

An E-mail from the Richter family working in Burkina Faso with FIA, January 2010

Nawile is a small village off the main road in a remote place, where more than 700 people live. They are all cultivators of the earth, surviving daily by growing their own food. This year the food situation is difficult due to a less than normal rainfall. Common illnesses are diarrhea, malaria, and stomach problems. There are only two deep wells (both of which are broken) and only two open hand dug wells (which have limited water) to serve this entire community.



Unable to find adequate water, people resort to gathering water from the low creek beds, knowing that the water will make them sick. It's sad to see people gathering water from the same place that animals drink and urinate.

When this source of water dries up by the end of January, the women are forced to travel to the next dry creek bed in a neighboring village 9 kilometers away! (That's 5.4 miles!)

Early in the morning, around 6am, the women travel 9km with their water containers to gather water. After a rest from the searing sun and heat, they start back with the water on their heads, returning to their homes at 4pm. That's a 10-hour trip to get water that we wouldn't even put in our toilets! In our pre-rehab interview with village leaders we also learned that there is an outbreak of pink eye that is affecting 319 children and adults in the village. Without sufficient money and access to medicine this epidemic has been going on for months.



How humbling and sad it is to learn of their plight, and yet how exciting it is to be used by God to bring about the restoration of an old broken well.



On January 12th 2010, people started arriving at the well early in the morning in expectation of those who were coming to repair the well, **which had been broken for a couple of years**. When we arrived there were close to 200 people waiting for us, (nothing like a little crowd pressure on our first rehab.)

Members of the church in Nawile were gathered under a nearby tree singing songs of praise in their native tongue to the beat of drums. They had carried water and dolo (a local drink from millet grain) and peanuts for those who had come, some from villages 20 km away. It was quite a scene.

Matt Durkee, field administrator with Friends in Action International from Ouagadougou had come to help me and to provide services for which I didn't have the equipment such as cleaning out the well and taking deep water samples. What we thought was going to be a simple quick rehab turned into an all day job!



After greeting village leaders and praying together for God's blessing that we could get this well fixed, we began pulling out the old broken pump a little after 9am. Church leaders from various villages had arrived and we quickly put them to work learning the various jobs needed to do the repair. So, we were repairing the well as well as doing on the job training. Somewhere around 11:30am the old rusty pipes were out of the hole. It wasn't hard to see the problem; several pipes had holes pierced in them from rust, and the foot valve was clogged up with lots of chunks of rust.

Matt then measured the water level and well depth, which turned out to be very encouraging. There was a lot of water down there, good water. The static water level was at 12 metres and the well depth was 36 metres.



After inserting a submersible pump powered by a generator, we were pumping water out of the well at better than 1 litre/second. To our surprise the water recharge rate was great; after an initial draw down and pumping for an entire hour, the water level only went down 12 cm! Matt roughly calculated a water volume production rate of 5 cubic meters per hour. Praise the Lord! It sure was a good feeling to know there was water in the hole, and plenty of it before installing all the new materials.

After a short break we were back at the wellhead installing the new stainless steel piston and pipes for the India Mark II pump unit. It took a little while for everyone to get into the routine, but soon the pipes were coming and we had a good system going. We ended up only having to install 10 pipes for a working depth of 30 meters trying to remember that the worst of the dry season is yet to come. When we got to the last pipe and were ready to put on the pump head, the pump rod was too long. No problem, just cut the rod and rethread it, right? Stainless steel is very tough and we couldn't get the threader tool started. Now, we didn't know what to do. Replace the last rod and try again?

We called one of our supply contacts that said we needed to pull the entire system and tighten the stainless pump rods all the way on the threads to reduce the length above. So, a little reluctantly, we started pulling the entire well again, unloosening the pipe and tightening the pump rods more fully, reapplying the horsehair joint material and connecting. However, when we finally finished with that proposition we still had the same problem! The pump rod was too long!

Another call revealed that the pipe man had forgotten to give me a special piece to account for the difference in length. Now, we were faced at possibly not being able to complete the

well due to a lack of materials, this after having installed the well "twice". My heart sank at the thought of all these people who had come to see the well repaired and the church who had sung out their hearts all day in anticipation and all our volunteers who worked tirelessly in the hot sun.

Like we had done many times already, we stopped to pray and ask for God's blessing and guidance. Despite my feelings of desperation, God was still at work inspiring one of our volunteers with another solution. The solution was to use a pump rod that still had the threads on it, which made it possible to start the threading tool and thread the rod all the



way down to the correct height. So after that arduous process, we were back on track and ready to mount the pump head. The villagers, sensing our optimism and progress, began singing louder than before and crying out shouts to God. As the sun was sinking below the horizon of the African plain, a church leader from Nawile pumped the well for the very first time, bringing out an abundant supply of water. Everyone broke out in praise, including me with shouts of

hallelujah, that God had prevailed and enabled us to repair the well. Water was flowing again! Clean, fresh water! It was a joyous moment that will forever be remembered in my mind.



A great team effort, perseverance despite difficulty, and an eager willingness to serve brought forth a truly successful 1st rehab!

Hallelujah! We prayed and sang in Dagara for another 30 minutes and took pictures until it got too dark to see. Night had fallen, but not without God bringing water and hope to an entire village!



The next day I traveled out to Nawile to observe how things were going with the new pump. When I arrived at the village center, I was greeted by smiling faces offering calabashes of clean water! At the well, there were about 10 women gathering water and washing clothes. It was so awesome to see those 40 litre basins of sparkling clear water!

At the "Worship at the Well Event", the first Sunday after the rehab, Sodire, the local evangelist, reported that there were 12 new members added to the church that day (the President of the Water Well Committee happened to be the first one!) and 13 families that requested Bible studies in their homes with other family members. It was a great worship event, attended by several hundred people. Some were drawn to what was going on. Others came out of respect for what had been given. As they came to worship they laid down their basins in long lines flowing from the water well. Then, after services, waiting one after the other, the people pumped clean fresh water for their families.

Everyone in the village of Nawile is so happy about having clean water available. Evangelism is exploding. The faith and witness of the church grows everyday. And to top it off, people from the village of Namore (a neighboring village) had come to the worship at the well event requesting that someone come to their village to tell them the Good News. They wanted a church in their village. So, the following Sunday (January 31st) Sodire, along with Nawile church members and myself went to Namore to present the Word in that village for the first time!



Clean water was the immediate need that opened their eyes even more clearly to the Living Water, Jesus Christ. Thank you for joining us in praise to our wonderful God who is mighty to save and who does the unimaginable and the impossible so that the lost can be saved. On behalf of the folks in Nawile and our mission team, I want to thank everyone who had a part in this well rehab. When you look at these pictures I hope you will all feel and know that you too made a valuable contribution to this effort. Without your support, prayers and encouragement we would not be able to serve in this way in Burkina Faso. We're all part of one big team, making a difference in this world, one good deed at a time, in Jesus name! God bless.

Working Together For Those Who Thirst For Something More,
Geoffrey Richter and Family

Isaiah 41:17-20