

Playing with the Africans

Burkina Faso 2011

The View From My Shower

As I stood in the short brick enclosure that they called a “shower” with a bucket of water at my feet, I paused. I realized that I could actually see everything going on around me and I also realized that everyone else could see me, which was awkward. I looked around and saw a game of soccer that was about one hundred kids against the four guys on my mission team. I also saw a woman bathing her baby and cooking in the courtyard that surrounded the very ghetto shower stall (ghetto was a word in my vocabulary that I used very frequently when commenting on my surroundings this last week). I could hear animals complaining very loudly (of what I don't know), the squeals of excited kids and the occasional roar of a very old motorbike. I ended up having to squat in the shower because the wall didn't go high enough and as I washed off I couldn't help but laugh at the experience. Only in Africa!



The People

I was so blessed to get to work with a few different groups of native “Burkina Bays” this last week. The first group we got to interact with was the kids at the church that the team from last year roofed. They were tons of fun and they got us warmed up to the culture of Africa. The next group was the people of a village called Debe in the bush where we stayed for two nights. We got to know them the best and they taught us all a lot about gratefulness, hospitality and joy. When we left the bush we didn't interact formally with any more natives but since we were whites in a black country, kids surrounded us wherever we went so we got to meet more as we went along.



The Ministry

This is probably the section that is hardest to write, because I will never know how much of an impact I had on the people of Burkina. Because of the language barrier it wasn't possible to have a deep, meaningful conversation with anyone, *but* I do know that playing Ring Around the Rosie and Duck Duck Goose for the thousandth time made those kids smile like they had won a million dollars. And I know that being in that village and helping roof their church and just smiling at the people we saw made a difference. Even when it felt like I wasn't helping with anything at all, I know that those kids will never forget the time some white people came and made a fool out of themselves just to play games with them. And I know that all the sweat and discomfort that went into the benches we made for a different church definitely made their year. I wish I could burn the image of all the happy faces that were a result of our team's work this week. God used us in ways that don't seem significant to us and He blessed our efforts with the rewards of seeing people dance, scream and cry with thankfulness. God is good— Amen?



Things I Learned

Besides the things I already mentioned, I learned a lot other lessons during my time in Burkina. I learned a lot about having a Christ-like servant's heart from the people on my team because they were the best examples of servants that I had ever seen, especially in my age group. They constantly served and encouraged me throughout the entire trip, always looking out for my best interest. I have never felt so cared for and accepted, which was definitely an unexpected surprise since we are teenagers and tend to be very cliquey and judging. My team also taught me how to be able to laugh in the most frustrating and chaotic times which was a HUGE blessing because we had a lot of those times (i.e. the power going out in the heat of the day, our flights being majorly delayed numerous times and having to stay inside for a few days due to the unrest happening in the city). A big lesson I had to learn myself was to not let disappointment ruin my day and get me discouraged, but to accept the fact that I tried my best and move on. When you are in a place like Africa you really adopt a new attitude and perspective on things, and I think I definitely benefited from that.

Only in Africa...



...does a huge turtle walk out onto the field where you are playing ultimate Frisbee

...does Ring around the Rosie bring more joy than anything else

...do you have to run away from a mob of kids to spit toothpaste in a bush

...do kids watch your every move or even lack of movement



...do you stop 7 times on a 4 hour car trip due to complications

...do the people bang on drums and dance all night to celebrate a roof

...do you laugh when you fail to be able to pee in a hole

...do you tie a goat to the roof of the van

...do you take a ghetto safari looking for hippos

...do you kill a chicken with a dull knife and a

sawing motion (I still can't believe I did that!!!)

...does a coup d' etal on the government and gunshots in the street not seem like a big deal

...does the pastor of the church scream and dance around after he receives 2 soccer balls

...do the kids who don't have a TV know the song "Waka Waka"

Highlights

- Leading Sunday School at a local church on Sunday
- Having the most amazing team of people to work with
- Playing with the kids on the first night in the bush
- Getting to experience Africa– the city, the bush and the people everywhere

Thank you a thousand times over for your prayer/financial support. This was definitely the most amazing trip I have ever taken and I hope you are blessed for being a part of it.

In Christ,

Michaela Frantz

