



The Atkins Family

Jason, Emily, Savannah,
Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau,
West Africa

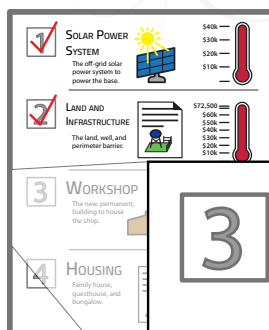
May 2020

Our new base is starting
to take shape!

Steady Transformation *by Jason*

Our team is making steady progress on the construction project at the new base! This month, a small crew has completed the western perimeter wall. The western side (the back side that parallels the river-front) was the longest side of the three that needed to be walled, and also the one most vulnerable to encroachment by someone else's future construction. The wall is simple and will later have fencing across the top part of it to keep any especially hoppy goats from jumping over the low parts, but is an important marker for the community even as it is.

When the government came to mark out the land, they also clarified the position of the roads that should go around the three sides of the property. Here, they don't build the roads for you, but do clarify where they're supposed to be so you can build them, haha. So, we've had another small crew of guys ripping up trees, tearing down termite mounds, and digging out sharp roots. It will just be a simple dirt path, but is at least nice and wide so that it'll be easy to make turns with trailers when we're delivering supplies. Without much planning here, if you arrive at a place with existing construction, the houses have often been built leaving only tiny single-track paths between them. Starting with a virgin forest means we get to create everything from scratch!

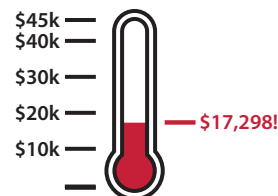


New Base Fundraising Progress

3

WORKSHOP

The new, permanent,
building to house
the shop.



In three months, we've made significant progress beginning to transform a beautiful piece of land into a beautiful, functional base!

Along the perimeter wall, we're also trenching to bury tubes for water and (eventually) electricity. Digging and covering now will let plants regrow over that land in the rainy season.

Steady Transformation (cont'd) *by Jason*

The termite mounds are interesting. To look at them, and knowing they're made out of dirt, you might imagine they'd be pretty fragile and easy to knock down. Not true! A sledge hammer does very little to them, and watching the guys working on them I've learned a few tricks. In case you're ever faced with the task of removing a 10' tall African termite mound, the strategy (where water is plentiful) is to knock the top off of the mound and then fill it with a hose. Once the water has had time to soak in an axe or pick can break chunks off. Once you get it down to ground level, you're not quite done yet. The mound is hollow in the middle and leaves a hole in the ground, which if you just fill in, will turn back into another termite mound in short order. The trick is to set a fire down in the hole which smokes out whatever of the colony is remaining underground—then the next day, you can fill it in. New information for me!



Termite mounds can get huge here! And they are tough! Our crew has had to remove several that were in the way of paths, trenches, or walls.

Inside the mound somewhere, the queen is always near the pulsing, squirmy, egg sack. (Lower left)



The community has been interested in what's going on and how it might benefit them since the beginning of the construction. The neighbors are happy to have a nice wide road, and the price of the remaining land around us is already increasing from what we paid. The community is also coming to get drinking water from our well, since it's pumped from a rock layer it's seen as cleaner.

Despite the normal government hassling that accompanies trying to do anything in Guinea-Bissau, compounded by the slow-downs and difficulty of a government firing on even fewer cylinders than normal because of the virus, we're making steady progress. The rainy season which will start soon will slow things down, but aside from buttoning a few things up, we've already made good progress up to this point.



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