



# The Atkins Family

Jason, Emily, Savannah,  
Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau,  
West Africa

May 2023

We escaped the sweltering heat with a long weekend at the beach. We hope you enjoy your summer as well!

## Friends *by Emily*

This past month we crossed the border into the neighboring country of Senegal for a long weekend at the beach with 3 other families who all live in the capital - a young single woman from the US (Laura), an American woman who lived with us for a few years and is now married to a Guinean man, with their 6-month-old son (Sloan, Pedro, and Jayden), and a South African family with 4 teenage kids (Adriaan, Joscelin, Asher, Katie, Cassady, and Ruben). It was such a great group of people who all love Guinea-Bissau, and we had so many encouraging conversations about the beauty and welcome we have found here and the ways we see God working in the culture around us.

The kids loved the beach, the pool at the house, baby cuddles with Jayden, and sleeping in air conditioning at night. But, their favorite part of the trip was having English-speaking friends to play with and no school to interrupt their play time. As

with pretty much all expat friendships here, it was bittersweet as

Joselyn and the kids headed back to South Africa the week after we came back. Adriaan is staying, so we will see him again, and the family might come back in two years once the older two are finished with high school.

Over our 16 years here, Jason and I have said goodbye to almost every expat friend we have made, and it doesn't get any easier. Pray for the kids as

they once again are missing friends they just made. Also, please pray especially for Nathaniel and Miriam. They are both shy in Creole and neither one of them really has any close Guinean friends at the moment. Pray that God would give them courage and that He would bring just the right friends for each of them.



*Fabulous brick-oven pizzas were enjoyed by all at The Cheese Maker's Lodge. You expect nothing less with a name like that!*



*We enjoyed a fabulous time of building sandcastles, bodysurfing, and not sweating at the beach.*



*So much fun to feed a baby!*

## Steady, Hard-Fought Progress *by Jason*

Well, I have to confess that I am equally thankful for the hard work of the guys on my team and tired of working to get back up to ground level on the house! My guys have put significant sweat and strength into the foundation dig and pour (cont'd)

## Steady, Hard-Fought Progress (cont'd) *by Jason*

(...) for the house. We are closing in on finishing it as the rainy season is waiting to crash down on us any day now. The foundation is poured concrete, averaging around 3 feet deep. The fat clay that is everywhere here makes great compressed adobe blocks but a lousy material for a building foundation to sit on in a place with so much rain. Given its tendency to swell when wet (like frost heave back home), the geo engineering advice we got was to get pretty deep and pour wide footings. We've done exactly that, and while my guys can't believe how much concrete is going into the foundation, they're getting it done. As a result, I'm confident that we're not going to see walls cracking because of settling like we see in our current house and so many other buildings around us.

If we'd had a backhoe and cement trucks available, the job would have been easier, but since my guys dug it all with shovels and picks, and have been mixing concrete in a single-sack mixer and then moving it to the pour in wheelbarrows, it's been a significant task. Fortunately thanks to their hard work while building using a system they're not used to, they have learned a lot, and we've now hit a good stride. Stripping the forms from the previous pour and resetting for the next means we can pour about 4 yards twice every week and a half.

We're currently two pours away from having the house foundation completely done and are hoping to wrap them up before the rainy season shuts us down, so that we can let the pounding rain start to compact the fill in preparation for pouring the slab in September. And then, at long last, we'll be ready to get started on the faster process of laying block. We thank you for your support that's allowing us the time we need to build things properly.



*Above: The guys have been working hard, muscling literal tons of concrete around!*



*Plastic conduit for the eventual house electrical installation is being wrangled/organized in preparation for being poured into the foundation wall.*



*The tractor is helping speed up our cement-mixing station under the tree by keeping supplies at the ready! From there the concrete is taken by wheelbarrow to the pour.*



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