular exposure with groups seeking to bless the Malians, placing them on the front lines of interaction with service-minded foreigners. The potential for these children to go on and do great things for their country has increased profoundly. They have a reason to be smiling.

THE MICAH SHEA WATKINS ACADEMY OF DONGORONA

School Report



Our young teacher of the 8th grade students in the middle school of Dongorona armed with her main teaching tool, chalk.

THE MICAH SHEA WATKINS ACADEMY OF DONGORONA

School Report



A young Samake is an 8th grade student in the middle school of Dongorona.



A young Samake is an 8th grade student in the middle school of Dongorona.

THE MICAH SHEA WATKINS ACADEMY OF DONGORONA

School Report



A young Samake is an 8th grade student in the middle school of Dongorona.



James Arrington stands on the grounds of the Micah Shea Watkins Academy of Dongorona before taking a tour and meeting some of the students.

THE MICAH SHEA WATKINS ACADEMY OF DONGORONA

School Report



A row of 8th grade students at the middle school of Dongorona.



Students of every age gather in the corridors of the Micah Shea Watkins Academy of Dongorona.

THE MICAH SHEA WATKINS ACADEMY OF DONGORONA

School Report



Three students, all Samake by name, attending the school at Dongorona

[illegible]

The class role and assignment board posted on the wall of the 8th grade class. You will notice that most of the names are from the Samake family. It is typical that an entire village may only have a handful of family names, as the village represents a single family over many generations.

THE MICAH SHEA WATKINS ACADEMY OF DONGORONA

School Report



Students in the 8th grade class inside a classroom of the Micah Shea Watkins Academy of Dongorona.



Students sitting in the windows of the corridors of the Micah Shea Watkins Academy of Dongorona.

THE MICAH SHEA WATKINS ACADEMY OF DONGORONA

School Report



Students gather in the school grounds to kick around a soccer ball at the Micah Shea Watkins Academy of Dongorona.



James Arrington and Zou (our driver) join in the fun of a game of keep away.

THE MICAH SHEA WATKINS ACADEMY OF DONGORONA

School Report



A future student looks after her little brother on the grounds of the Micah Shea Watkins Academy of Dongorona.



Little children gather at the well in the center of Dongorona.

THE MICAH SHEA WATKINS ACADEMY OF DONGORONA

School Report



Children walking through the lumber yard at Dongorona.



3 children walk toward the center of Dongorona with typical Malian dwellings in the background.

THE MICAH SHEA WATKINS ACADEMY OF DONGORONA

School Report



The small 7th grade class of Ferekoroba. These students are few in number but very blessed to have a school that is accessible. The next nearest school is more than 3 miles away. Over the years this class will swell, but for now having a small class means more focus and learning for each one of them.



A child prepared to sell Shea butter soap in Dongorona.

THE MICAH SHEA WATKINS ACADEMY OF DONGORONA

School Report



A future student crowds in with the others to see the foreigners visiting their school at Dongorona.



A future student of the Micah Shea Watkins Academy of Dongorona.



Villagers from surrounding villages flock to Oullessebouyou to the old hospital to have visiting doctors see them.

The Existing Hospital of Oullessebouyou

While out near Oullessebouyou we visited the medical efforts being made by the group that came with Mike Clayton, assisted by Hoops ASL. They were performing the dental and eye surgeries and delivering glasses to needed elderly.

The circumstances of the hospital are quite horrible. It is a sanitation nightmare, but despite this, the local doctor and the visiting doctors and nurse do their best to provide quality care to the Malian people.

Just up the hill from this location a new beautiful hospital has been built but is still to date being unused because it was built but never completed by the previous president who was ousted following the coup of 2012. It is out of the hands of local authorities, but we are hoping that with appropriate pressure it can be opened to use and filled with equipment to support the surrounding area for miles. We were able to tour the new facility and were impressed with its potential.



The old hospital is dirty and full of unusable equipment, yet the local and visiting doctors do the best they can.

Visiting doctors serve the Malian villagers in dirty cramped quarters

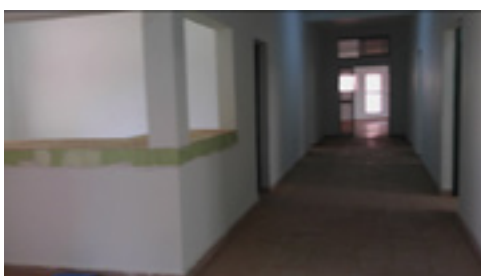
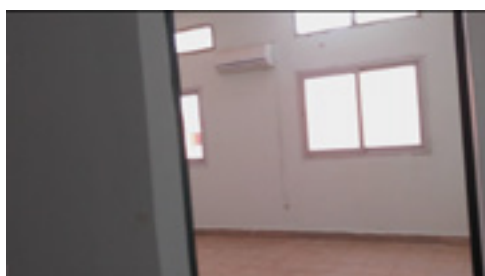
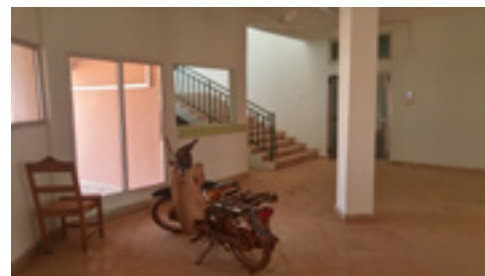
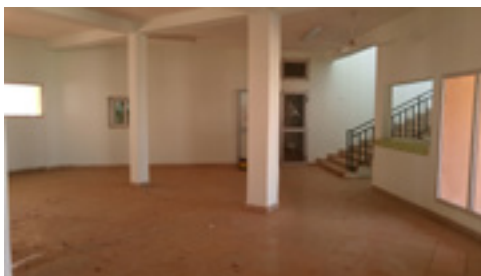


