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## Trip Report

Date(s) of Trip:	02 December, 2005 – 04 December, 2005
Destination(s):	Yalgo (French spelling and commonly pronounced "Yalogo"), Namentenga Province, Burkina Faso, West Africa
Purpose:	Regional and village assessments to determine location to implant project BF0602, "Agricultural Development through Demonstration in Burkina Faso, West Africa".
Homebase:	Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, West Africa
Name(s):	David Verbree with the help of local translator and consultant, Ismael Ouedraogo

## In Depth

### Scope

This trip was necessary to determine or to eliminate a possible location for implanting our regional/country office and demonstration farm under project BF0602. A positive evaluation will confirm the region of the country (north-east) where we would establish ourselves and also some of the activities and objectives for the proposal proper. A negative evaluation will mean that significant regional assessments would need to be included the proposal and the budget augmented accordingly.

### Goals

- To determine if the north-east region of Burkina Faso is conducive for implanting our regional/country office and demonstration farm.
- To determine what infrastructure is available including utilities, transportation, access to emergency medical services for staff, and food availability for staff.
- To evaluate the specific perceived needs for the people of Yalgo.
- To evaluate the environmental and ecological conditions of the region.
- To evaluate willingness of the people to participate in development activities.

### Introduction

We met with the traditional leaders (the chief and his ministers), the mayor, and a group of about 40 farmers and herders. All of them expressed a sincere desire for our help and seem very motivated, even progressive, and eager to learn new techniques. They are ready to receive us as soon as possible and offered us several hectares of land. We told them that we have other assessments to do,

and that we are currently seeking funding, and if we are to return, the soonest we would be able to would be next July.

### ***Location and Significance***

Yalgo is located about 216 km (currently 6 ½ hours) from Ouagadougou between Kaya and Dori on the only route that has access to the populations throughout the north and northeast of the country. It is also virtually the only goods-to-market road in this region. It is located in a region where three major ethnic groups intersect and is a dividing line between people predominantly reliant upon agriculture (south) and those reliant upon livestock (north). It is one of the few market towns in the Dori corridor which is held there every 3 days. Despite its significance in this region, it remains relatively undeveloped and almost completely dependent upon the rains for both their agricultural activities and fodder and water for their livestock.

### ***Population***

Yalgo is one of 5 villages that comprise a village cluster of 14,555 inhabitants. It is estimated that each village has roughly 3,000 inhabitants.

### ***Migration***

Migration patterns are generally difficult to determine. The conflict in Ivory Coast caused some in-migration this past year. However, now the problem seems to have subsided.

### ***Composition***

A majority of the inhabitants of Yalgo are considered young in age. Actually, while we were there, we saw very few elderly people and the vast majority in the village center were about 18-25 years old. The village uniquely consists of a mixture of the Gourmantche, Mossi, Peul (Fulani) ethnic groups with Gourmantche and Mossi in approximate equal proportions and the Peul very much the minority. The dominant language is Moore, but the more educated can speak French and many also speak Fulfulde and Gourma. There are three primary religions: animist, Christianity, and Islam with animism being significant to all people. Despite this diversity, people appear to get along quite well.

### ***Government***

Government authority was established in 1989. A female mayor is generally responsible for day to day operations. A very elderly chief and his ministers are generally responsible for lawmaking and judging on difficult cases. There are also three police officers for enforcing laws. Land is on a land-use system disallowing private ownership. The chief and his ministers are responsible for allocating land.

### ***Livelihoods***

Almost all households rely on both agriculture and livestock for survival. There are few government employees ("functionaires") which include teachers. There

is a very small service industry consisting of just a few dozen shops. On market days, there are many stands set up by both locals and traveling businessmen that provide 25 CFA revenue for the government from each vendor.

### ***Agriculture***

The staple crops are millet, sorghum, maize, and rice. Both short and long duration varieties of millet and sorghum are used. Other important crops include peanuts (groundnuts), sesame, niebe?, and wandzou?. Many people with harder soil use the Zai technique and generally have much better yields than those who do not use it. Crops are planted entirely by hand in holes (not row-planted). They stressed that they do not have any modern knowledge and the people do not know how to use a simple drawn plow. Generally, they harvest their own seed. Occasionally an NGO sells or provides seed. Fertilizer is available from Bobo, Ouaga, or Kaya, but is expensive so they generally use manure from their livestock.

