

Benkadi Project

"To live together is very good"

Annual Newsletter

2010



Thank you for your support of the Benkadi Project's charitable activities in Guinea, West Africa.

"Benkadi" means "To live together is very good" in the indigenous Malinké language of Guinea. Last year, we continued our work in this spirit in several small villages in rural areas of Guinea as well as in the capital city of Conakry on the Atlantic coast. Our work remained a grassroots effort, leveraging person to person connections and working through close partnerships with local community leaders.

- ◆ **Provided funding to continue construction of a new Youth and Community Center in Sangbaralla village.** The new building will provide space for young people to study and perform local music, dance and other art forms and meeting space for community organizations. We are hopeful that the new Youth and Community Center – which is being built by hand by the young people in the village -- will be completed in the coming year. *(see picture on other side.*
- ◆ **Sent five students to school in the capital city of Conakry.** Benkadi donations covered expenses for tuition, uniforms and books.

countries. These stoves cook rice using a small fraction of the wood typically required for cooking in West Africa, decreasing each family's fuel requirements and reducing deforestation.



Basic Human Needs

In a country where per capita income is approximately \$500 per year, many if not most people experience difficulty feeding themselves and their families.

- ◆ **Supported a local garden in Sangbaralla village tended by elderly women and men.** The Benkadi Project purchased seed and buckets for bringing water from the Niger River and paid the local blacksmith to make new hoes. The older people expanded their garden to produce more vegetables for their own consumption and to sell at the market in the village.
- ◆ **Provided bags of rice in Conakry** to allow unemployed people to feed their families.
- ◆ **Pilot tested several highly efficient cooking stoves designed for use in underdeveloped**

Health and Clean Water

- ◆ **Paid for treatment of serious illnesses** for five adults and one infant suffering from life threatening conditions including an often deadly combination of typhoid fever and malaria. Four of the adults and the baby survived.
- ◆ **Repaired two wells in Senekoro village** in northeast Guinea, providing access to clean water.
- ◆ **Planned for construction of a well in the village of Menkiné**, five hours north of the capital. This will be our second major well construction project. We completed two new wells and repaired a third in Sangbaralla in recent years. In Menkiné, the only source of drinking water is the nearby river, a major health hazard which leaves people in danger of water-borne illnesses. Unfortunately, we had to put the Menkiné project on hold in 2009/2010 due to protracted political instability in Guinea last year. With the recent completion of Guinea's first democratic elections since its independence from France over 50 years ago, we hope that the political situation will stabilize and that work on the Menkiné well will be able to progress in 2011.



Students in front of the new school house (opened in 2005)

Progress in the Past Year

This past year, the Benkadi Project used funds collected through musical performances, educational presentations and hundreds of donations to provide assistance to children and families in Guinea in three areas:

Educational Opportunities

- ◆ **Continued our support of the elementary school in Sangbaralla village in the northeast portion of the country.** The school was completed 2005 through donations to the Benkadi Project.





Looking Ahead in 2011

Our priorities for the year ahead include:

- ◆ **Finishing construction** of the Sangbaralla Youth and Community Center
- ◆ **Ongoing support** for Sangbaralla school and for a group of students in Conakry
- ◆ **Completing one or two new wells** in Menkiné village and repairing a broken well in Sangbaralla
- ◆ **Continued support for the local garden** in Sangbaralla and exploration of similar projects in other villages
- ◆ **Funding medical treatments** and consider providing additional high-efficiency stoves for use in rural villages



- ◆ **Offering a workshop for teenage girls** in Conakry led by local nurses who will discuss the importance of delaying pregnancy until the girls are older and better able to care for a child.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for your support of the Benkadi Project since we began our work in 2002.

We are continually amazed by what we have accomplished together, starting with a few individuals and groups with whom we initially shared our experiences in Guinea and our love of the music and the people of this small, struggling West African nation. Working from hand to hand and heart to heart, your support has meant so much to the people in Guinea who have benefited from your generosity.

We see the powerful results of our connections across cultures and across thousands of miles in the faces of the children, families and communities we have assisted with education, health and basic human needs in Guinea each year and in the enduring ties of friendship we have built together. We look forward to sharing our progress in the year ahead!



What more can we say than -- *Iniké Kosobé – Thank You Very Much!*

For Additional Information or to Make A Donation, Contact:

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The Benkadi Project is affiliated with the Motherland Rhythm Community, a 501c3 non-profit organization.



GUINEA FACTS:

- ◆ The size of Oregon with 9.8 million people
- ◆ In recent decades, Guinea has experienced significant economic and political decline.
- ◆ Chronic unemployment and persistent government corruption have led to widespread poverty and limited access to health, water, sanitation, and educational and economic opportunity.
- ◆ Life span averages 55 years.
- ◆ Most people live under the global poverty level of \$1.25 per day.
- ◆ Literacy rates are very low.
- ◆ 150 of every 1,000 children die before their 5th birthday.
- ◆ **Since independence** from France in 1958, Guinea has not had a peaceful transition in power.
- ◆ **In September last year**, government soldiers opened fire on tens of thousands of citizens protesting the military ruler's decision to run in national elections. More than 150 people were killed and many women were sexually assaulted by the soldiers.
- ◆ **Last winter**, the leader of the military junta survived an assassination attempt, but was subsequently exiled to Burkina Faso. The military agreed to move forward with elections to hand the government back to civilians.
- ◆ **At this very moment Guinea is on the cusp of great change.** The public voted in the first ever free election for president in June and then a run off on November 7, 2010. When the new president takes office Guinea will have its first national leader who is not tied to the military. *This gives everyone hope for the future!*



Co-Directors,
Helen Bond & Amy Lusk



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