

Greetings all,

October 2016

We are writing to give you another long overdue update on our progress of the project in Fougoulou. Over the summer, we were traveling back in the US, and thus unable to visit the village, but over Columbus Day weekend, we drove down to Tambacounda and spent the weekend in the village. Ronit was completing a 10-day work trip and had the driver and her colleagues drop her off in the village. So she got an extra two nights there, giving her time to work on the garden and visit with some friends before we arrived.

As with all projects of this sort, there are some positive outcomes and things we wished were progressing faster. Trying to elicit behavior change, especially when we aren't there to reinforce those changes, becomes difficult. That said, we had a very good trip to Fougoulou and will remain engaged with the village.

**Toilets:** We were disappointed to hear that most of the toilets we were hoping would be built prior to the start of the rainy season were not built. It is difficult to build them during the rainy season (the hole fills with rain water and the cement doesn't have time to dry), so this is a good dry season project. There are many reasons (excuses?) why the toilets weren't finished, but the end result is the same... not enough toilets for the number of people in the village. We continue to encourage them to finish this part of the project as the current rainy season is just finishing up.



**Garden:** The garden is in good shape. Part of the work Ronit did during her first two days was help clear weeds from the garden. The current plan is to make a pépinière (seed nursery) to start out a few varieties of crops, and then the women will transplant these into their individual plots. Ronit was able to purchase new seeds to start the pépinière. The fence around the garden is holding up, though parts of it needed repair due to weed overgrowth. The well near the garden also needs to be dug deeper.

**School:** This is the highlight so far of our work in the village. We hired an outside company to repair and rebuild the desks, put a fence around the school, repair the walls, doors and windows of the school. The new rooms look great, and the kids were enthusiastic about the upcoming school year (school in Senegal starts in October, and there were two new teachers assigned to Fougoulou). We did have a hard time convincing the kids not to use the furniture as jungle-gym equipment, so we'll see how long the "newness" lasts. As well, we asked a sign be made dedicating the school to Jason, Ronit's older brother. The French came out OK. The English, not so much (despite us telling the sign maker *exactly* what to write).



**Hygiene:** Despite showing the villagers how to make a Tippy-Tap hand washing station, none of them have taken the initiative to create one on their own. On this trip down, Craig did build another Tippy-Tap, and encouraged others to do the same in their compounds. Whether or not this translates to better hand washing is yet to be seen. We also showed a series of videos in Pulaar done by Peace Corps volunteers highlighting the importance of hand washing.



acquired the pounder without our help. As with many “technologies” in the village, when it broke, no one knew how to repair it, so it has sat unused for the last few years. The chief wants to revive this machine for the cost of about \$200. While we could finance that, we are more interested in knowing their plan for when the pounder breaks again. Who will fix it? How will they pay for it? Who has ownership over the maintenance? If the village can come up with a plan to address these questions AND if they can pony up part of that \$200, then we will finance the rest.

As we enter the final eight months of our time in Senegal, we’re hoping to get our projects in Fougoulou to a point where they are either finished or sustainable. Of course, that might be a bit of a stretch. But we’ll continue to work towards this end. Thanks again for your support.

Craig D. Gerard  
Ronit Kirshner Gerard

As for the next phases of the project, we will continue to encourage them to build toilets, keep washing hands and practice good hygiene. The chief asked us to assist with repairing the village pounder. The pounder is a machine that pounds grain quickly. What normally takes the women over an hour of pounding by hand, the machine can do in a few seconds. This frees up the women’s time for gardening, other house work, and mani-pedis. OK, not so much the last one. Ironically, our money collection for Fougoulou started in 2004 with the goal of buying this pounder. When we arrived in Senegal in 2013, we learned they had