



Climate Change and Desertification in the Sahel

By Judy Gray, WNC Director

I recently travelled to Fada, Eastern Burkina Faso, to visit the World Neighbours Canada (WNC) program there (we support an organization called APDC). I was lucky to be accompanied by Brad Fee, a colleague with a huge interest in International development, a love of Africa and the ability to speak French.

On the first day we visited Sanikpenga, one of the furthest villages from Fada. We traversed a landscape that is not far removed from what we'd call desert but is known as Sahel. We passed through areas of sparse trees, most of which appeared dead, with little or no foliage; but occasionally came upon a tree in blossom or full leaf - either a balanite (the nuts of which can be used to make soap) or a mango.

All in all, a pretty bleak landscape; colour provided by the red soil and occasionally punctuated by villagers, dressed in incredibly bright batik sarongs and capped with brightly-coloured head coverings. The combined effects of climate change and human degradation have caused desertification.

APDC director, Charles Tankoano, explained that during his adult years

the landscape has changed significantly and where once the trees grew so densely as to make a forest, the plain is becoming more and more like a desert, and trees die each year as the water table drops. The problems of poaching, bush fires, and wanton cutting of trees, in addition to the effects of climate change, are serious issues for the region and combatting these practices is one of the key objectives of APDC's program.

Under the Big Tree

We were greeted near the entry to the village of Sanikpenga by a motorcycle cavalcade sent out to escort us to the village. I was blown away by the welcome - a group of people, numbering about 150, were gathered under the "big tree" to welcome us. By the end of the four days of village visits, I had shaken innumerable hands and been curtsied to by many women.

Handshakes completed, we sat in chairs of honour, as the village leader or elder stood to welcome us. As the language spoken in the villages is mostly Gourmantsche, we definitely needed the translation services of the APDC field workers, David and Mano.

Testimonials, often presented by women, followed the greetings. A woman who had received training in animal fattening and an initial cash loan to buy an animal (a sheep or goat) would stand in the circle centre, tall and proud, and explain how much she'd paid for the animal, how much she'd sold it for, and how she'd used the money earned. Often a woman might have repeated the buying/fattening and selling process several times and now she might actually be raising a cow as well as several goats. Sometimes, the testimonials took up to 40 minutes and during that time, the rest of group was silent and attentive.

Goats and Vegetables

During our visit to Sanikpenga (and other villages), we were taken to see the projects in action. Women proud-



ly showed off the goat, sheep or cow they were raising - a much bigger, healthier animal than those we saw wandering freely in the countryside. Some women had built henhouses and were raising chickens too, though this activity has had problems as chickens are very prone to illness if the care and inoculations are not carried out carefully and on schedule.

In some villages we saw fields that had been planted with vegetables ("jardins maraichages"), likely in late November, so that fresh produce would be available to eat and sell during the dry season (now). Unfortunately, climate change is affecting the water supply in hand-dug wells and many of the plants that have not already matured will wither and die before coming to fruition.

It was exciting to see that in fields where water is available the villagers are harvesting large leafy cabbages and lots of tomatoes! Despite the difficulties, the pride and confidence on the villagers' faces mirrored the words of the testimonials.

Although the project activities have had ups and downs, the fact that people have been able to improve their lives and those of their families is a step in the right direction!



The Goal: Water and Sanitation for Everyone in Ramechhap District

by Dale Dodge, WNC director

The partner organization of World Neighbours Canada, Tamakoshi Sewa Samiti (TSS), has its sights set on an incredible goal – water and sanitation for everyone in Ramechhap. The goal is within striking distance thanks to incredible hard work done by villagers, with funding provided to TSS from World Neighbours Canada, the Aldergrove Rotary Club, Rotary International, the government of Canada, and by many individual donors. Almost 80% of households in the province now have access to piped water, with many of the water systems constructed by villagers themselves with technical and material support from TSS.

For several years, another goal of TSS has also been to facilitate the installation of hygienic toilets in every household in the district, and that goal is getting ever closer. Since 2001, when the toilet program began, World

Neighbours and TSS have overseen the installation of more than 20,000 toilets. The number of households in Ramechhap is estimated to be about 45,000. During that same time, World Neighbours Canada and TSS estimate that the number of gastrointestinal infections has decreased by 75% in the villages with toilets - due in part to the use of the toilets, but also from the installation of water systems to the villages.

Our present project is another one year effort which will see 500 more toilets and 3 water systems installed. The water system in Kanba is in the planning/organizing stage and the other two, in Raat Danda and Aagaute are in the construction phase. All three, and the toilets, should be finished by the end of the summer of 2015.

We were fortunate to have two friends from Kamloops visit Ramechhap last fall. Don Fraser, a Rotarian with long experience in community



development, and Nico Petch, a recent engineering graduate, were taken to Kyama to see the water system funded by Aldergrove Rotary in 2014. They were welcomed with the fanfare and generosity that Ramechhap villagers always extend to guests from abroad.

Don and Nico were impressed by the openness of everyone involved in the program, and by the high degree of technical integrity that typifies work done by TSS.

A Youtube video of their trip can be seen at <http://youtu.be/4z2heb5LJXI>.

The Vital Role of Preventive Health in Rural Honduras

Preventive health is a key component of the rural development program in Honduras supported by World Neighbours Canada (named the Michael Newman Program by Vecinos Honduras to honour our late director). Typically implemented by volunteers (predominantly women), preventive health measures take a holistic view of the factors affecting the well-being of rural families. In a recent report from Vecinos Honduras, preventive health activities included:

- village health committees assisted mass vaccination campaigns that targeted children and elders.
- families implemented healthy home practices, including “polishing” walls and floors – not to make them

shine, but to remove habitat for the insects that carry Chagas disease (afflicts millions of mostly poor people in Latin America).

- the use of “smokeless stoves” continues to be promoted – stoves that vent smoke outside the home and use less firewood (compared to traditional kitchen fires), reducing respiratory ailments in children.

The program is now funded mainly by the Inter-American Foundation and the Kenoli Foundation of North Vancouver, supplementing early investment by World Neighbours Canada. This represents the fulfillment of the goal of Michael Newman and World Neighbours Canada – we strived for many years to help Vecinos Honduras

acquire major funding so the organization could reach its full potential and help thousands more Hondurans to improve their lives.



New Way to Donate

We are now able to accept donations in the form of securities through our account with Qtrade Investing.

If you would like to use this service, please contact Bruce Petch or Dale Dodge - bruce@worldneighbours.ca or dodger@persona.ca - and we will make the arrangements.

Visit us on our Website and on Facebook!

We at World Neighbours Canada have been working on our online communication. We have beefed up our website, which presents information and reports on all our project areas, and our society in general.

On the website, you can sign up for online updates (these only come about once a month), and even donate to our program. Check us out at **www.worldneighbours.ca**.

You can also find us on Facebook, at **www.facebook.com/WorldNeighboursCanada**