

Dear brothers and sisters, friends of Burkina Faso and friends of Africa,

Please visit the African Family Film Foundation website: <http://www.africanfamily.org>

Please share this letter far and wide, to friends and family, and beyond and encourage all to visit the website.

We are making a special appeal for assistance for many of the 600,000 people impacted by what could be described as a West African Katrina: Burkina Faso is the hardest hit of 16 countries and Ouagadougou is to date the hardest hit community: torrential rains that engendered the biggest floods in 90 years!

A major water reservoir/dam broke north of the main hospital in Ouagadougou, knocked down the walls behind the Hopital Yalgado and flooded it so badly that all patients had to be evacuated. Twelve bridges in Ouagadougou were destroyed, leaving many people in many areas stranded; At least 5 major quartiers (neighborhoods) in Ouagadougou are flooded and devastated: Dapoya, Paspanga, Samandin, Tagin and Zogona. The estimates coming in: 159 dead and 600,000 affected in West Africa. In Burkina Faso: between 150,000 to 300,000 are homeless in Ouagadougou; we're awaiting reports of the impact of torrential rains on rural sectors. The government has set up 93 crisis centers in and around Ouagadougou.

Pierre Balma is coordinating our relief efforts in Burkina Faso during this current crisis. He lives with his wife, Sylvie Sawadogo and three children in Ouagadougou. Their home is AOK. Many of the Peace Corps veterans, volunteers and staff who served in Burkina Faso, met Pierre at the last reunion, when he accompanied me from Santa Cruz to Washington, DC. He gave a beautiful speech at Tom and Elizabeth's home that weekend in September 2006. I met Pierre in November 1967, upon my first visit to Zao village, when he was a one-year-old! Pierre's dad, Raymond Balma, and I worked on the construction of 12 water wells from 1967-69 in the Koupela region, during the first two years of my 8 years of service as a Peace Corps volunteer in Burkina Faso.

From 1969-75 I volunteered to create a national audio-visual archives at the CNRST (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technologique) in Ouagadougou, documenting on film and tape the music, dance and oral traditions of 33 cultures of Burkina Faso's 59 cultures, teaching Burkinabe youth sound recording, photography and filmmaking so they could document their own peoples and cultures.

During the 70's and 80's, Pierre and his brothers, Hiacinthe and Cyprien, worked with me on various projects in their village and rolled sound on two feature documentaries: Zam Zam and Zakaramba. Zam Zam will be released in the coming months and we plan to present one or both films at FESPACO in February 2011.

You can see photographs of Pierre teaching solar energy production to elementary school students in Ouagadougou on the African Family Children's Fund page of our website.

At the bottom of that same page under “REDISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH” you can see photographs of the relief work Pierre coordinated during the severe drought and crop failure of 2005: distribution of grain to African families in need.

Having gone through my own struggle for survival during the past three years, having beaten back Lyme, Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s, I am more determined than ever to devote the rest of my life, my time and energy to raising people's consciousness and appreciation of African culture worldwide and simultaneously helping as many African children and families in their struggle for survival so that they can realize their dreams.

On August 31-September 1, 2009, the day after the 4th anniversary of Katrina, what some are calling the biggest storm in nearly a century hit the capital city of Burkina Faso and surrounding villages. Many people in Ouagadougou have lost everything: home, clothing, belongings, livestock, pets, their livelihood, their ability to make a living. In many villages farmers have lost their homes, crops, pets and livestock.

The biggest fear in coming days and weeks is the likely outbreak of more malaria than usual and a cholera epidemic. Children, elders, the disabled and ill are at major risk. Many individuals and families are simply in the crisis of their lives. All this happening in one of the poorest countries in the world, with little resources to cope with. We can make a difference and we must.

During this crisis I am in touch with Pierre Balma on a daily basis. We spoke again last night and just spoke today at 3:45 PM Pacific (10:45 PM Burkina). Another torrential rain with violent winds hit Ouagadougou and Burkina Faso yesterday, making the situation even worse.

African Family Film Foundation is ready to help. We have very low operating costs. We are all volunteer. We have distribution channels in place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, so we can get help to the people on the ground fast!

We use the money to buy supplies locally (blankets, mosquito nets, and food: millet, sorghum and rice) to avoid needlessly paying to fly things in from overseas - it's a matter of distributing existing supplies from towns and villages in the region that weren't hit to the affected cities and villages. This supports the existing local economy as well as provides relief for the people that need it.

Here are some examples of what your money can do:

\$7 will buy a locally made blanket

\$10 will buy a mosquito net

\$50 will help feed a family for a month

Please go to the African Family Film Foundation website: <http://www.africanfamily.org>

Watch the videos in French (by local Burkinabe reporters on Canal 3) and in English (by Associated Press), check out the African Family Children's Fund and the Donate page.

You can make a tax deductible donation via PayPal, using practically any credit card.

You can send a check to:

African Family Film Foundation
PO Box 630
Santa Cruz CA 95061-0630

Please know that your contribution can and will make a difference.

Remember to share this letter far and wide, to friends and family, and beyond and encourage all to visit the website.

If you have questions and/or suggestions, please email or give me a call. If you get my voice mail, please leave a message.

Wend na kaaosa nyamba! = [may the] Great Spirit prolong you!

Bring Peace!

Taale Laafi Rosellini
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