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## Jason, Emily & Savannah Atkins

### Quick Summary of the Government Status in Guinea-Bissau

Over the past month around 650 African peace-keeping troops have arrived in Guinea-Bissau and the military has appointed an interim government and turned over control. Two thirds of the parliament of Guinea-Bissau and several international bodies (including the United Nations) have refused to recognize the authority of the military-appointed government, so we're keeping our plans flexible as we watch the situation closely.

### Passing It On *by Emily*

Lately I've decided that one fun part of teaching myself to do something is that after I get the bugs worked out I can teach someone else. In the past I've been reluctant to jump into teaching right after I figure something out, wanting to wait until I'm closer to the "expert" level before I try to show someone else – I mean, what if they have a question I can't answer!!! 😊 Over the past year God has provided me with lots of different opportunities to teach something that I've barely learned myself, and in every one of those times my little mistakes have helped learning the new skill not be so overwhelming to my trainees.

Since I've been loving the new skirts I've made myself out of bright African fabrics, I decided to invite Abby, the 12-year-old daughter of our teammates Wade and Katie, to spend a few days at my house and learn to sew by making herself a skirt too. I definitely consider myself a beginning seamstress, but I had an easy pattern that I had made once already, so we set aside a weekend and got to work. When she came in from the village where her family lives we had no idea that the military would overthrow the government that very evening, effectively trapping her an hour away from her parents. But she was a trooper and while we were sitting tight in the house, eating strange concoctions of things I had on hand — she learned how to sew and made herself an awesome new skirt.



Abby learning to sew

After the skirt was finished and Jason got back to Bissau we decided to all go out to the village, where Abby's family lives, to wait out the coup and so that Jason could finish welding the metal roof on the new dorm building. Since teaching Abby to sew went so well, I got some old t-shirts, gathered the women from the church in the village, and showed them how to cut the shirts into strips and weave them together to make potholders. I used the same concept as the rug that I made for Savannah's room, just smaller. We had fun and by the end of the second day most of them were doing it well.



Practice makes perfect!



Teaching some of the women from the church how to weave strips of old shirts into sturdy potholders

Weaving a practice potholder to show the women as an example



Abby and I, each in the first skirt that we made ourselves from a sewing pattern

Continued...

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# Raising the Roof by Jason

The evacuation from Bissau caught us in the middle of an exciting project that we didn't get the chance to share yet. Our teammates building the YFC discipleship base in Mansoa were fighting hard to finish their dorms before the next group of students arrived. The dorms are being built to house classes, students, and to host retreats and camps for the church. There are six rooms plus a kitchen and they will be outfitted to accommodate about 200 people.

Roofs in Guinea Bissau are generally made with either grass thatch over splintered palm wood or corrugated zinc sheeting over a steel frame. Each have their advantage, but for durability and strength, it's tough to beat the steel. When we heard Wade was ready for the roof, we jumped at the chance to help out!

The steel for the roof needed to be bought in Bissau, so we had the huge advantage of bringing the steel back to the shop to pre-cut a lot of the lengths we knew we'd need before loading it and our equipment into the truck to head for Mansoa. Our bandsaw is able to make eight perfectly straight cuts at a time, rather than us cutting the steel by hand with a hacksaw out in the 110 degree Mansoa sun. The capabilities in the shop that allowed us to prepare things ahead saved us at least five days on-site.

Emily had been looking for an excuse to get out to Mansoa to visit our friends the McHargues anyway, so she and Savannah were eager to come along, and we stayed in the McHargues spare room. The heat in Mansoa is sweltering as the season approaches the rainy season. It felt even hotter breathing into a welding mask and wearing long sleeves and jeans. The cruel irony of roofing work is that as soon as you create some shade, you're off to work on a different part of the roof, again in full sun!

Together with my two construction guys, Nilton and Carlitos, we got a great start on the ironwork for the roof. The heat was oppressive, but we did our best to stay hydrated. I think I owe the companies that made our welding equipment a recommendation of some sort, because despite blazing heat, dusty air, and hard work, our equipment never once balked at us. We ran two welders side-by-side most of the day and made great progress.

The coup happened in the middle of the project, after Emily had taken Abby back to Bissau for the weekend. After a stressful couple of days I was able to go to Bissau to bring them back to Mansoa as we waited to see what would happen. We got the opportunity to go back to our apartment one more time in order to quickly pack a few things up when we realized we might not be back for a while. Back in Mansoa we worked hard to finish the project while keeping an ear to the ground about the political situation. Once the ironwork was done, and our stout New Zealander friend named Aidy was busy putting the zinc on, we evacuated with Katie McHargue and her kids to Senegal. The finished project is a thing of beauty. Perhaps not objectively, but the sweat equity we put into it, and the many ways it will be used by God, make it beautiful to us. 😊

*Jason + Emily*



Loading up the steel and tools to head out to Mansoa



Nilton, our main construction guy, a super hard worker, and one of Jason's best friends



The mighty bandsaw



Slicing through roof girders with a plasma cutter



Setting the frame for the roof on the L-shaped dorm



Daddy's welding gloves and sporting a dress made by Mommy



Nilton and Jason welding away in the heat of the Mansoa sun



Our friend from New Zealand, Aidy, attaching the corrugated zinc to the steel frame



The finished roof. The walls are still being plastered and the windows and doors haven't been installed yet. To the right you can see the front face of the house, in the middle is the house of prayer, and to the right you can see the small bathroom building and the large pavilion

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