



The Atkins Family

Jason, Emily, Savannah,
Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau,
West Africa

February 2021

Jason just rejoined the family in Little Rock after a productive but tiring 7-week trip to G-B.

Early 2021 Trip *by Jason*

I was blessed during January and February to be able to take a 7-week trip to Guinea-Bissau. It was exhausting and wonderful to have a short window to make as much progress on several projects as I could during this short-term trip. Since we don't know how soon we'll be able to return as a family to normal life over there, I had the opportunity of this quick sprint to move as many things forward as possible before returning to the U.S.

Though we've hosted short-term missions teams, it has been a while since I've been a short-termer, and although I was living in our house, it was still a strange situation in many ways. When we host short-term teams, it's wonderful to see their energy and passion, and to see Guinea-Bissau for the first time again through their eyes. However, we know that they're able to wear themselves out and then go back home, while we have to pace ourselves a little more because we'll still be needed there after the team goes home. Without the family to take care of, I essentially shifted to short-term mode, worked a lot of 60-hour weeks, and "camped", basically only eating, sleeping, and showering at home.

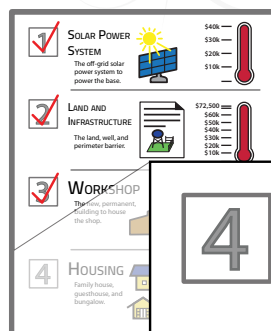
Though I went with a list of possible projects far longer than I knew I'd be able to tackle, with the help of hard-working local partners, we were able to accomplish a lot!

Thank you so much for your part in our support team that allowed me to take this trip. It was a big blessing!

Setting Up Block Production *by Jason*

Many of the projects we're currently working on at the new base are laying groundwork for the main thrust of constructing all of the buildings. One of the main resources needed is block. Though we have several types available, the best option is to utilize the compressed adobe block making machine that was sent over more than a decade ago. The blocks produced by the machine are very dense and, because of their mass, make for cooler buildings without air conditioning.

The machine uses a clay dirt (and optionally cement) to produce blocks. This (usually red) clay dirt is ubiquitous in Guinea-Bissau. It's the dirt that's (cont'd)

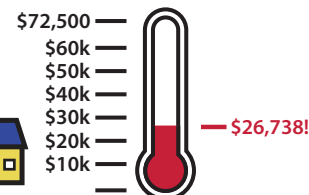


New Base Fundraising Progress

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HOUSING

Family house, guesthouse, and bungalow.



A dear friend brought us a drone! Here's the view of the project land from over the river. Isn't it beautiful?



Our new clay mining site!

Setting Up Block Production (cont'd) *by Jason*

(...) under the surface in most of Canchungo, and is also screened from gravel which is being hand dug at the quarry in our neighborhood. Since it's so common, and there's an established market for it as fill dirt, we didn't assume it would be any trouble to source. However, once we got the machine set up and sent a truck over to the quarry to buy a load of it, they told us that the vein of gravel they've been digging in right now doesn't have much of the dirt, so they didn't have any to sell! We looked around for someone else selling it, but because it's so cheap, people in our area generally don't dig it up just to sell it.

After looking around at several options, the best option ended up being to purchase a small sliver of land just behind us. This small piece of land was orphaned by a projected road going through it, and since the leftover piece was going to be too small to build a house on, we were able to purchase it way below the normal price for the amount of square footage. It's a small little 36' x 130' plot, but several sample holes revealed that once you get under the top foot of dirt, it's primarily the bright red clay we're after, without any significant gravel we'd need to screen out.

We purchased the land for \$800 and set our guys to work mining the dirt with shovels. Through some hard work, they've harvested enough dirt already to produce 1,500 blocks, although rough calculations show that if the clay dirt is at least six feet deep, we should be able to get about 50,000 blocks-worth of dirt out of the site. Being on an incline, when we're done mining it, eventually the rainy seasons will fill it back in with sand and it can be used for something else, perhaps a garden. In the meantime though, we have a nearby, plentiful, cheap source of dirt for making blocks!



Garage Expansion *by Jason*

While visiting our teammates, Travis and Sarah Lacey, last December, they asked if we'd be willing to add a third bay to the construction storage / eventual garage building so they could have somewhere enclosed and safe to store their truck while they're away on furloughs. Of course, we were happy to help! After years of our ministry not having any land of its own, it's wonderful to have some space to be able to offer to help others with their needs!

One of the projects in January was to pour the foundation for the expansion, so that once we start setting block for the walls of the building, it can all go up together in one shot.



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The extra foundation was dug, the rebar bent and tied, the foundation and stem wall formed up and poured. Now, when we're able to start construction, we'll be able to build and roof all three bays at once. It's going to be a tremendous help to have a secure, dry space to store things at the site!



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