

The Village Drill Comes to Mali

About 3 years ago I learned of the Village Drill - a portable, man-powered well drilling system, which I thought would be perfect for our situation in Mali, West Africa. When I shared this information with my Malian coworker, Samuel, his eyes lit up and he immediately exclaimed, "Wow! We need that here!" I had no idea how we would ever find the finances for such a thing, but I began to look into it. But I should back up and tell you Samuel's story, so you understand why he would get so excited about well-drilling equipment...



The Village Drill



Samuel & me, ready to leave for the villages.

Samuel was born in 1968 in the village of Sehoun-Foulala in the Dioila region of Mali, where his father was the village chief. It's an extremely underdeveloped region where people make their living by subsistence farming. Life is hard, opportunities are non-existent, and disaster in the form of famine or sickness is always just around the corner. At an early age Samuel became frustrated with the narrowness of this existence, that life was nothing more than a constant struggle for survival. Why couldn't things ever change? In

his teenage years, that frustration turned to anger and rebellion. With no education and not much of a plan, he left Mali altogether, hoping to find a better life in the big city of Abidjan, in the neighboring country of Ivory Coast. His life there consisted of using and selling drugs, but he found lodging with a Christian family who had a profound influence on him. He experienced a dramatic turn-around as he came to faith, and eventually made his way back to Mali.

Back in Mali, he got acquainted with Youth With A Mission, learned to read and write, and eventually completed several training programs through YWAM. Samuel's desire, along with his wife Silvana, was to bring spiritual and material blessing to the land of his birth. But they often wondered what they could tangibly offer to their community. This led them to begin visiting several villages, listening to what the needs were in each one. ***The recurring theme they heard, time and again from the women they spoke to, was their inability to provide food for their children.***

Mali, a land-locked country, has large amounts of arid land with great portions of it reduced to complete desert. This makes access to water very difficult. The Sangares understood the direct relationship these communities had to their land and, essentially, their survival. After taking a course in community development, Samuel and Silvana began a small agricultural endeavor - a Community Vegetable Garden Project. They acquired a plot of land and divided it up amongst the families and began teaching the women how to grow their own crops. By providing simple and sustainable irrigation techniques, they were able to begin an income-generating project in which the members of the village worked and produced crops to feed their own families as well as sell in the market. Before long, surrounding villages heard



Samuel, Silvana & children

about this project and asked the Sangare's to come and help them set one up too. Soon they couldn't keep up with the demand! **"We are in 30 villages...directly working with over 1200 women with the gardens, literacy courses, primary healthcare and much more. Indirectly, with the average family of six, this ministry is touching 7200 people!** It is so amazing to think of this!"

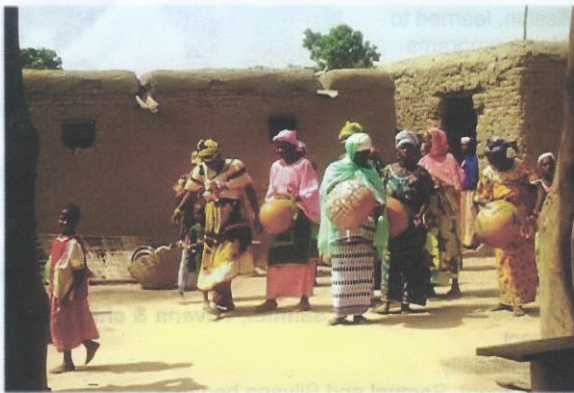


Community Gardens in Kounambougou

And here is where the village drill comes in. To supply these dry-season gardens with water, several wells are usually hand-dug in each site. Because there's a limit to how deep a well can be dug by hand, these wells often dry up or cave in after only one season. The Village Drill has the potential to drastically improve existing gardens, as well as to accelerate the installation of new gardens in villages we have not yet reached, by providing deep, reliable wells. Of course, the use of the drill goes well beyond the garden project alone, as it can provide clean water to just about any community in the region that simply needs a reliable well. For Samuel, the Village Drill is a tremendous tool

in the effort to improve the lives of thousands in the Dioila region of Mali. Thanks to Rotary of Lakeshore in Pasadena, MD, the Village Drill kit has been purchased and delivered to our base in the village of Koyala, Mali, and we are looking forward to getting our team trained in its use in the coming months.

Paul Butler with YWAM & Source of Life
Mali, West Africa



The women leading the community gardens in Koyala, Mali, performing a welcome dance for Samuel and our team.



Samuel getting information from the leaders of yet another village that is asking for a garden project.