



# THE CHALLENGE

September 2020

## Letting Go and Letting God: FIA in West Africa

### Greetings from West Africa!

It has been some time since we had an opportunity to share the Lord's work through FIA's ministry in West Africa. Over the past 12 months, FRIENDS has been establishing a new base of operations and new partnerships in a different region of the West African continent. We have seen opportunities begin to develop with national partners and see great potential for supporting local and national evangelical movements through the well-drilling ministry. Our plans were for work to commence in May 2020.

**COVID-19 and the global pandemic response essentially disrupted every one of our plans.** While we have remained hopeful over the months that with each projected "end date" for border closures and travel bans, we can get back to our country of service and start on some of the projects we



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want to do. The reality is that we can't plan anything with certainty.

I have been drawn fairly regularly to the reminder found in Psalms 20:7, "Some trust in chariots, and

**I have been drawn fairly regularly to Psalms 20:7, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the LORD our God."**

some in horses, but we will remember the name of the LORD our God." Amid the challenges of trying to make plans and weighing decisions as we develop a new area of ministry, it can be very easy to proverbially be so focused on "the tree" that we miss seeing "the forest".

**Though travel bans and restrictions have denied FIA teams and personnel from re-engaging in our countries of service, we have been able to see God's work progress.**

Advances have been made establishing relationships with people and organizations positioned to support sustained growth and development in this new region of West Africa. Official government registration continues to progress, and the current situation has actually opened doors for greater representation at the national level. Opportunities have been created for FIA personnel to engage with language study and development, as well as to have needed times of rest/restoration in light of the travel restrictions (another unplanned blessing!)

**FRIENDS' West Africa ministry has supported two much-needed projects over the past few months:**



**1 Clay Block Press**

One of our new partners approached us to ask if we'd be able to help purchase a clay brick/block press to be used for making bricks for construction. This organization already has experience with the unit and trained personnel to operate the press. Providing the press enables us to support and accelerate their work of constructing schools, clinics, and church buildings as they plan to establish various ministry centers in the 12 surrounding communities. When possible, our own ministry will assist them with the water supply component in each project development. A side benefit to supporting this purchase is that FRIENDS also has some claim to the equipment and the operating personnel, which means that it can be used for other future FIA construction projects. A great opportunity for all!

*BELOW: Building constructed using a clay block press.*





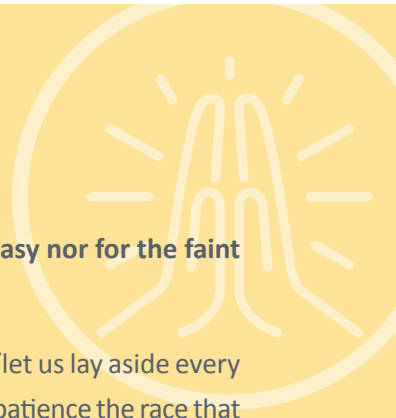
## 2 Water Supply Wells

Even though we have left Burkina Faso, a country where we spent 14+ years actively drilling wells and serving the evangelical and local communities, FIA has continued to facilitate well-drilling for a growing community of displaced people. These people, predominantly Muslim and animistic by faith, have been driven from their homes by the growing terrorist movement in the northern part of Burkina Faso. As their numbers grow and new camps are established to help those who literally have nothing but the clothes on their backs, new issues of food and water scarcity, poor health and hygiene arise.

The Burkinabe government approached FRIENDS, as well as other registered not-for-profit organizations, to ask for help. Partnering with local evangelical leaders looking to share the love and hope of Christ to these displaced communities, FIA funded contractors to drill two wells. Our efforts relieved some of the burden, servicing upwards of 1000+ people who previously had no access to clean drinking water.

My heart was torn when one of our representatives there shared what happened during a celebration time after one of the wells was drilled. “During the time of thanksgiving after the wells were drilled, the [Muslim] call to prayer was broadcast by the local mosque in the village. As soon as the first sounds of the call were heard, the entire community of displaced people started to scream and run, because those words were the

# PRAY:



**The road before us is not easy nor for the faint of heart.**

As the Apostle Paul writes, “let us lay aside every weight... and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...” Hebrews 12:1-2 KJV.

Please pray for wisdom, discernment, and especially perseverance as we face what is to come.

same words the jihadist would yell when they drove through their villages, shooting their guns. The call to prayer is a constant reminder of what they have lost, and seeing their fear has distressed me to my heart and soul. It is only through Jesus and His Hope and Love that these people can find peace and healing.”

This scene continues to haunt us as we consider the lost and the hurting in Burkina Faso. Although we may be led elsewhere, our heart is still tied to the places we’ve visited, to the times we shared a meal, or possibly drilled a well, and to a people who have had much ripped away—not because of COVID-19, but because of this terrorist movement. We have much to be praying for.

