



The Atkins Family

Jason, Emily, Savannah,
Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau,
West Africa

March 2020

The container arrived
and we have a beautiful
piece of land for our
new base!

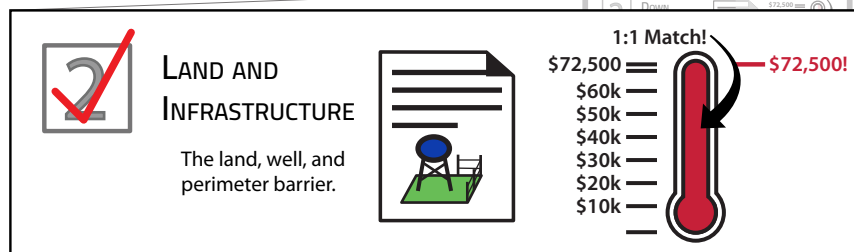
Land Purchased! *by Jason*

We are incredibly blessed to be able to announce that we have purchased the 2.5 acre site we wrote about last month for our new base! We've been over there most days since, and continue to be awed by its quiet beauty. Birds sing, there are no houses immediately around, and there's even a little lagoon in the river that is swimmable for an extra hour each tide cycle compared to our current house because of the depth! We're continuing to firm up plans for exactly where to put everything, but have already sited the spot for the future shop. While the work ahead is big, we are excited for all of the possibilities for ministry and rest this spot will provide for us, our partners, and our guests.

Thank you so much for your prayer and gifts toward this project! We are awed by the way God has worked through the church to bring the funding together as it's been needed. This month we reached the phase 2 goal of the fundraising campaign! If things go as planned, we'll be able to finish the taxes on the land, finish the well, build the water tower, and build the perimeter wall with that money.

Land transactions in Guinea-Bissau are often difficult because of how involved the government is. We did our due diligence and think we are in good shape to have the official paperwork reflecting ownership of the land in the next month or so, presuming the government continues operating. Land ownership here is only really sure once you have a complete set of documentation with all taxes paid, plus a security wall around the perimeter—so before we do much else, we'll also get a group of guys started building that 1500' long wall. We had thought initially to just put up some goat fencing but were advised that, since it's an undeveloped area, we may have fewer slithery visitors if we build a block wall. The plan then will be a hip-height block wall with goat fencing above that!

New Base Fundraising Progress



Coronavirus in Guinea-Bissau *by Emily*

One of the hardest things about living in such a poor, remote country is the lack of access to basic infrastructure, including health care. Not only for ourselves, but seeing people we love suffer and die from curable, preventable disease has broken our hearts again and again. We had our first 2 cases of COVID-19 in the capitol this week, and as we prepare for its spread we are praying that people will remain calm and that the poorest countries of the world, like Guinea-Bissau, would be spared.

In a country where multiple generations share almost every house with many people sleeping in each room, people eat every meal out of shared bowls, where everyone shops each day (because of a lack of refrigeration) for the food they need (buying each ingredient from a different person in a crowded market), and children play freely in large groups in the streets between houses, social distancing is a foreign concept that's not gaining much traction, even with travel restrictions and all of the schools and churches closed.

Coronavirus in Guinea-Bissau (cont'd) *by Emily*

Guinea-Bissau, without notice, was one of the first countries in West Africa to close its borders; the same week that our land sale went through and the container cleared customs, effectively taking away our decision to stay or go. Even though all of this has been sudden for us, God is not surprised, and we are not alone. We have extra food and soap, we are doing what we can to help others prepare, and praying for God to show us how He would have us be salt and light in a difficult, fearful time for our country and really the whole world.

Container Arrival *by Jason*

The shipping container that we stuffed in December with solar equipment for four different ministries, and supplies and equipment for ourselves and several other missionaries arrived at the port of Bissau in January. We've been working since then to get the required taxes paid and the mountain of paperwork filed to be able to get it.

The land purchase happened just as it was looking like the shipping container might be released by customs soon. We had made an interim plan to have the container delivered to the drinking water filter factory site, where it would be stored until we had land ready, and then move it a second time to its final place on the new land, wherever that would end up being. However, with the new land purchased, it made the most sense to save the cost of moving the container a second time, and just get its place on the new land ready quickly so it could be delivered directly. A mobile crane that can lift a 30-ton container isn't cheap, and we didn't want to have to pay them twice!

We rushed around to pour six pads for the container to sit on, siting and leveling them to eventually sit next to and on the same level as the eventual new shop building. The pads were poured, and a week later, the container was released. We were relieved that it was released, because it happened as things around Guinea-Bissau were starting to shut down because of the virus, and we worried that a government shutdown might mean several more months of port storage fees, potential theft, and time we couldn't get to work using the equipment and supplies in the container.



The day had finally come for the container to be delivered! Months of work finding good deals, packing, dealing with documents, and lots of generous giving and help, all wrapped up in a 30-ton box! The container arrived on a truck, with an entourage of National Guard workers, whose job is to make sure the equipment in the container matches what you paid import taxes on. We'd spent the previous four days working hard to take down some huge, low tree limbs, cut out roots, and clean the narrow, windy path that leads to the new land to be ready for a pair of giant, heavy, vehicles. The semi arrived late in the afternoon, and by dark the mobile crane, which assured us was on its way, still wasn't there. Everyone was ready to call it a night, assuming the crane would show up in the morning, when, at around 9:30pm, it finally pulled up. The crane operators had the container down onto the ground around 11pm. I say onto the ground because they clumsily set it down on two of the six pads initially, because at one point the massive crane started tipping. Those two cement pad were crushed, and another two pushed out of the way as they drug the container across the tops of several others. In the end, what was left of our beautiful pads was a cracked, crumbling mess, but the container was down without any obvious damage to the contents, and no one hurt, so we called it a victory. However, because of how damaged the pads were, we spent until 1:30am cutting sections of tree trunk to shove under the container edges, just in case one or more of the pads gave out under the incredible weight during the night. Fortunately, none of them did, and the trunks are still just there as backups!

We were over-joyed and exhausted as we closed the evening by peeking into the container and remembering all of the great stuff in it! The things in the front of the container are too heavy to be liftable by hand, so over the next week we'll have a slab poured in front of the container, after which we can get the level-cement-only forklift out of the container, charge its batteries, and use it and pallet jacks to begin unloading and distributing all of the supplies and equipment.

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Thank you again to everyone who gave toward and helped with the container project! It was a huge undertaking, and will be a blessing to us and the many different ministries in Guinea-Bissau who included material in it!



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