



# The Atkins Family

Jason, Emily, Savannah,  
Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau,  
West Africa

April 2023

We're filling our freezer with fresh, delicious mangoes because they're arriving faster than we can cut and eat them!

## Escaping The Weak Grid *by Jason*

Over the last few months, during several week-long trips to Bissau, my team has been setting up a huge 18kw solar power system at the WAVS campus that's being built there. Being in the capital, they have the advantage that they're able to use grid power, which for the last several years has been generated by a Turkish generator-ship anchored in the harbor. Unfortunately, although the generation is quite reliable, it's an expensive way to generate electricity and the distribution in the city often has cuts due to the way it is installed. The power poles are usually a spaghetti soup of wires hanging from each other and going every which way.



*The electronics were installed in a corner of the office to keep the outside dust away. The install was tight, including some extremely stiff cables used for connecting the batteries, but we got it done and closed up!*

how many ways a well-laid plan can go wrong on the path to implementation in Guinea-Bissau. In the weeks after turning the new system on, they were experiencing random cuts which we later traced back to one of the system's three inverters. After some troubleshooting and inspecting the inside, we found that the brand new unit had corrosion and some bent components inside, likely from mistreatment during shipping from the U.S. Unfortunately, the equipment was sent over in someone else's container where these heavy components were not lifted carefully enough nor adequately protected from (cont'd)

While grid power is a lovely luxury, it's unreliability has often made things difficult for WAVS, running a school that includes a welding program and whose construction requires a lot of air conditioning. They had sent over a solar power system several years ago, and had stored it waiting for a building with an appropriate roof to mount it on. They recently finished their second classroom building, which included a south-facing roof, so the time had come!

The installation took several trips, but in the end, it came together! There was a bit of a learning curve because it was the first time I've ever installed solar panels on a ceramic tile roof, and I had to decipher boxes of components purchased and organized by someone else. I'm happy to report, though, that the system is operating and generating much stronger electricity than they were used to seeing from the grid. You can literally watch the lights get brighter when the system is switched from grid to solar power. We're hopeful that the system will be a big help to both lowering their energy costs as well as increasing the reliability of the electricity they need to train students.

Unfortunately, an epilogue exists which demonstrates just



*We lifted and attached 45 big solar panels to the hot roof. We were glad for the A/C when the time came for the inside work!*



*Finishing the installation of the third and final 15-panel bank, for a total of 18,000 watts!*



## Escaping The Weak Grid (cont'd) by Jason

(...) humidity. It's heartbreaking after so much time and money was spent to get the system over here and installed. The good news is that the manufacturer has spares available for purchase, so eventually (when there's a good route for getting some fairly heavy parts over here) the replacements will be able to be installed and the system should be ready to roll!

## GOOOOOOOAAAAAAL!! by Emily

Earlier this year Savannah joined a neighborhood soccer team. Though she has had her share of bruised shins, hamstring cramps, and swollen toes, she has actually been loving the exercise and getting noticeably better every week. It's a mostly kid-organized league which means that there aren't any adults around at practices or games, so she has dealt with quite a few bullies on her team and other teams. However, Savannah is not one to lose her determination and she has been practicing hard and playing harder. Making friends and participating in sports is not easy in a culture that actively teaches their kids forcefulness over kindness, revenge over forgiveness, and that physical fighting is fine as long as you win. We don't let our kids act that way, and it's hard to be different. Please pray for Savannah, Nathaniel, and Miriam, that God would give them courage to live the way that He has called them to no matter what circumstances they find themselves in.



*Savannah with a shot on goal (the space between the two rocks in the road) and the goalie with a diving save!*



*The kids can now campfire-roast and shell cashews from our own trees all by themselves.*



*This foosball table came over in the container in January and has been very popular.*



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