

To the people of Japan: Thank you!

Burkina Faso

Project for Primary School Construction

Completion ceremony (April 14, 1997)

The ceremony was packed with around 1,000 people including audiences from nearby villages, as well as Minister of Basic Education and Literacy Sanou and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ouédraogo.

The Japanese ambassador spoke about Japanese cooperation in his speech, stating that, “All of our cooperation is filled with the wishes of Japanese taxpayers hoping for African development,” and added, “I have been impressed by the serious attitude of the headmaster, teaching staff, students, and village people towards education. I am sure that the wishes of the people of the villages here - that many people who will lead this country in the future will come from among these students - will come true.”

His microphone cut off in the middle of his speech, but the people listened to the interpretation in their local language, and were nodding and clapping at important points. After the ceremony, the local residents said goodbye to the Ministers and the Japanese ambassador at the village entrance, and continued waving until their motorcade could no longer be seen.

The ceremony was covered in local newspapers with photographs.

“79 Classrooms Provided by Japanese grant aid – The 31 schools that have been built have been christened” the Schools of Friendship as symbols of the friendship between Japan and Burkina Faso. ...We have received valuable gifts other than the 79 classrooms as part of this project: 186 ventilated toilets, water vessels for drinking water with taps, and cleaning equipment. With these, the education environment of 4,000 children in the five target departments will improve. (From the local newspaper 'Observateur Paalga)’

Education in Burkina Faso is in a poor state even among developing nations (the primary level school attendance rate is around 33% (1994)), and there are many existing primary schools that have temporary classrooms constructed of sun-dried clay bricks and straw thatching, which are affected by the weather and are having safety concerns. There are also many primary schools that have only one or two classrooms, being one of the reasons for the attendance rate not increasing. This cooperation provided for rebuilding and increasing 79 classrooms in 31 primary schools in five department, in addition to providing equipments for education such as desks and chairs.