

Introducing... Family Profile

Sponsored child name:	Fode Sanha	Sponsored child number:	0109 - 020523
Sponsored child date of birth:	1998		
Sex of sponsored child :	Male	Community name:	Brandao 4
Religion of sponsored child:	Muslim	Community code:	BR4

I am happy to greet you and would like to welcome you to Plan Guinea Bissau on behalf of your new sponsored child, Fode Sanha. My name is Abduali and I work as a community volunteer in Brandao 4, where Fode and his family have lived for as long as they can remember. Together with other community volunteers I help with communications between sponsors and the families in Fode's community. I'm sure that you have already glanced at the attached photos. Don't worry about the serious expressions on their faces. A photo is a very serious thing here - on the very few occasions their photos are taken, the villagers make a real effort to express their dignity. I recently visited the family and talked with Braima, Fode's uncle. Now I would like to introduce all the family members to you.

Introducing Fode

First of all, let us talk about Fode. He is an active little boy whose favourite games include football and basketball. His uncle tells me that Fode always says that when he is older he would like to be a street hawker. In this part of the world children grow up fast and all must play a part in the family's progress and survival. Although they still have time to play they must also help with the daily chores. Fode helps to fetch water for the house and with small errands.

Fode is now in the first grade of the primary school. His uncle says that his performance in school is good. He is a bright child and studies hard. The day starts early for Fode as he heads for school. He travels by foot and it takes him less than 30 minutes. Every day Fode meets his friends Saido and Mamadu and like children everywhere they chatter about all kinds of different things so the time passes quickly. Fode is glad to reach school and to start the day with his friends. He always looks forward to the mathematics lesson that is his favourite subject.

Fode is not able to write to you himself yet, however, I am eager to write to you on his behalf. They are keen to learn more about you, your family and the country in which you live. Although children in this community are very shy about writing to someone in a different country we will encourage them to communicate with you in their own personal way, perhaps through a small drawing. It is also very exciting for them to receive a letter or a photograph from a friend abroad and so I hope you will be able to find the time to send Fode and his family a message occasionally. I have seen the wide smiles which this can bring to a child's face!

Introducing Fode's family

There are 3 family members living together with Fode. I would like to introduce them to you.

Maimuna (26), who is Fode's mother. At the moment she is working as a housewife.

Sancum (38), who is Fode's father. At the moment he is working as a peasant farmer.

Braima (40), who is Fode's uncle. At the moment he is working as a peasant farmer.

At home the family speaks their local language, Fula.

Fode and his family's health

Braima told me that Fode has been in good health during the past six months. This means that he was one of the fortunate ones as still, many children suffer from diseases that could be prevented. There is no health facilities in Fode's community. If there were an emergency case, the family would have to travel more than two hours to get to the nearest hospital. This makes it nearly impossible for them to receive emergency treatment.

Where Fode and his family live

Fode's family lives in a small house made of adobe with a straw roof. The house is owned by the family without a legal title. Whilst showing me their home, Braima told me that the house is in a poor condition. This means that living conditions are not very healthy. Fode's family does not have their own latrine and have to use a hole in the ground for their needs. This creates a lower level of hygiene and increases the incidence of disease, particularly amongst the children.

In many areas of Plan's work a lack of access to clean safe drinking water all year round is a real problem and can cause an increase in common water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea and cholera. Throughout the year Fode's family get their water from a borehole with a hand pump that is less than 1km away. There is sufficient water during both rainy and dry seasons. The water is safe for the family to drink at all times.

Fode's family uses an open fire to cook their daily meals and their main fuel is wood. