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FOT IS CONSIDERING CHANGING THE NEWSLETTER TO ON-LINE FORMAT ONLY.

If you would prefer to continue receiving the hardcopy version of the newsletter in the mail, please let us know by checking the box on the enclosed greeting card form, and returning it to us.



Founded in 1981

Winter 2008-2009

Au Coin de la Présidente

Greetings Friends—

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

Though penned 150 years ago, Charles Dickens' opening lines to *A Tale of Two Cities* certainly resonates today with the political and economic upheaval we face. In our small, but determined way, Friends of Togo (FOT) continues to strive for the betterment of times through continued financial assistance to the Togolese people and their small nation we hold so dear to our hearts.

FOT has been raising money and funding grass-root projects in Togo for almost 30 years with a system and procedure that works. For a list of some of the amazing projects funded by FOT, see Project Chair Amy Nelson's report elsewhere in this issue. Your dues and donations fuel these worthy endeavors. FOT is managed 100% by volunteer labor. The board meetings are held in our homes, keeping operating cost at a minimum. At the last meeting we discussed emailing this newsletter rather than paying for the printing and postage required of the paper format. The Board was concerned that you would be less inclined to renew your membership if reminded electronically. So please, take advantage of and return the enclosed renewal form and envelope!

If you have thoughts to share on the above topic or other concerns you wish to discuss with the Board, consider joining the FOT board of director's list serve. This list and the Togo-L list, managed by Kelly Morris, continue to be FOT's two most vital communication links. If you have a general message to share, send an e-mail to: [TOGO-L\(AT\)YAHOOGROUPS.COM](mailto:TOGO-L(AT)YAHOOGROUPS.COM)

As Washington, D.C. prepares for the largest and most epic inaugural event in the nation's history, FOT had its own grand plan. We wanted to hold our January board meeting en plein air, on the National Mall, while waiting to march with the Togolese flag in the Peace Corps section of the parade. FOT had marched in both Clinton parades and was very disappointed to be informed that we could not march as an organized group. Since the Obama parade is predicted to be enormous, only a few hundred marchers have been allocated to represent both the National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) and the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington, D.C. (RPCVW). The slots will be assigned through a "Parade Lottery".

If you are interested in participating, visit: <http://www.rpcv.org/pages/sitepage.cfm?id=1917>. For a complete list of RPCV inaugural related events visit <http://www.rpcvw.org/mc/page.do>

Whether or not one of us carries the Togolese flag on January 20 remains to be seen. But our hopes are high for 2009. With your help FOT can and must continue to make a difference. To repeat a sentiment heard twenty years ago during Jesse Jackson, Sr.'s presidential campaign,

"KEEP HOPE ALIVE"

Thank you and Happy Holidays.

Ruth Fenzi Reeder
Atakpame, 1976-78



FOT MEMBERSHIP REPORT: NOVEMBER 2008



Once again it's the holidays and time for La Secrétaire Pour La Life to report on FOT's membership and continuing lutte to recruit new and old members back into the fold. This year with some extra assistance, there are currently 201 up from the 163 out of a total database of 693. These 201 members date from 2001 to 2008. We need you back again!! Tell all your friends, acquaintances or even étrangers.

Most of our new members this year have joined through the National Peace Corps Association, for which FOT pays the privilege. Members most often renew when they receive a newsletter. That typically is also the time when many members contribute beyond the \$25 membership fee to provide for projects.

In the past, FOT was able to complete two to three newsletters a year; one in the Spring/Summer and another in the Winter for the holiday season. A hundred milles mercies to Lisa Roberts for continuing year after year, after year to take on the task of making sure that FOT has a newsletter. Hopefully, as last year, she will have the assistance of some newer members, such as Dave Rabinowitz - thanks to them for any help they might be able to offer.

If anyone knows anyone who would like to become the Membership / Database Manager, I would be more than happy to hand over the reins. Also, FOT would love to update their directory, which was last done in 2000, but again we need YOUR HELP! So if anyone out there has addresses, e-mails, etc. of lapsed members, please post them on Togo-L, or have them e-mail moi @ [ellen.levin\(AT\)montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:ellen.levin(AT)montgomerycountymd.gov).

*** HEUREUX HOLIDAYS and BONNE ANNEE! *** - Ellen Levin

TOGO NEWS: On November 1, 2008, the Ewe community buried one of their own, Christine Gah, who lost a battle against breast cancer. Mourners and sympathizers included relatives and friends from Ghana, Togo and Bénin. She left behind three teenagers - 19, 15 and 10 - who now need someone to adopt them. All three are students and legal residents of the United States.

