

Where are they now?

Bienvenue Diane Kaboré, 2011-2017

In 2011, we added three new girls to our beneficiary list for a total of five. One of these three was Bienvenu Diane (Welcome Diane). She was aided at the secondary level by our sister association, *Solidarité Goëlo-Burkina*. I was with *Solidarité* President Gilberte Saint-Cast in 2011 when she had a picnic for her beneficiaries. Diane was there and I took this photo.



I had a chance to talk to her on a visit to her school, where she was in her last year. She was a tall drink of water.



She told me that she lost her father at age three and her mother at seven. She, an older brother and two younger sisters were given to different family members. She ended up in the home of her mother's brother, who told her he could not support her after she turned 18. She wanted to be an accountant and work in a bank, but she felt trapped.

That summer, we agreed to finance her university education in accounting. She was accepted in a private university in Ouaga and was able, with our support, to move out of her uncle's house. But she was a special case. She would rent an apartment alone, and she would need support twelve months of the year. We swallowed hard and said yes.

We visited the apartment in 2012. It was 12 miles from the university, which she did by bicycle. It looked safe enough. It was in a string of small apartments within a walled compound. The landlord, a woman with two children, lived in one of the units and locked the gate at night. Diane had two rooms, a bedroom with a mattress that we supplied.



In one corner of the sitting room, she had a desk and a chair.



She cooked in another corner. Everything was neat and tidy.



She was feeling confident that she had a home and was on her way to a university degree. She learned that she had graduated from secondary school with honors.



In 2013, we visited her university. The administrator said she had excellent grades. We left her in the parking area where she kept her bike. The ride home would take her an hour.



In 2014, we sat down with an administrator of her university, who assured us her grades were good. She graduated with her undergraduate degree that summer. She had done a three-month internship with the national postal service and based her thesis on that experience.



She wanted to continue at the same university for a Master's degree. We thought that the chances of her getting a job would be improved and therefore worth it. We agreed.

In 2015, we visited her at home, joined by Christiane who, as a volunteer, runs everything for us in Burkina. We stepped into her apartment.



She was in the middle of an internship with the state water company by day; her Master's courses were in the evening, because of a shortage of professors. Christiane advised her.



At this point, she shared the apartment with Clarisse, a friend from secondary school. They shared the mattress we had given Diane.



Clarisse had a motorbike that she didn't need in the evening, so she let Diane use it to get to and from classes. What a relief! We said goodbye and wished her luck.



She came to see me at the hotel where I was staying in 2016. She was in her last year of a Master's in accounting. Courses were at night; in the daytime she worked for the French bank Société Générale as an intern—no regular salary. It was her third internship with the bank, each with the promise of regular employment that never came. She was feeling anxious. “What am I going to do when you're not there”, she asked?



We visited her in 2017; she would finish her coursework for a Master's later that year. She seemed more confident.



She came to see me at my hotel in 2018, her course work finished. She was working on her thesis. Her roommate Clarisse supported her; she had a job in the private sector.



Nothing had changed when we met with her in 2019. She was still doing on and off internships with Société Générale. It was obvious they were exploiting her. I began to get nervous for her. She was supporting herself by selling vegetables in the market.



With me was Anne Penketh, a former AFP correspondent at the UN and member of the board of our new association in Geneva.

Then in 2020 there was a breakthrough. She came to see me at the hotel and announced that she had passed a competitive test to become a government employee as a financial supervisor. I was thrilled. She would have another two years of preparation at l'ENAM, a university that prepares students for government service. All would be paid by the Government, including a salary. Diane was launched!



Today she is bursar of a lycée in the town of Bondokuy, about 300 km west of Ouagadougou. Her lycée was closed due to a terrorist threat but reopened last November. She has a government contract for life with the Ministry of Education. She's engaged to be married to Alexandre, who just finished his medical studies and won a government contract for life as a doctor.

Her long-term plan—to find a job in the capital and settle down with Alexandre. Let's hope that happens.

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