

FORGET SOCKS. GIVE THE GIFT OF WATER THIS YEAR



“Socks?”

Yes, socks. I have bought my father in law more socks for Christmas every year than either of us care to remember. And that’s the point - neither of us do remember the socks (or the sweater. Or the tie. Or the grilling implements etc). This holiday season, think about coming together with your loved ones and making a donation as a family to WMG’s Burkina Faso project. **Your donation will help families in Deou overcome a water crisis.** It will empower them to understand why water is becoming increasingly scarce, and to implement hands on solutions so that more is done with the water they do have.

“Wait...you’re doing this all backwards.

Where is Burkina Faso? “



It is a small landlocked country in West Africa with about 15 million people. It is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranked 174 out of 177 by the United Nations. One in five children die before their fifth birthday, making it 7th in the world for childhood mortality

world for childhood mortality. Just over half of the population has access to clean water, while less than 15% have access to sanitation.

“So, I should give money because these statistics are so appalling?”

Statistics appeal to me. But they don’t always help you truly understand a situation. So if you donate because you want to change these grim statistics for the better, that’s great. For those of you that need a little something more tangible, that want to know the people behind these statistics, let me introduce you to the community of Deou.

“What’s going on with Deou?”

Deou is a poor, isolated district in northern Burkina Faso. Declining rainfall and recurrent drought mean that increasing numbers of the rural poor, who traditionally rely on farming for a living, are moving to towns and cities looking for work. In the urban areas, this results in unplanned slum and squatter settlements without services like water and sanitation. And the families left behind, consisting of women, children and the elderly have contend with diminishing





resources and an unraveling social fabric. Grazing land is disappearing. Wells are drying up. Cattle, the staple asset in every household are dying. And farming, which barely produced enough during good rain years, is yielding less and less maize every year.



“Forget the cattle for a minute. What about the people?”

Women and girls bear the water burden here. They travel long distances to collect water for the entire family’s needs. These distances are often so great and the wait at the sources so long, it can take a day to collect water. This results in a water relay race – when one family member returns from the trek, another starts out on it. And during times when families cannot find wells that yield water, they get sick drinking water from stagnant water ponds.



“Why is this happening?”

Well, everything depends on the rains here – there is no other alternate source of water. And climate change means diminishing rain falls. But the rain that does fall is increasingly of less and less use since it is not captured in any way. The rains in Deou are intense thunder storms. The land is so eroded from drought and over use that most of the rain water runs off quickly and is lost downstream. Much of the rainwater that does remain is quickly evaporated in the

direct sunlight – very little soaks into the ground to grow plants or recharge groundwater. This is why wells are drying up. Grazing land is also affected since the runoff from the rains is carrying valuable soil and nutrients away with it.

“So what can be done?”

The rains need to make their way underground to recharge the aquifers and keep wells wet. This can be done with checkdams and recharge wells. Large ponds can be constructed to store water for cattle and provide irrigation to grow vegetables for nutrition and income,. Grazing plans can protect water sources, grasslands and cattle. And hygiene programs can ensure that water sources remain safe to drink. WMG can help Deou do these things. By living with the community and working with Deou families, we can empower them to look at all the options and design their own solutions.

“Wait... what’s a checkdam? And what does a recharge well do?”

A checkdam can be as simple as a pile of rocks placed in a waterway to slow down rain water runoff. This prevents erosion and allows more water to soak into ground. And while a regular well means that you take water out of the ground, a recharge well is a way to take surface water and put it back in the ground.



“Does giving money actually make a difference? How come it seems like these problems never get better?”

I get donation fatigue sometimes as well. I get a lot of fundraising appeals about need but rarely any feedback about results. That is why I was so interested in this graph that was recently presented by Bill Gates.



It shows that the number of deaths of children under five has been cut in half between 1960 and 2005. This is amazing, staggering progress. It is because incomes (and all the associated benefits) have increased and because life saving vaccines have become more available. The figure is still about 10 million so more must be done. More livelihood projects, more vaccine distribution and more water projects. Clean water and sanitation can reduce these deaths by over 25%. So yes, donations and philanthropy towards projects like this one make a difference. It's especially tough to give during these times of economic uncertainty and difficulty. But the need for and impact of your donations are just as vital.

“Ok, so no socks this year. My family and I want to make a donation to the Burkina project. How do we do it?”

1. Send a **check** to:
Watershed Management Group,
P.O. Box 65953
Tucson, AZ 85728
2. Pay by **credit card** at: www.watershedmg.org/contribute
Be sure to mark that your donations should go the Burkina Faso Project. If you want to make a gift donation in someone's name, let us know. We will send a gift card to the recipient letting them know of your generosity. Your donation is tax deductible since WMG is a registered 501 c 3 charity. Thank you. And WMG wishes you and your family the best of this holiday season.
3. Pass this flyer on to others or go one step further and make a pitch on our behalf. If you'd like to help us fundraise, email me at sowmya@watershedmg.org