On the home front, the Togolese government has decided to make education free for all students from Pre-K through age 15, starting from October 6, 2009. Also, the government is committed to building about 2300 classrooms between now and next year. This reminds us of Peace Corps/Togo's contribution of over 2500 classrooms in the 1970s. You surely remember those overcrowded classrooms!!!



- Marc Dagbovi

STAYING IN TOUCH: At the last FOT board meeting I was asked to arrange an interview with a current or past Peace Corps Togo Volunteer for this newsletter (see p.4). Contacting volunteers today is a lot easier than it was when I was in Togo in the late 1960s, and I learned that there is a group on the web networking site, Facebook.com, dedicated to Peace Corps-Togo, with members including current, former and soon-to-be volunteers in Togo. Joining the group required creating a free Facebook account (go to <http://facebook.com> and follow the simple Sign Up instructions on the home page), then, once you've logged in, type "peace corps togo" in the search window to the right of Logout and search for the group(s). It turns out there are actually several Peace Corps Togo groups, some of which have their membership restricted, but the main group, Peace Corps Togo, should be listed first. Click on Join Group and enjoy.

Once you're in the group you can participate in the Discussion Board, read or post things on The Wall, view the publicly-posted photos and articles and see who the other members are. To see the private information from other members you have to become their friend, which you can do by clicking on Add as Friend when displaying their public information. If they accept you, which is not guaranteed, you can see their personal photos, articles and activities (and they can see yours), and contact them directly. Facebook is a good way to connect to what's happening in Peace Corps Togo today, and also waste a lot of time on your computer.

- Dave Rabinowitz

TREASURER'S REPORT: NOVEMBER 9, 2008

Money on Hand

Citibank Balance—\$3458.42
Merrill Lynch Balance (presumably they will be changing names)
\$4360.29 (as of 7/31/08 - this will be considerably lower now).

Monies Received

108 donations/memberships in 2008 (most before March)
Renken Fund \$425
Karen Wade Fund \$7060 (plus \$46 received recently)
NPCA (about \$35 per month) direct deposit

Calendars \$860

Expenses this Year

PO Box fee \$128, Register.com \$93, Internet Planners \$65.45

Sent to Togo Earlier this Year

Quick Action Grants (5/2/08) \$2040
Renken Fund and Karen Wade Projects \$7525

Board Approved to Send ASAP (November 2008 Meeting)

\$2040 (includes \$1754 Quick Action, \$46 Karen Wade Fund, \$200 Training Health Educators Project, and \$40 fee to send funds)

- Susan White

**FRIENDS OF TOGO / LES AMIS DU TOGO
2008-2009 MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone (W) _____ (H) _____

Please include service location, date and program: _____

Dues and contributions fund all of FOT's projects in Togo. Dues are \$25/year (\$35 for overseas members). Both are tax deductible. Of the \$25.00, \$22.60 is tax-deductible, and \$2.40 goes towards FOT's operating costs and the newsletter.

PLEASE CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOXES:

- Renewal New Member Address Correction (Include original label)
- 1-year free membership for: -New RPCV, or -Togolese National
- Enclosed are my annual dues of: \$25 \$35 overseas
- Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: Friends of Togo (FOT), and Mail to: FOT, P.O. Box 9436, Washington, DC 20016 USA.

FOT FUTURE DIRECTORY:

- Please check the box if you **do not** wish to be listed in the future FOT directory.
- Please **do not** include my name, phone number, or other information in the next FOT directory.

HARD-COPY OR ON-LINE VERSION OF THE NEWSLETTER:

- Please continue to send me the FOT newsletter in the mail.
- I prefer to read the on-line version of the newsletter (at www.friendsoftogo.org. or possibly sent by email). Please **do not** send the hardcopy version in the mail.

Claudia Godina ('66-'68) reports that she took a culinary tour of India with Lee to celebrate 35 years of marriage. She still uses her French (perfected in Togo) with Lee's business partners in Bruges, half the population of St. Martin, Haitian checkers in my local A&P, and any French I meet on frequent visits to Manhattan. She hopes to revisit Africa (after 40 years) soon.

This summer was a busy one for Michael Saks ('64-'66 Kpalimé) and his wife, Judy. He writes, "In June, we attended the graduation of our daughter Nora from the University of Toronto. She earned 'highest distinction' in her double major of Environmental Studies and Anthropology. Then, less than a month later, Judy and I celebrated the marriage of our son Jonathan to Erin Strauss on July 3. A rabbi from Richmond married the couple in a field on Shannon Farm, where Erin grew up, near Waynesboro, VA. And a week after the wedding, Judy and I visited China for three weeks on a fascinating adventure arranged by Grand Circle Travel. Now we are happy to be back home in Rockville, MD, where I work part-time for Borders Books and Music."

Andrew Winters ('76-'79) died suddenly in December, 2007. He was an active member of the Rotary Club of Potomac (MD), and at the time of his death he was working on raising money to fund the building of wells for the village of Koka, Togo. In his memory, the club continues to work on this project. In November there were two fund raising events which netted more than \$8,000 for the project. Bill Cocke will be providing the technical assistance for the well maintenance and installation, and training for the local villagers. Also involved is the Rotary Club of Dapaong.

Betty Clark ('76-'79) recently retired from GAO and is waiting to hear where she will be posted, as she has been accepted as a Peace Corps Volunteer again. In the small world of coincidences, she recently heard that Linda Golden, the daughter of a high school friend, is currently a PCV in Togo. And FOT has approved funding for a training project that Linda submitted.

Patrick O'Hare ('77-'79) is currently living in Charlottesville, VA with his wife Sara, and son Patrick Andrew. After Togo, he went to law school and then spent 22 years in active duty in the Army. His last position was the director of the Army's legal center in Charlottesville. When he retired in 2005, he stayed on as deputy director in the same organization. He wrote that he has limited contacts from Togo RPCVs, but has kept touch with David Boudreau who is with Homeland Security, and Tony Solomita who works in NYC and is closing in on retirement eligibility. He also reports that Bill Bruton is a banker and Bill Taylor is the dean of a business school in New Mexico.

Amy Nelson ('95-'97) was married to Scott Sommer (no Togo service . . . yet) on September 6, 2008 in Washington, D.C. Many thanks to Amy for her hard work on FOT Projects!

News from Philadelphia: FOT-Philly has not been very active during this year 2008 for several reasons: we lost a few members who moved to other cities: Gavin Oxman moved to Seattle, Christina- Christina, where are you these days??-; others got caught in various other activities, including electing our new President, which for me took about 10 months of my life! But what a ride! In February, I decided to support Senator Obama and became a team leader for our neighborhood team. We registered thousands of new voters, did not get discouraged about our loss in the Pennsylvania primary, and kept on working throughout the summer: building our team, recruiting volunteers, canvassing the neighborhood to identify new supporters, designing, making and

selling buttons to buy equipment for our office, waving signs at each of Obama's visits in Philly. This has been the best campaign I participated in, superb organization, clear leadership, amazing volunteers along the way! See you at the inauguration!

Members of FOT-Philly continue to support Hope Through Health (www.hthglobal.org) and AED, the HIV/AIDS program in Kara. We raised a few hundred dollars at a special event in the art gallery VIVANT (<http://www.vivantartcollection.com/>) and we will resume our activities in 2009. Hope you will join us if you move to Philly: [christianedgeisler\(AT\)gmail.com](mailto:christianedgeisler(AT)gmail.com)



Heidi Hartsough (Togo 95-98) and Oliver Hack (Togo 97-99) continue to live in San Francisco, married in 2003 and now have two kids: Sequoia (5) and Masai (21 months). They are extremely independent and strong willed girls - not to mention fun and silly beyond words! Heidi loves her work as an L&D nurse at UCSF Medical Center and is planning on getting her midwifery degree within the next few years. Oliver recently left the non-profit world working with children, youth and family services in SF and has now taken the position as Chief Operating Officer at the SF Mayor's Office of Housing. So far so good. If anyone is passing through San Francisco, do contact us and stop by - we'd love to catch up with you! [oliverhack\(AT\)fastmail.fm](mailto:oliverhack(AT)fastmail.fm), [hhartsough\(AT\)hotmail.com](mailto:hhartsough(AT)hotmail.com)



INTERVIEW WITH PCV ARWEN WOLFE

Q. You're in the Natural Resource Management program. What kind of work do you do? Most of the work I have done with relation to the NRM program has been with trees. I have worked with local counterparts building nurseries, and raising and planting a wide variety of different tree species to use in various ways. We have completed several small reforestation projects in individual family compounds, at the local schools, and around my village. I have also given presentations about the uses of various trees, such as Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) and its value as a natural pesticide, and *Leucaena leucocephala* and its ability to fix nitrogen into the soil, acting as a natural fertilizer to Northern Togo's poor soil. Trees can also be used to control erosion and for food production.

For this past year's Arbor Day, we had a community soccer game and a presentation at the local secondary school (CEG), presenting to the roughly 600 students, as well as their teachers and roughly 150 community members. The focus of the presentation was *Moringa oleifera*, an amazing tree with edible leaves and young seed pods, which contain numerous vitamins, minerals, and even protein. My homologue translated an adapted version of the children's story "The Giving Tree" to teach *Moringa*'s many uses in a fun, easy to understand way. We concluded the festivities by having all the "importantes" of the village (the chiefs and presidents of associations, etc) plant a *Moringa* tree on the school grounds. The chief of each of the six villages was given a *Moringa* tree to take home.

I also occasionally give presentations on other simple ways to manage our natural resources (and reduce waste) such as how to build and optimally use improved cook-stoves, how to can tomatoes, make jam and soap and lotion.

I am currently in the process of preparing several funded projects. Next February, we hope to paint a map of the world on the side of the only CEG in my village. I also hope to be able to build several wells in the most rural, inaccessible village of Soundina-Bas (which is made up of 6 separate villages), and Powai, which currently has 1 well for 800 people. I am also trying to secure a stock of basic medications for the health clinic in Powai, which will serve the population of 800 people, who do not have easy access to another facility once the rains have come (there is one rickety wood and rope bridge across the river, but if you are sick or pregnant, it is virtually impossible to leave.)

As you can see, I do work outside of the NRM sector. Twice monthly I help weigh babies at the dispensary in my village, to monitor children's weight gain and encourage proper nutrition. I am planning a presentation on how to use *Moringa* to improve nutrition. Togolese are used to incorporating leaves into their sauces, so it won't be a challenge to get them to try *Moringa* leaves instead of, for example, kapok leaves.

I also help with Club Espoir, a monthly club for children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. I recently took part in Togo's AIDS Ride, a bike tour around each of Togo's five regions giving presentations on HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and discrimination. I was a counselor at a girls' summer camp, Camp UNITE this past July. We talked about a lot of issues such as sexual harassment and rape, time management and self-confidence, that aren't generally covered at home or in school. We also made sure we had plenty of time for singing, dancing, and playing.

Q. Are you working with host nationals or other organizations?

I work with several wonderful people in my village and a few in the regional capital of Kara (18kms away), but have not yet worked with any organizations.

Q. How is the local response to your program? Most people I come in contact with are receptive to the NRM program. Soundina-Bas is an agricultural community, and most of these people depend on their fields for their livelihoods. My villagers are amazed and grateful to learn about the relatively easy ways they can manage their natural resources and improve their soil, reduce crop loss from insects, conserve tomatoes. I do however find that, because their lives are so closely tied to their crops, they sometimes don't make time to learn new ways to do things, as that requires them to take time away from working in the fields. It's an unfortunate but difficult obstacle to combat.

Q. Could you tell us about your living situation? Are you with a family, with other volunteers, or in your own place? I live with an amazing family. I live in half of one of a cluster of houses that make up the concession of our extended family. I have a bedroom, a storage room, a large kitchen/living room, and a small bathroom with a bucket-flush toilet

Friends of Togo / Les Amis du Togo

and a drain in the corner for bucket showers. An indoor bathroom, I'm spoiled, I know! My homologue lives with his immediate family in the other half of my building, and there are approximately 10 other buildings making



up our concession.

Q. How do you get around? Do you bicycle, walk, ride a mo-ped? I walk a lot, especially to get around my village. To get to the regional capital of Kara, where I buy vegetables, fruit, bread, and other staples

(Soundina-Bas' local market doesn't provide much more than tomatoes, onions, and soap), collect my mail, and charge my cell phone and camera, I either bike, or walk 2kms through the bush (which gets interesting in the rainy season as it becomes a swamp, with knee-deep rivers running through it) to the paved road and then get a taxi into the city. Only select Volunteers are allowed to ride motos (motorcycles), on certain routes, and I am not one of them.

Q. What are you eating and how and where are you getting it? About half of the time, I eat food prepared by my family. This usually means pate, cornmeal mush, dipped in a variety of spicy sauces. When there are yams, we also eat fufu (a sticky mashed-potato-esque dish, which you dip in sauce). Right now, watch (rice and beans) has been common. Occasionally I get a piece of fish or chicken, but my family is poor so usually cannot afford it. The other half of the time I cook for myself, making things like spaghetti and chili (canned corn has been a favorite culinary discovery), and other American dishes. I can always find some type of vegetable in Kara, although there isn't much variety, and sometimes prices are very high. There is usually some sort of fruit in season (mangoes, bananas, pineapples, guavas, watermelons, etc) as well.

Q. Was your area affected by the recent floods? My area wasn't directly affected by the floods, other than some fields became water-logged, causing minor crop damage. The bridges that fell in the South did cause transportation issues, and the increases in the price of gas and food



and other items this caused were definitely felt.

Q. What motivated you to join the Peace Corps? Peace Corps had been bouncing around in my head ever since high school, when a friend first predicted that it was something I would do in my life; I hadn't heard of it before, but thought it sounded fun. As I headed into my final year of university, I didn't have a concrete plan of what I wanted to do next - more school, a job, I didn't know. And I knew I wanted to do Peace Corps at some point in my life, so I decided why not now, when I'm not tied down with a family or career?

INTERVIEW WITH PCV ARWEN WOLFE

Q. Has it been what you expected? I tried to come without expectations, but I knew I would love it. It just fits my personality. I was expecting to live without running water and electricity, and I have neither (they're overrated, anyway). It's just small things which are different. I took for granted I would live in a round little mud hut with a straw roof, but I don't. I also see other Volunteers more than I expected, but Togo is a tiny country. It is physically impossible to be hours or days away from another Volunteer.

Q. Could you tell us about your most memorable moment up to now? "Most memorable" is almost impossible to answer. The greatest moments are always with my family, and I have a greatest moment almost every day. Yesterday, however, I took my brother / neighbor / counterpart



Essossinam to the ocean for the first time in his 29 years. He is a wonderfully motivated, caring, devoted person. I wish I could clone him and give one to every Volunteer. That is why it was so special for me to be able to bring him to Lomé for the first time in his life, and show him the Atlantic. I blindfolded him, and led him by the arm across the sand towards the edge of the surf. He could hear and smell the ocean, and was terrified I was going to make him go in the water.

About 10 feet from the edge of the waves, I told him to take off the blindfold. The look of awe on his face was priceless, childlike in its wonder. He took it all in for a few moments, and then started drilling me with questions, such as "how far does the sand go out" and "how do the boats move?" I persuaded him to let the waves wash over his feet, and he smiled and giggled and grabbed my arm with fear. We walked along the coast for a while, stopping to watch dozens of men pulling at an enormous fishing net. We made it as far as the border with Ghana, and Essossinam enjoyed a sweet cake bought from atop a woman's head while looking across to another nation. He thanked me for taking him, but I think I got more out of watching him than he did out of seeing the ocean for the first time.

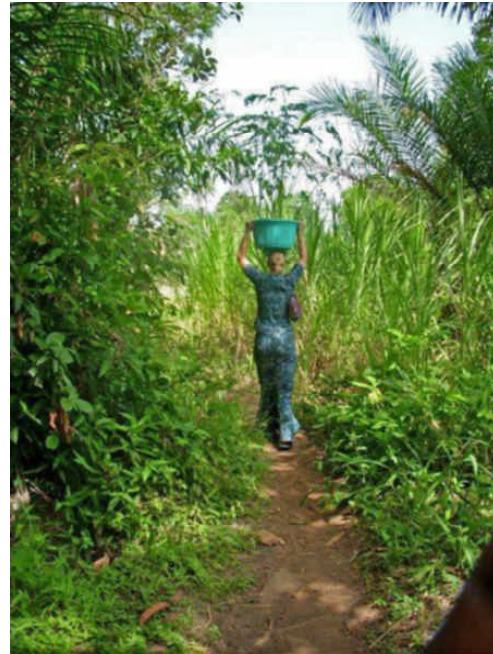
Q. What is your favorite place in Togo? Togo is a small country, but one of extraordinary beauty. My favorite place, and the one I find the most heartbreakingly beautiful, hands down, is my village. There's a place between my house and the paved road where there are a series of hills. I have spent countless hours gazing down from these hills to the village I call Home, nestled at the base of the Kabyé mountains, and to Bénin in the distance in the other direction. Part of every Volunteer's service, of course, is self-discovery and contemplation. This is the place I go to think about everything my service has brought about.

Q. What was the local reaction to the recent US presidential election? In the weeks leading up to the election, my family and friends in the village had a lot of questions about the candidates. They found it a little hard to believe that American voters would consider electing a black man as their leader, but I explained how a lot has changed since the 1950s and '60s and how, a lot of people (maybe most, seeing how the election turned out) no longer believe that the color of a person's skin means anything more than a different amount of melanin (I explained that there was "quelque chose scientifique" in people's skin that caused the difference). A lot of people choose to look past something so insignificant and instead make their choices based on a candidate's values, ideals, character, charisma, etc. I said that, especially from my area of the country (the Pacific Northwest, I'm from Seattle-même), a lot of people felt that OBAMA was the better candidate because of his ideas and, at least for some, because of his cross-cultural experiences.

My family listened to updates on the radio in the weeks preceding the election, and in general people asked me if I was American and who I would

be voting for. It sparked a number of interesting conversations with the most random people on the street, in bush taxis, and at fufu bars. Election Day was pretty calm. I left my village in order to watch CNN via satellite in the regional capital of Kara, and was informed of OBAMA's grandmother's passing by my seat-mate in the taxi. People knew about the elections, definitely, but it wasn't anything wild. I heard of some families staying up all night with their radios to follow election news. Most families are up and working long before the sun, though, so most people heard about OBAMA's victory from their radios about the same time people in America did. I called my family just after sunrise to make sure they knew the results, because I knew they were anxious, and they told me they'd heard it on the radio. I grabbed a taxi back to village and told everyone I met along the way that OBAMA had won. Some people cheered, some ignored me, but most at least gave a little smile.

Q. What are the current programs in Togo and do you have much contact with volunteers in other programs? Natural Resource Management (NRM) mainly focuses on three things: trees, bees, and dirt. "Trees" signifies things such as reforestation and using trees for erosion control, and food production. "Bees" is beekeeping, the only animal husbandry that Volunteers are currently trained in in Togo. "Dirt" is soil conservation, using methods such as compost, green manure, Nitrogen Fixing Trees (NFTs) and cover cropping.



Girls Education and Empowerment (GEE) Volunteers work in areas such as working to stop forced marriage and child trafficking. Girls' clubs which promote self-confidence are popular. Women's literacy programs are also a great topic. Community Health and AIDS Prevention (CHAP) Volunteers focus on things like baby weighing, nutrition, personal hygiene, and disease prevention. Volunteers work at dispensaries and rural health clinics, giving talks on various topics, and conduct

home visits, checking up on malnourished babies and people infected with HIV/AIDS.

Small Enterprise Development (SED) Volunteers help businesses start up, and teach healthy business practices and money management. Village Savings and Loans is probably the most popular topic dealt with.

Because Togo is so small, it's difficult not to run into other Volunteers pretty regularly. We are generally posted in "clusters" so most people have someone 5 or 10 kilometers away. Many Volunteers have site-mates, or are only a kilometer or two away from another American. This makes it easy to collaborate on cross-sectoral work, and Volunteers frequently help each other out. Your local SED Volunteer may come to your village to give a talk on Village Savings and Loans, for example. It is also fun to combine projects, such as a union between NRM and CHAP work, holding a workshop on Moringa and everything from how to start a nursery to how to get the most out of its nutritious leaves.

I hope this has been helpful!

Wili wili wili!

- Arwen Wolfe

Participation, Hygiene, and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST)

Project The PHAST training session was held in Sérégbéne on October 24-26, 2007, and led by the Red Cross Regional Coordinator for Water, Hygiene, and Sanitation projects, Mr. Achille Lokossou-Dah-Lande. There were 22 participants, 20 of whom were women.

The training was highly successful, and consisted of several activities using laminated and colorful 11x13 drawings depicting different sanitation scenarios. For each activity, village participants are arranged in a circle with an animator in the middle. The participants are shown the relevant pictures one by one and asked to describe what they see, prompted by the animator to point out specific details related to the sanitation topic at hand. The images are then tossed onto the ground. Two or more participants then come up and arrange the six or nine images from the least to the most sanitary or healthy; no prompting is given. The volunteers must then go through each one and explain why

Other activities include Guinea Worm and General Village Sanitation, as well as multi-ladder scenarios regarding water collection, transport and storage; and the many different paths of fecal-oral transmission with relevant barriers to contamination and transmission.

Since the end of the training, the participants have applied what they learned. On the following market day they broke up into three groups, and demonstrated the various ladders in areas of the village. Similar activities are planned for the immediate future.

Birth Certificate Project

This project, undertaken by Groupement CADO, obtained birth certificates for 150 children. FOT has funded certificates for an additional 150 children.



they placed it where they did in the hierarchy. "Why is this healthier than that?" Often, in the course of explanation, they will change their opinion and rearrange as needed. Only after they are satisfied with their work is the rest of the audience invited to give their opinion. Once a consensus is made, the volunteers are then asked to note where on the ladder their own village is situated. If there are other individuals in the group who are at a different point on the ladder, they are encouraged to say so. To use the Sanitation Ladder as an example, perhaps most will point to the image of someone defecating in the bush (the lowest rung), but some will point to the second image of defecating into a hole to be filled in with dirt immediately, and still one or two others may point to an image of a traditional latrine further up the ladder, or to another still further up of a VIP latrine with a hand-washing station. The trainer then asks what is needed to go from the lowest rung to a higher rung achieved by one of the other individuals. These discussions are always interesting, as people realize that many of these cost nothing, or very little when compared to the health benefits, and then adding hand-washing improves any latrine situation.



Village Savings and Loan Project

PCV Ross Mazer created two Village Savings and Loans to respond to chronic poverty in the canton of Sérégbéne. These associations encouraged their members to save money, and provided loans to begin or enlarge a business or commerce activity.

Initial meetings were used to explain the procedures of the Savings and Loans, elect officers, and make all decisions related to the operation of the association. For example, in one village the members chose to set the price of a share at 500 F CFA, to allow two months for members to reimburse loans, and to charge a monthly five percent interest rate.