We trust that as the Lord raises up those in Burkina Faso to heed the call to serve and be the hands and feet of Jesus in that location, we pray we will also respond as needed in the new region in which we are placed. Thank you for supporting this ministry and continuing to journey with us as the Lord leads us onwards.

### **Matt Durkee**

**Field Leader**

FIA West Africa Well Drilling Ministry

# MORE THAN A CONQUEROR

## Pastor Saul Overcomes COVID-19!

One of the greatest blessings in my life was to meet Pastor Saul Peralta in Bolivia back in 2002. The Lord seemed to bond us instantly into a friendship that has just grown closer since that time. I am so grateful to the Lord for sparing Saul's life last month when he seemed to be on his last breath, fighting COVID-19.



For almost two decades, Friends In Action has partnered with Pastor Saul to develop an Indigenous Training Center (ITC) to provide biblical teaching for hundreds of villagers, as well as host youth conferences for countless Bolivian youth and orphans. Bolivians who have come to Christ through other FIA supported outreaches, such as *El Misionero* (medical mission boat) or *Inspiración* (24/7 radio station), are often unable to attend church

or seminary due to their remote location or lack of education. Pastor Saul's efforts at the ITC ensure new believers are equipped as pastors and teachers, ready to take the Gospel further into the Amazon by sharing with their neighbors and families. His dedication and work among his people endear him to my heart all the more, so to see him on his deathbed was heartwrenching, to say the least.

COVID-19 has hit the tiny villages of

Bolivia very hard. The town hospital has a maximum capacity of 35 beds and one ventilator. Many villagers from areas along the Amazon River have to travel for two days to even find Tylenol. Doctors report that the pharmacies have long run out of any medicine to help the suffering. Mass graves hold the bodies of those who lost their struggle while hundreds of others are left sick or grieving. Over 60 pastors have died leaving dozens of villages without hope and leadership. To say the situation is dire is an understatement. Seeing Pastor Saul so sick brought me to my knees in desperation.

"I cried and cried out to the Lord all night by his bedside that God would spare his life," shared his wife Matilde. I know my prayers and those of many, many other FIA's supporters were also poured out over those touch-and-go days Pastor Saul was laid up. I rejoice that God saw fit to heal my dear friend.

Romans 8:35 and 37 come to mind as I see Pastor Saul recovered. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."





taken over for Pastor Manuel Bravo, who used to lead our *El Misionero* Medical Mission Boat ministry until he died of COVID-19 in late June. Pastor Rafael, who leads *Inspiración* (the FIA supported 24/7 Christian radio ministry) also helped out. Pastor Rafael has also been healed from the virus thanks in part to the medical treatments and funds given by FIA supporters.

In late July, Pastor Saul and our coworkers in Guayaramerin reached the village of Primero de Mayo who requested help to sustain their lives with food as many cannot work or care for themselves during recovery. FIA's

faithful supporters sent three times our matching fund's goal during our fundraising efforts in July to aid these and many more precious villagers!

Your generosity enables continued crisis outreach, support of national frontline doctors and nurses, and the Gospel to be shared with unreached villagers. To say thank you just isn't enough.

May you abound in grace,

Gratefully,

**Gary Ferch**

**Field Leader**

FIA Ministry in Bolivia

Pastor Saul is recovering well. He and Matilde credit the Lord's grace and the encouragement of hundreds of FIA donors who diligently prayed and gave so generously to help the people of Bolivia. "Thank you for the sacrifice of your prayers (Hebrews 13: 15,16) for our dear coworkers in Guayaramerin. And, thank you also for sharing in their hardship during this crisis. We appreciate all that you have done to help. It means so much to us," Pastor Saul wrote recently to me.

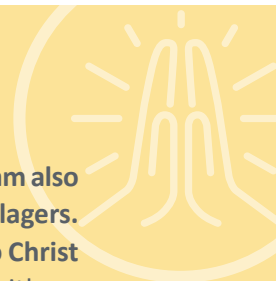
By mid-July, Saul was strong enough to lead a mission team to the smaller village of Cauchuela Esperanza and distribute food to the poorest and weakest families struck down by the virus. Pastor Saul led a team of three pickup trucks and a minivan carrying enough food for over 150 families! Iver Suarez, a young missionary, accompanied him on the trip. Iver has



*Medical and food supplies arrive.*

## PRAY:

**With each food bundle, Pastor Saul and his team also explain the Gospel and offer to pray with villagers. Dozens upon dozens of people are turning to Christ for hope and healing!** Please praise God with us for his wonderful care. As I Peter 5:7 instructs, we continue to cast all our care upon Jesus because He truly does care for us.



# School Days in Papua New Guinea

## WHEN COVID ISN'T THE ONLY OBSTACLE



While North Americans are wondering what the new school year might look like for our children, many little ones in Papua New Guinea don't have the opportunity to learn at all. In PNG, there is no guaranteed free, public education accessible for many children from remote bush regions.

