

How do you drill a well?

March Team 2011

That was the question that dominated the thoughts of seven members of Crestwicke Baptist Church. In an 8 hour layover in Paris airport, with malaria tablets in one hand and a coffee in the other, seven men faced the unknown of well drilling in Burkina Faso. What would we be required to do? How could we help the well drilling experts, given that only one of us had ever



been involved in the well drilling process before? Those seven men, who faced the unknown, were Egil Rasmussen, Rick Willis, Stephen Fisher, Graeme McKeown, Dwight Smikle, Pete Giesbrecht and Tim Cairns.

When we arrived in Ouagadougou, the capital city of Burkina Faso, the first thing that hit us was the heat. Standing on the stairway down from the plane, the heat felt intense, yet it was dark it was almost 10 o'clock at night. The heat was something we had to get used to, as temperatures on the trip ranged from 45 – 53 degrees Celsius during the day and around 25 degrees at night.

On that first night we caught, but a glimpse, of the poverty of Burkina Faso. Depending on what report you read, Burkina Faso is listed somewhere between the 3rd and the 6th poorest country on the planet. As dawn burst forth on a new day in a new continent, we saw the poverty of this country before us. It is hard to describe what Burkina Faso looks like, pictures don't do it justice, neither do words. The country seems to be beyond any description of poverty we had encountered before. People are in need in Burkina Faso.

As we left the capital city and went out with the drilling equipment into the north of the country, the barren, flat, landscape dominated our view. The ground was parched and the imminent need of water was apparent. But the question still dominated our thoughts, how do you drill a well?

We made base camp in the regional capital of Gourcy. To call it a regional capital, gives the town a dignity beyond what we saw. If Ouagadougou was poor, then Gourcy was beyond anything we had experienced before. At 6am we left Gourcy and made our way to the first drill site, a small village about 25 minutes drive from base camp, the village of Sandebas. This village has no real discernable road taking you to it. Not many people from the western world have ventured to this remote location. But what took us there was a need, identified by the Assemblies of God churches in Burkina Faso.

Sandebas has no church, Sandebas is notionally Muslim, but in reality the people worship a hybrid of African animistic religion and Muslim



belief. The town was served by one well, a well that didn't pump water in a very efficient fashion. The people of Sandebas needed water. They needed water more than even they knew.

The burning question for us was, how do we drill a well? That question was at long last answered in Sandebas. Mark Collier and Matt Durkee, our hosts from **Friends in Action**, spent 2 hours showing us what we would be required to do. The well drilling process is actually fairly simple. A large hammer is lowered into the ground. Once rock is discovered the hammer is removed and a hard casing is put into the ground to prevent the hole from collapsing. A smaller hammer is then lowered into the ground until we hit water. Well that is the theory!

We were asked to help with many aspects of the drilling process, putting rods unto the drill bit, lowering the casing, helping with machinery operation, but above all we were the shoveling team. The dirt that came out of the ground needed to be shoveled away. This was backbreaking work in the heat of the African sun. Hard but rewarding work!



After drilling down 340 feet on two occasions and finding no water, after 6 long days, we finally hit water on the 3rd attempt. That was an amazing moment, the woman of the village danced, the children of the village cheered, the men of the village were shaking our hands in heartfelt thanks. The people had a viable well to use alongside the other well in the village.

We moved from Sandebas back to the village of Gourcy. The intention was to drill a well for a school that partnered with the Assemblies of God. However after 3 days at this location, it became apparent that we would not be able to drill a well, however, we left a viable location for a hand dug well at a later date.

From Gourcy we moved camp to the town of Soukula on the outskirts of Ouagadougou. This time we were teaming up with SIM to drill a well for a schoolhouse and village. Praise the Lord that the drilling was easy, in one afternoon we hit water. The village now has a well that will deliver a clean water supply for many years to come.

As we contemplated our trip, we all wondered how God would use us. What we realized is God knows what he is doing! On four occasions the drilling equipment broke down and serious repairs were required, yet the expertise needed to repair the equipment was within the team. Hoses were mended, brackets welded, hitches were changed, engines fixed and maintained. Every problem was solved, not in our strength, but in His.

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I think what we discovered above all, is that we do not drill the wells. We can only do what the Lord wants us to do. These wells were not our wells, the holes that we drilled were not our water holes, and the machinery we fixed we did unto His glory. The work is His. We are but His instruments in the work he has called us to undertake.



The wells that He enabled us to participate in, provide physical water, but the physical water is but a means to the people hearing of the living water that comes in relationship with Jesus Christ. When we were in Burkina Faso, the Jesus video was shown to the residents of Sandebas. The people of Gourcy have Pastor Etienne and his team who are ministering to them and the people of Soukula have the diligent service Pastor Ishmael and SIM who minister to them daily.

Please pray for these men. The villages they work in are mainly Muslim, sharing the gospel is difficult and dangerous. But the Spirit is at work! Praise the Lord for the inroads the gospel is making in the hearts of

the people of Burkina Faso. Praise the Lord that gospel is being proclaimed and that people are turning to Jesus Christ, the one in whose name we drink and never thirst.

How do we drill a well? A well of Living Water is drilled as we proclaim the gospel, through acts of service, through the proclamation of the word of God and by the love and care we show to others, then the well is drilled as we see the Holy Spirit at work, claiming the lost for the Kingdom of God. That is how a real well of life is drilled.

Thank-you for your prayers and financial support, the Lord is blessing the people of Burkina Faso