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## **Bako inspires group**

Former Chadian orphan hopes to make return trip to U.S. to help fund raising.

*by Matt Brennan*

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The power of persuasion has come in handy for Ngarndeye Bako.

A top Christian figure in Chad, Bako convinced Gary Augustine, the pastor of the Evangelical Fellowship Church in Elburn, and a handful of his friends, to help with his country's orphan problem.

Bako came to the United States and studied at Wheaton College on the Billy Graham scholarship. While there, he did some research for class on the orphan problem in his home country of Chad, a subject that was personal to him.

"He himself is an orphan," Augustine said. "He was taken in by a mission organization. They helped his grandmother to be able to take care of him."

Bako wanted to return the favor, and find a way to raise money that would support a program providing funding for people to raise orphans in Chad. He asked some American corporations for help, but they were hesitant to get involved with a project overseas.

While attending College Church, in Wheaton, Bako came across John and Vivi Wickberg. They were interested in what Bako had to say, and decided to have him over for dinner. That is also where Steve and Nancy Hoffman, members of the Evangelical Fellowship Church, and Augustine, met Bako.

Since Bako had already tried with no success to interest the American business world in his project, he tried a different approach. He pleaded to the group at the Wickbergs for help at a grass roots level. He wanted the group to help try to raise money for the project.

As a result of this, Augustine, the Wickberg's and Steve Hoffman flew to Chad to view the problems first hand. They spent from Nov. 5 to 19, 2003 in the country, viewing the problem firsthand, and talking with some of the orphans for a video to be used in the fund-raising project.

The group has since been trying to form a nonprofit company to help raise money. The fund-raising aspect of the project will be much easier once the group has organized, Augustine said.

## **Why they decided to help**

Bako's personality makes it easy to want to help him, Augustine said.

"First of all he is a man of incredible charisma and stature," Augustine said.

When the group was getting its visas in the United States, it was asked who it was visiting in Chad. When Augustine replied Bako, his name was met with warm regard thousands of miles away.

"This is from the United States, they know him," Augustine said. "So he is a very powerful, effective and good administrator, very good at what he does."

It was also easy for Augustine to see that Bako's reasons for starting the orphanage program were genuine. He simply wants to return what was given to him, according to Augustine. Bako wants to make sure that the programs that were there for him as a child orphan, are there for future children, Augustine said.

But his program and his goals also go deeper than that.

Bako has a vision of a network of kids, who if treated right, would have the opportunity to grow up and make a difference in the world, Augustine said. At the same time, this group of children could grow up, and provide a change for the positive in Chad.

"Bako sees this as a concept that people, because of their hardships, would be willing to invest in their country for change," Augustine said.

Another reason that the group decided to get involved is that the cause is not popular overall. Few groups fund a project like this, Augustine said.

"There just aren't a lot of government resources for this sort of thing," Augustine said. "And there aren't many outside groups funding it in the west."

This group is the primary provider for Bako's project right now, Steve said. That is why the group is eager to get a nonprofit status, so that it can widen its fund-raising base. The money is not in danger of running out, but there needs to be more ways to raise it.

Augustine estimated that the group has raised between \$25,000 and \$30,000 for the orphanage program so far, and that number is continuously rising. The program currently takes care of 40 kids, Augustine said.

Bako wants those numbers to grow, and he also wants the program to take on a few extra projects, Augustine said.

"I think he's happy from the point of view that we're doing something," Augustine said. "But he'd like to raise money to buy land and build a center. I think he'd like the progress for that stuff to be a little quicker."

The group understands Bako's anxiousness, however.

"We do appreciate the fact that he is aggressive," Steve said. "We might be concerned if it was the other way around. We just try to put some reality into his viewpoint."

## **Bako's return**

The group fell in love with the cause, and is still in the process of forming the nonprofit organization to help the cause. It hopes to receive a boost in the fall, when a tentative return visit is scheduled for Bako.

The visit plans to involve Bako in the fund-raising side of the project in the United States while he is here, Augustine said. Augustine and other members of the group hope to have Bako speak at area churches and libraries, in addition to becoming involving with the community, Augustine said.

"It's the whole idea of just letting people know what you are working on," Augustine said. "People will have a better sense of connection, if the person is here."

Part of the reason he is not coming back until the fall is that the group will be able to do more fund raising once they have achieved a nonprofit status. It will be easier for them to raise money when donors feel more comfortable, Steve said.

"Once we get our ducks in a row, we can use him for public speaking," he said. "But we are still in the process of putting this organization together. The fund raising is pretty limited right now."

It will be good for potential donors to the project to hear from Bako himself, Steve said.

"Bako is a visionary," he said. "He's always trying to push us up to that next level."