The new hospital and grounds sit unused while a dispute ensues over who owns it and who will finish what was started.

The New Hospital of Oullessebougué

While the old hospital is really quite unusable, the new hospital shows great promise if cleaned up and made live. I'm still not completely sure what is keeping it from being used, but I understand it has to do with ownership and custodianship.

Here are some pictures of the hospital and its potential.





Villagers from surrounding villages flock to Oullessebouougou to the old hospital to have visiting doctors see them.

Hoops ASL and the Court at Kolobonkoro

One of the main reasons for the visit of Hoops ASL was to build a court in the school at Kolobonkoro. This was a task that ultimately cost much more than originally anticipated, but will bless the students and community for many years to come. The basketball stands are very nice and should last for a long time.

The materials arrived much later than anticipated then had to be bribed to get past customs. Then they ended up being insufficient for the size of the court and more had to be purchased. Originally slotted to take 2 days to construct, the court took the entire week and then was actually completed by workers in the days following the end of the expedition. Yeah has pictures of the finished court that we will request.



The old hospital is dirty and full of unusable equipment, yet the local and visiting doctors do the best they can.

Visiting doctors serve the Malian villagers in dirty cramped quarters

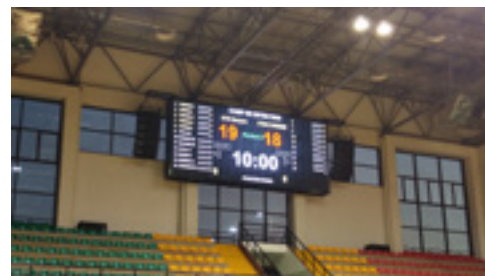


Hoops ASL team plays against the Malian National Team.

Hoops ASL and the Basketball Tournament

The other reason Hoops ASL was in Mali was to hold a tournament with any and all of the local teams there in Mali, in an effort to form bonds and create a bridge between the two communities.

The whole day was spent playing basketball, team after team after team. It was a lot of work and everyone was tired, but it made for a great event.





James Arrington dedicating the grounds for the construction of the Vocational School in Ouellessebouyou.

Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Vocational School at Oullessebouyou

This school is going to be something else. Yeah plans to bring in influences from all over the world and create an environment where High School and College-aged students can learn the latest in Hospitality, Agriculture, and perhaps other areas like IT.

His hopes are to align with several international schools and organizations to deliver to the willing students, the most current methods adopted by the first world, and allow for these students to then work to transform their communities from within.



The old hospital is dirty and full of unusable equipment, yet the local and visiting doctors do the best they can.

Visiting doctors serve the Malian villagers in dirty cramped quarters



In Summary

The trip to Mali was very fruitful. We accomplished what we set out to do, plus had several very pleasant surprises to add to the list of accomplishments. We shared time, energy, and food with several other NGOs and built bridges that may prove fruitful in the future. Here are a few of my final observations:

There are many types of humanitarian missions working within the borders of Mali right now. Some of them offer services that are very temporary and small in scope, but are good nonetheless as they open doors and prepare the way for bigger, more enduring forms of assistance to be made. Some of the foundations just give without requiring any investment of the Malians, and while these are the ones I support the least, they do good inasmuch as they open doors of opportunity for foundations like ours to come in and make lasting changes to forgotten regions of the world. I am more committed than ever to continuing in our tri-party model of offering schools to villages that show diligence and willingness to provide for their own with the government providing teachers. I can already see that over the years as the pool of educated Malians increase they will begin to develop solutions to their own problems.

Our solution is not fast, nor is it free or comprehensive. We offer an opportunity to these villages that is hard to put a price tag on. The value is tremendous. In addition to giving their children an education and preparing them for the next levels of schooling, we put each village we build a school in, on the map. We bring attention to them and then are followed by other organizations that offer complimentary services to these same villages. It is exciting to see what has happened within the city of Ouellessebouyou. It will be exciting to see what takes place in these other villages over the next 4 decades.

Our opportunity to reach and work with more people than ever has presented itself with this documentary that KSL is putting together. It is time to begin our social media campaign so that we have a strong presence by the time it airs in October. Thank you for entrusting me to represent the Empower Mali foundation on this expedition. I foresee the need for this kind of thing increasing over the years as our schools and influence grow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Arrington'.

James Arrington

Empower Mali, Board Chair

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