



The Atkins Family

Jason, Emily, Savannah, Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau,
West Africa

November 2025

It's so much easier to get things done when it's dry and cooler!

Let There Be Shade! *by Jason*

Last month, the masons used the new blocks we made during a few-day break in the rains to finish the walls of the second wing of the new shop. The only remaining block work now is last few feet of the front wall of the central section! After we poured the bond beams on top of the new walls, we lined up the steel trusses and purlins we'd been fabricating during the rainy season and set to work roofing the whole wing, which already included my office and a storage room, and will now include a room for the CNC plasma cutting table and a second room which will hold carpentry in the near term and then be transitioned to sheet metal work once the dedicated carpentry building is eventually built several years from now. It's so exciting to add another big chunk of floorspace that's protected from sun, rain, and dew!

Now the shop structure is almost ready for us to begin building the roof over the main section. That project will take several months as we haven't yet fabricated the 34' trusses, but in the meantime the masons will be working to finish laying the last blocks of the building, above the big roll up door. We're so thankful for such progress!

Left: Look at that newly covered floor space: a pair of 370 sq ft rooms to house plasma cutting and carpentry.



So much nicer to roof in the cool(er) season!

Quiet, Reliable Block Making *by Jason*

Last month I told you that we had swapped one of our cement mixers and the block-dirt-mixing roto-tiller from gas to electric. This month, I tackled converting our next-most problematic fuel-powered machine: the diesel-powered block making machine. While we'll eventually want that machine to return to being fuel powered so it's mobile, until our construction is done it's going to be busy making blocks in the same spot, right next to the clay mine. As the diesel motor has continued to give us trouble (again because of the dust involved in the process), I had planned to convert it to electric as well. When we sent the shipping container last year, I included some components for this project including a brand-new (cont'd)



The block maker is now powered by electricity instead of diesel and is more reliable and much quieter!

Quiet, Reliable Block Making (cont'd) *by Jason*

(...) electric motor (which I got at an auction for a fabulous price).

The conversion required machining an adapter plate, some mechanical work, and some electrical. I'm happy to report that although the new setup is making blocks slightly more slowly (at least for now), the machine is working very reliably, quietly, and without sucking in any dusty air! We're now one step more insulated from fuel supply problems (there was no diesel for several days this month) and excited for one of our most important machines to be more dependable.

The machine working hard for several hours most days will put an increased demand on our off-grid solar electrical system, so next month we'll tackle the job of adding a second bank of panels to the newly-built section of shop roof to keep up. During the process I was reminded again and again how blessed we are to have the resources available to meet these challenges as they arise. Thank you for your faithful support providing the materials we need to keep turning this site into the excellent vocational training spot for Guinea-Bissau's youth that it will one day be!



The heart of the adaptation was this nice, new electric motor sourced from an auction and sent in the shipping container last year.

Help Has Arrived! *by Jason*

We received some help this month! Jim Redyke, from Tulsa, came out for a week



to encourage us, help spur some improvements, and dig a huge load of new block-making dirt out of the mine with the skid steer. It was a great encouragement having him here and a big help to kick off this season's block making with a huge supply of material ready to go!

We've hit rock in several areas of the two half parcels we bought to mine clay dirt for blocks. We'll likely need to try to buy the land next to it as well, as there are a lot of blocks left to make!



House Walls *by Jason*

We reached another important point in the site construction this month: the first blocks laid for our new house! The first batch of blocks we made this dry season were enough to finish the shop, so the rest of them were used to get a start on the house. So far, after all of the foundation work, we've only poured about a quarter of the slab for the house, so we're only able to get started on a few of the walls, but it's still very encouraging to see the house starting to take shape vertically.

Over the next few months we hope to do the remaining four slab pours to finish the house, and as each pour is completed we'll unlock more walls that can be built! We hope for major progress on the house this season as the shop construction enters its finishing phase (plaster, paint, electrical, etc.).



Our new house has its first blocks laid! It's so exciting to see the first few rooms taking shape.



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