

STUDENT'S HANDOUT



Background Information

Burkina Faso, an ex-French colony, won its independence in 1960. Despite international aid projects, Burkina Faso remains a difficult region to develop. This Sahel country is surrounded by other countries and thus does not possess any ports allowing for maritime trade. The majority of the population lives on subsistence agriculture. Desertification and recent droughts severely affect agriculture, the economy, the population, and the livestock. At this point in time, close to half of the population (the equivalent of the Quebec population) lives in absolute poverty.



Instructions

Read the following interview with Samuel, a young intern who lived in Burkina Faso, and answer the questions.

Interview

RITA: What were you doing at the time that you decided to go to Burkina Faso?

SAMUEL: I was doing an internship with NetCorps, a program linking information and communication technologies to international development. I was associated with a Burkinabe partner to assist him in the development of his information and communication technology (ICT) internet cafe, and in the training of his staff. We combined our expertise for a better use of the available equipment.

Country	Burkina Faso	Canada
Capital	Ouagadougou	Ottawa
Population (2004)	13 400 000	32 000 000
Population Density (per km²):	49	3
Urban Population (% in 2003) :	18	80
Life Expectancy at Birth (2003)	46 years	79 years
Adult Literacy Rate (% 2000-2004):		
Total	13	99
• Men	18	99
• Women	8	99

RITA: What was your motivation to participate in this project?

SAMUEL: The desire to experience and live the unknown in a completely different context than the one I live on a daily-basis in Quebec. I had just finished my studies in technological support and thought that it was the perfect moment to leave.

RITA: What was the primary objective of this international cooperation program?

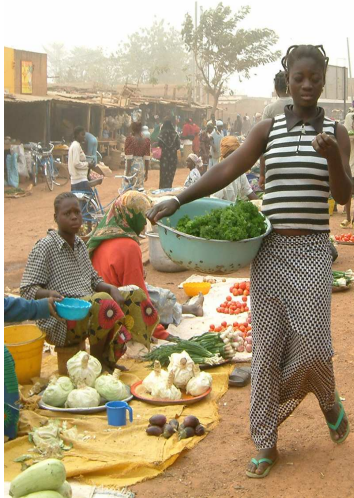
SAMUEL: It was, first of all, to allow developing countries to have access to new technologies. Solidarity is built through the sharing of knowledge, which was what the NetCorps program offered, financed by the Canadian International Development Agency.

RITA: Did you experience a cultural shock upon arriving in Burkina Faso?

SAMUEL: Certainly! I'll admit that I was very eager to experience one! My integration was both simple and enriching. In the city, most people speak French. There were many people to whom I could speak and ask questions!

RITA: Is there a person in particular that grabbed your attention?

SAMUEL: Yes, of course! His name is Ali. He was in charge of parking the motorcycles at the cybercafe, where I worked. I have very good memories of this honourable man, enthusiastic under all circumstances. I supported Ali in his struggle against stereotypes of HIV positive individuals, about which he taught me a lot.



This region of the world is affected by the AIDS pandemic. In 2003, about 29,000 people died of AIDS. The causes are diverse but many people cannot afford the expensive medication. On a happier note, television and local newspapers inform Burkinabes of the disease and of prevention methods.



RITA: What did this experience offer you on a personal level?

SAMUEL: It provided a lot of motivation to work on personal challenges. I took advantage of this internship to test my reactions in extraordinary situations. I think that an experience like this reinforces or radically changes our convictions because they are put to the test, whether we want it or not.

Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

**Reading Comprehension Evaluation
In the Country of Honourable Men**

1- You just read an interview with a young intern. In which program did Samuel visit Burkina Faso? What does it consist of?

2- Find in the text two expressions that describe Burkina Faso.

3- Why was Samuel's integration "both simple and enriching"?

4- What do you think is an HIV positive individual?

5- According to what you read, list 3 professional gains and 3 personal gains that such an internship can offer.

Professional Gains	Personal Gains

6- Using the description of Burkina Faso in the Background Information section, locate the country on the map and justify your answer.



Answer:

AN INITIATIVE OF THE
In-Terre-Actif Network of the Comité de Solidarité/Trois-Rivières



PRODUCED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA
THROUGH THE



Canadian
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