The Village Savings and Loans have also gone through a month (two meetings) of saving money to create a sizeable fund from which to

draw loans. They managed to save considerably more than anticipated. At the recent meeting the first round of loans were distributed. In one group, for example, after only three rounds of savings the S&L was able to distribute 55,000 F CFA in loans.

This saving "cycle" is set to finish on March 1, 2009. At the end of the cycle the money in the safe will be distributed to the members, according to the number of shares purchased by each. However, the amount in the safe will be more than the sum total of shares bought, since it also includes interest paid on loans and any fines. As a result, when the sum is added up at the end of a cycle and divided by the number of shares purchased, the price of a share will inevitably rise. Even those who never took out a loan will make money.

There are several safeguards in the Village Savings and Loan system that are responsible for its success. First, there is a safe with three keys. That means that four people (the three who have keys and the treasurer who keeps the safe) must come together before being able to have access to the safe. The members are therefore confident in the safety of their investment. In addition, each member has his/her own bank book with a record of the number of shares bought. This buying of shares happens in front of everyone as well. The bank books are stamped every time a share is bought. This means that it is not necessary to be literate in order to understand the system. A member can simply count the number of stamps and multiply by the price of a share (500 F, for example) to know how much money he/she saved. This project is a great way to create capital and investment particularly in rural villages where bank services are unknown.

A spin-off project was the **Vacation Enterprise Program**. This project offers scholarships to pay for girls' school fees. However, rather than simply paying the fees, the scholarship, given right before school vacation, provides the start-up cash for each girl to do a commerce activity.

Each girl chose a commerce activity and wrote out an action plan, listing her proposed expenses, revenue, and profit. One girl, for example, chose to buy jewelry (necklaces and earrings) in bulk and to resell them individually in her village. The other two are doing a diversified commerce consisting of buying and selling gasoline, onions, salt, spices, and other condiments.

All three girls have started their work and so far each is making the profit that was predicted. Each week the girls meet to discuss any problems they may be having. They also turn in 500 CFA. This money is used to pay the school fees in September. Any money they make in addition to the 500 F a week is for them to use as they like. All three girls' profits exceed 500 F per week. Both the girls and their parents were required to sign a contract upon receiving the scholarship, promising to abide by the terms therein.

La Cellule Familiale Conference

PCV Ross Mazer conducted this three-day conference in Sérégbé. Thirteen married couples (twenty-six participants) attended. Topics covered included family planning, methods of contraception, family conflict resolution, children's education, and financial management. A follow-up activity was conducted in the weeks following the conference. The PCV and trainers met with each couple individually and asked them about the topics, and about problems they encountered putting what they learned into practice. The majority of the couples seemed to have taken significant efforts to apply what they had learned. For example, one couple said that before the conference they did not know that parents were involved in education. They believed that it was entirely the responsibility of the teachers. Since the conference, they have approached the teachers to find out how their children are doing in school. They discovered that their children are doing poorly and cannot even read. Fortunately the children are young, and the parents now take a more active interest in their schooling. As a small indication of this, when the children come back from school they are no longer allowed to greet their parents in the vernacular but must use French.

Other couples had begun family planning and followed monthly budgets.

FOT and Peace Corps Project Capsules

Brownie Lee, Country Director of PC Togo, used FOT Quick Action money for 21 tree planting projects in the Maritime, Plateaux, and Savane regions.

A fundraising bike ride resulted in over \$7,000 for the Karen Waid Scholarship Fund.

Family and friends of PCV Beth Renckens raised \$1,000 for tree planting. Beth reported as of 4/2/08 that 1,000 seeds and poly-pots were distributed and 21 men and 6 women attended the mandatory training sessions.

Brownie Lee was able to obtain a \$4,000 grant from the Embassy for Club Espoir and Group de Parole activities.

\$2,545 was sent to Barkoissi for flood relief and to buy school benches.

- Amy Nelson

TOGO RPCV TO MARCH IN INAUGURAL PARADE!!!

Hats off to FOT VP Anne Kaiser for winning the Parade Lottery -- She will be one of 200 RPCVs to march in the Obama Inaugural Parade!

- We hope she'll carry the Togolese flag.



PEACE CORPS - TOGO

To give us an update of Peace Corps-Togo, PCD Brownie Lee was kind enough to send us a copy of the PCV newsletter, VIN (Volunteer Information Newsletter). As the title implies, it is very informative, and helpful, and includes site visit schedules, photos, a Blog game, etc.

Much of the same information could be found in an old, whimsical, nostalgic, hand-typed (and illustrated) copy of the PCV newsletter put together by Bob Johnson and friends in 1977. There were no Blogs then, but there were two poems.

The use of computers, cell phones and/or text messaging has clearly had a profound effect on Peace Corps - Togo, mainly because of increased communication between staff and volunteers. Knowing that APCDs can be quickly reached, even from remote areas, for help and advice when a project isn't working has got to be encouraging, especially when the current programs depend so much on volunteer initiative and enthusiasm. The establishment of host country counterparts also seems like a great way to help volunteers in their work and cultural experience. And there are many training opportunities for today's volunteers, such as project design! There is also more reporting and accountability.

Peace Corps is evolving with the times!

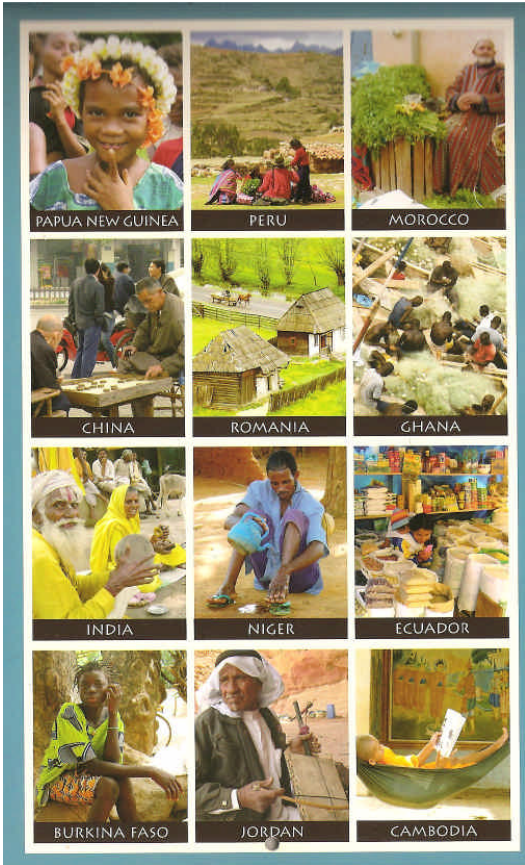
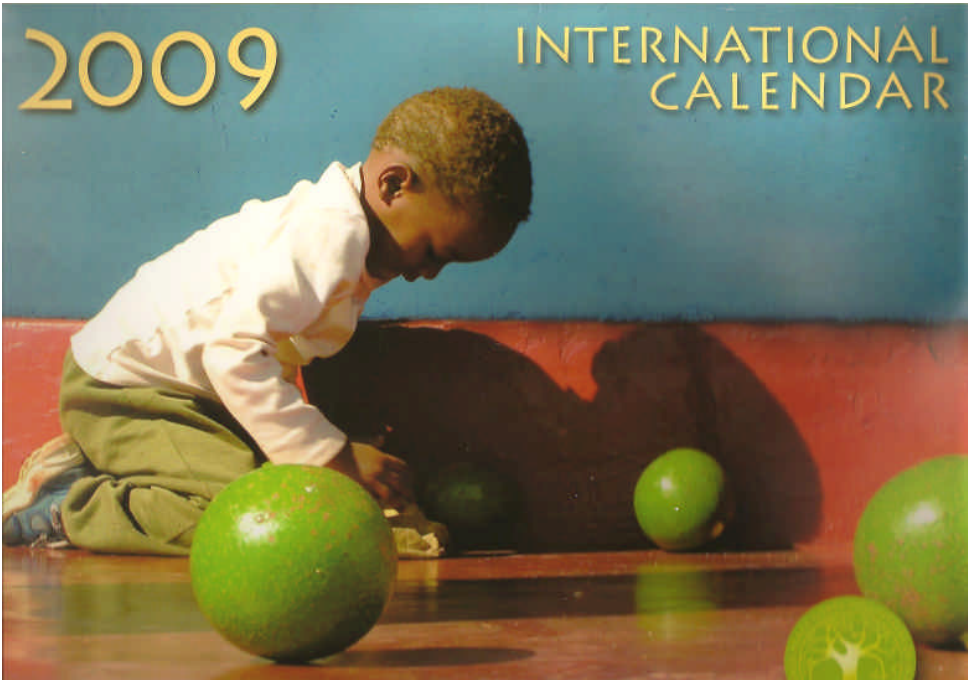
- Lisa Roberts



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FOT 2008 Picnic and Annual Meeting
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Ewé

Que la Bonne Santé et la Paix Soient Avec Vous
Français

❄️ *The Friends of Togo* ❄️ *Les Amis du Togo* ❄️

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Dues and contributions fund all of FOT's projects in Togo. Dues are \$25/year (\$35 for overseas members). Both are tax deductible. Of the \$25.00, \$22.60 is tax-deductible, and \$2.40 goes towards FOT's operating costs and the newsletter.

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