

WEND BENDO, BURKINA FASO: A PROJECT IN THE MODEL OF SAINT CHARLES DE FOUCAULD

FOLLOW-UP VISIT REPORT TO THE WEND BENDO PROJECT, BURKINA FASO, DECEMBER 2025 FUNDACIÓN TIENDA ASILO DE SAN PEDRO, SPAIN

At Home

On December 26th, we, the aid workers Nacho ARSUAGA, Carlos LLANO, and Aurelio SANZ, arrived in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. We were overjoyed to be back on Burkinabé soil and welcomed by Suzanne and her team. We were there to experience firsthand the development of the Wend Benedo project, sharing with its people the difficult reality of a country still plagued by the shadow of insecurity due to terrorism. In this environment, we felt completely free and safe, without any fear whatsoever.



Out of caution, and on the advice of our friends, we were unable to visit the project area (Kongoussi, Bam, Kaya, etc.), but we had several opportunities to meet with the people, as we will now describe.



A testament to something small, yet of great value

On the afternoon of the 26th, we visited the Little Sisters of Jesus. We had met them on previous occasions. They live the spirituality of St. Charles de FOUCAULD among the common people, through their manual labor, and by helping prostitutes who want to normalize their lives, all within the context of a parish. Learning from the poor continues to open doors for us in Burkina Faso. We took the opportunity to buy some handmade soap from them.

Team, Achievements, and Challenges of the Project

On the 27th, we dedicated the morning to working with Wend Benedo's team, part of the team in Bam, and the board of directors in Ouagadougou. We met with Suzanne, Yvette, Nestor, Edmond Norbert, Guillaume, Pascal, and Wendnyolosdé. We gathered in one of the rooms of the Lorette ND Reception Center. The realities of the project were presented, including medical and healthcare services, psychosocial support, accompaniment of new clients, outreach in villages, schooling for children and adolescents and their academic progress (which involves paying for schools, training centers, and boarding schools, as well as providing the necessary materials), nutritional support, and the significant effort to assist thousands of refugees displaced by terrorism.



Among these refugees are 52 orphaned babies, fed with formula, adopted by volunteer mothers in the project, all of whom have several children. We are pleased to highlight that in 2025, NOT A BABY HAS DIED. The Foundation's efforts to find resources for the development of these children are more than rewarded when we see families increasing the number of children without considering their own well-being and safety. We trust that

the project will continue to provide them with the means for their future schooling. It is undoubtedly a very serious wake-up call to our Western lifestyles in many respects...



The team is working to establish agreements with Save the Children and UNICEF to provide care for the children of the displaced population. Furthermore, the relationship with *Chrétiens pour le Sahel* continues for educational support.

Despite the insecurity, the Wend Benedo project continues its work and activities, taking on new challenges, such as the future of the two plots of land in Kongoussi and Sabce for the construction of vocational training centers.

It is important to note the positive attitude and spirit of "To be with" that characterizes all of Wend Benedo's guidelines, inspired by the insights of Saint Charles de FOUCAULD, and its openness to all, regardless of religion.

Family Dinner

On the afternoon and evening of the 27th, we had a much-anticipated reunion with the young people we've known year after year at Wend Benedo, since they were very young, and who are now in their twenties. We invited them to dinner and spent time reminiscing, looking through photos, talking about their lives, the self-employment they were trained for within the project, and their joys and hopes. They are now starting families.

This reunion filled us with a healthy sense of satisfaction as we witnessed their achievements. Carlos is in almost daily contact with them and other young people who are continuing their studies through social media. He acts as a mentor and motivator from afar.



Our People from Bam and Kongoussi



On Sunday the 28th, at the Les Lauriets Center, near the Ouagadougou Cathedral, we had a big day with the people who came from Bam and Kongoussi, 140 km away, in a rickety bus. Singing, introducing ourselves, sharing our lives, celebrating the Eucharist, eating together, showing interest in one another... Wend Benedo embodies a sense of belonging to a large group of people who are making progress, achieving health and dignity, helping others find

meaning in their lives, and encouraging each other not to be overcome by fear. We talked mainly about our hopes, individually, as families, and as a country. The exchange was very lively and realistic.

Marc, the little boy we met at Wend Benedo, came by motorbike from Ouahigouya (180 km north of Ouagadougou) to be with us. Today he is a priest and is almost two meters tall. He presided



at the Eucharist and spoke to us from the heart. It was a day we'd all been waiting for, and we felt like family, in a country where everything makes you feel like family, and at the heart of a project where human connection and the importance of "being with" are paramount.

We said goodbye knowing that we'll meet again in 2026, with new realities and new dreams. We know that Suzanne and the team won't let us down.



Yagma

On the afternoon of the 28th, we visited Cardinal Philippe OUÉDRAOGO, our friend and the founder of Wend Benedo, in Yagma, west of Ouagadougou. It is a joy to meet with him again each year, to talk about everything: Burkina Faso, world events, the beginnings of the project, the days we spent working at the monastery in Honda, under the great shea tree, in September 2004... His wise and humble style continues to inspire us to listen.



On the morning of the 29th, we began our return journey, already dreaming of coming back.



Speakers: **Carlos LLANO**, economist, Madrid, coordinator of Childhood Smile; **José Ignacio ARSUAGA**, lawyer, Madrid, responsible for Friends of Burkina; **Aurelio SANZ**, priest, Cartagena, vice president of the Fundación Tienda Asilo de San Pedro and coordinator of Wend Benedo in the West.



Childhood **Smile**



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