### ***Livestock***

All farmers also rely on their livestock. The following is a list of the total number of animals for the village cluster:

Cattle 20,000

Donkeys 630

Sheep 40,000

Horses 12

Goats 60,000

Birds 70,000

Pigs 120

### ***Goods and Services***

Availability of goods in town is very limited. On market days, fruits and vegetables can be bought. Meat can also be purchased cooked on a roadside fire or in the market on market days. Otherwise, there are only two or three small boutiques (stores) to provide locals with all of their basic household needs (limited selection for expatriates). We didn't notice any tailors or availability of clothing. However, we didn't have the opportunity to peruse the market. There are a few shops to repair motorbikes. Gasoline and cooking gas are available at a higher cost than Ouagadougou (5,000 CFA to change a tank for cooking). The nearest bank is located in Dori, 100 km north-east.

### ***Exports***

Exclusively African variety chickens are exported to Ivory Coast. Watermelons are exported to other parts of the country (possibly out of the country as well).

## ***Living Conditions***

People typically live in sun-dried mud brick homes with thatch roofs, but some of the government “functionaires” can sometimes afford a sheet metal roof. Most homes have a sheet metal door or window and some can afford a steel door. One or more homes generally share a courtyard which is walled in by a short 4 ft high wall.

## ***Transportation***

The bus companies STMB, Sogibuf, and TSR currently run every day. Sogibuf and TSR leave Ouaga from Sankariari Gare. Sogibuf departs Ouaga at 7:30am and 2:00pm. TSR leaves at 7:00am. TSR is reportedly unreliable and it was in disrepair the day we left so we exchanged our tickets for Sogibuf. Sogibuf comes from Dori and stops in Yalgo around 8:30am on its way to back to Ouaga. STMB stops in Yalgo between 9:00 am – 9:30 am. Seats may be quite filled up by the time the buses stop in Yalgo on the way to Ouaga. It is best to wait to buy a ticket until the first bus comes through with available seating. However, the buses stop only momentarily.

The road is paved from Ouaga through Pissilla. Currently, the government is in the process of paving the road the rest of the way to Dori. Unfortunately, this leaves a region that is susceptible to banditry. The road is expected to be paved all of the way to Dori in the coming months which should shorten the time it takes to travel from Ouaga to Yalgo to about 3 ½ hours (instead of 6 ½ hours).

## ***Security Situation***

Although, we have received no reports of criminal activity except for petty theft in Yalgo, on Saturday morning, the 3<sup>rd</sup> December while we were in Yalgo, both the TSR and Sogibuf buses were robbed and the driver of the Sogibuf bus was shot dead in between Tougouri and Yalgo on their way to Ouaga. We heard that a woman was traveling on one of the buses from Dori to Ouaga with 20,000,000 CFA (40,000 USD) in cash. It is believed that inside information caused the buses to be targeted. After the incident, the military came to Yalgo and enforced a curfew at 9 pm that very night. On our return trip, the military was still deployed on the route and identification was verified for all bus members at the checkpoint coming into Ouaga. Note: expatriates must bring their passports.

## ***Access to Emergency Medical Care***

There is a small clinic in Yalgo which has an ambulance. For emergency medical for expatriates, we recommend to ask the ambulance (as necessary) to take you to the Genets Clinic (preferred) or the Flamboyant (a French clinic) in Ouagadougou. Both clinics have the ability to stabilize a person, conduct x-rays, set fractures, vaccinate, treat most common maladies, and perform surgery (perhaps limited). The Genets clinic is cleaner and is run by a Burkinabé doctor trained in France. He outsources most blood work to a laboratory in France. He has delivered many of expatriates' babies and can perform cesarean sections. He is also very thorough in prenatal checkups with the latest in technology. Consultation fee is only 10,000 CFAs (20 USD). Both clinics stick wholeheartedly to the French medical system.