**W**hat a heartbreak and yet a challenge to hear a small Wewak child say, "I want to grow up to be a somebody too," as she watched a fellow village girl on graduation day. Girls who finish school and complete their education are a rarity in Papua New Guinea. Only parents who can afford the costly transport and tuition fees can ensure schooling opportunities. This means a small minority of village children have the privilege of seeing the inside of a classroom as educational expenses average more than a third of their yearly wages!



**Educating Wewak children is a game-changer, especially for girls in Papua New Guinea.**

Since the late 1990s, Friends In Action has been teaching Wewak nationals construction and business skills through work in a woodshop and telling them about Jesus. These indigenous workers complete carpentry projects that benefit local pastors, churches, and small businesses on the island.

Each day a handful of workers gather for devotions and Bible reading with FIA's field leader Mike Butler before beginning their day in the sawmill. These nationals have become skilled laborers and Christ-followers in their community.

**Like many small businesses in North America, COVID-19 restrictions have hampered the little woodshop's ability to function resulting in fewer funds available to support the workers. In turn, these families find themselves without the means to send their children to school.**

Educating Wewak children is a game-changer, especially for girls in Papua New Guinea. Each child who completes school has a far greater chance of escaping poverty, disease, and crime by pursuing work that impacts neighboring villages for good. The ripple effect is astounding. Listen to Delvin's story.

**Delvin grew up in the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea.** Like most villagers, she grew up in a small woven bamboo hut with a roof made of leaves. The family survived by eating the meager portions provided through the tiny subsistence crops of yams, taro, and bananas. Delvin's father came to know Christ and obtained carpentry skills through work at FIA's woodshop in the region. Passing along what he learned about Jesus to Delvin, she decided to

follow Christ too. Generous FIA donors added to her father's wages to sponsor Delvin's education.

While many other girls spent their days carrying water and cooking for their families, she was able to study in the classroom. Delvin longed for learning and made the most of the opportunity provided to her. She graduated from primary school, then high school, and then three years of teacher's college resulting in her currently being entrusted with a leadership role in the school in which she now teaches!

**Not only does Delvin's example inspire other PNG children to complete school, but as a teacher, she impacts many children from several language groups who come to town from remote villages to learn.** She faithfully uses her platform as an admired village teacher to share Christ's love with hundreds of children!

Friends In Action, Intl. is pleased to support our national workers' children and so proud of the progress each makes in their studies. We are so grateful to each of you who prays and gives to make sure that these little ones "grow up to be a somebody too."

**What an impact you make on the life of that child, family, and village for the glory of God!**

**"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."**

**—JEREMIAH 29:11**



**3 Ways You Can Help:**

**PRAY**

Please specifically lift the 12 children of our workers up in your prayers. Ask the Lord to provide, protect, and inspire them to a life that brings glory to God.

**GO**

Help transport these little ones to school! Slightly more than \$10 pays for the bus transport of one child from their remote village to school for an entire month. That's less than 40 cents a day!

**GIVE**

\$50 covers school fees for almost an entire month for one child (\$13/week). Just think, \$2 a day means world-changing, community-transforming, life-saving opportunities for these children! [faintl.org/donate](http://faintl.org/donate)



# 2020 MISSIONS BANQUET

CHOOSE FROM  
2 DATES  
& LOCATIONS

## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30

Best Western Premier, Central Hotel  
800 East Park Drive  
Harrisburg, PA 17111

Hosting 200 • RSVP by October 16

## FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6

Community Bible Church  
331 Anderson Ferry Road  
Marietta, PA 17547

Hosting 125 • RSVP by October 23

**TO RSVP:** Return the enclosed slip and your payment or register online at [fiintl.org/banquet](http://fiintl.org/banquet)

### *Details for Both Locations:*

Doors open at 5:30 pm • Dinner and program, 6:00–8:30 pm

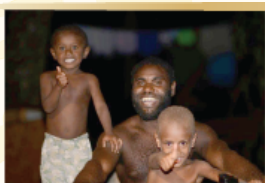
Cost: \$37/person or \$296 to sponsor a table of 8

**Enjoy a delicious served buffet dinner complete with dessert!** Seating is limited at each venue to promote safety through distancing. RSVP early to secure your spot!

### CELEBRATE GOD'S GOODNESS AROUND THE WORLD:

- Raffles, prizes, party favors
- Fun skits and games
- Auctioned items
- Christmas gift bundles

**TOOL COLLECTION:** Attendees are invited to bring new or used tools to replenish FIA's field toolbox. Let your hand tools, skill saws, drills, or battery tools with chargers help us reach the world for Christ!



Speakers share God's work in every nation despite COVID-19 challenges

Volunteer, Sponsor, and Donor Appreciation

Video footage from each indigenous people group helped

Messiah College Engineering & The Collaboratory

Testimonies from the Field



**FRIENDS  
IN ACTION  
INTERNATIONAL**

[FIaintl.org](http://FIaintl.org)



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