## ***Utilities***

There is one public telephone in the village and a few of the government establishments have a telephone. A cell tower being constructed in Bani, a village 10 kilometers north of Yalگو which should allow for cell phone usage in the area. Another tower is reportedly planned for Yalگو as well. Although no internet exists in Yalگو, there are net cafes in Dori. There is virtually no electricity.

## ***Water***

There are seven reported wells, but it is unclear if the wells service just Yalگو's 3,000 inhabitants or also the inhabitants of the 4 other villages in the cluster. The nearby reservoir is used for washing laundry, growing rice, and water for animals. It never dries up; however, the people claim that it is insufficient for all of their animals. The shoreline near the town center is rocky and none of the visible coast line is being used for gardens or irrigation. A water body assessment still needs to be done.

## ***Other Organizations that have Worked There***

PNGT II, PAPNA, Plan, Azawak

## ***Environment and Topography***

This region is located in-between the sahelian and sudanese zones and receives approximately 400 mm of rainfall per year with frequent droughts. Just 10 km north, desertification is clearly evident. Generally, the topography is relatively flat with a very large hill/mountain near the village center. The very large barrage created within the past decade is about 15 km long and is in a "Y" shape which increases the amount of coastline. The hills are covered with ironstone and granite boulders. The soil is relatively deep (between 1-15 m) in the flatter areas. Some of the land is "desert pavement", a hard-pan of gravel where all of the silt and sand have been blown away. There are relatively few signs of water erosion. Trees are sparsely scattered throughout the landscape.

## ***Techniques Employed***

Very few techniques were seen deployed. The Zai technique is being used in some places. However, we witnessed no use of contour farming, ridge and furrow or row planting, microcatchments, or other forms of rain water harvesting, windbreaks. We noted only a few rock bunds.

## ***Perceived Needs***

They expressed their perceived needs as fodder for their large numbers of livestock as they often have to purchase expensive feeds from distant locations, fuel wood and fruit trees (which were wiped out due to a drought), better use of the large nearby reservoir, and more efficient methods of cultivating.

## ***Conclusion***

Overall, Yalگو is a strategically ideal place for establishing our organization and demonstration farm for the following reasons:

- It is relatively easily accessible by road and has easy access to medical care for staff making it ideal for a regional office and demonstration farm.
- It is culturally diverse, permitting us to work with several ethnic groups at the same time, thus facilitating the transfer of knowledge to all groups of people.
- It is located in between agriculturalists in the south and nomadic or semi-nomadic herders in the north, which allows to work in both areas of development.
- It is located in between the Sahelian and Sudanese phytogeographic zones which dictates a fairly drastic change in the types and number of plant species. This improves our chances of showing some relatively quick success with Sahelian species while researching and conducting field trials for the extension of Sudanese species in the harsher northern zone.
- It is in a region with deep loess soil that has a large water storage capacity which makes it ideal for rain-water harvesting techniques.
- The people seem highly motivated, willing to learn, and hard-working.
- Although they do not seem as poverty struck as other regions we have visited, it is clear that they live day-to-day and have few coping mechanisms. They are forced to react to difficult situations rather than to be proactive. This prevents them from being able to grasp even the bottom rung of the development ladder.
- They mentioned several specific areas where they need help, and we also saw many other specific areas where we could help them.
- They are well organized and well governed (possibly because they have worked with NGOs in the past). This allows us to concentrate on teaching and not on establishing resource and community management structures or methods of disseminating information.
- They have land available for us (both somewhat fertile and degraded land for rehabilitation).

## ***Recommendations***

We should continue to seek funding and implant the project BF0602 in the Yalگو region. However, we recommend that the precise location of the project be left vague in the proposal proper so as to leave our options open. This trip report could be included as an appendix in the proposal proper to show that regional assessments have been done.

The proposal proper should include an activity for detailed local needs assessments for the 5 villages of Yalگو and perhaps other nearby villages or clusters through Rapid Rural Assessment (RRA), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), or the Ten Seeds technique. Also, a water body assessment should be completed to be sent to Patricia Thompson and Jerry Meads for analysis and modeling.

We also recommend that a representative be sent to Yalگو before July 2006 to report on our progress and possibly to gather additional information.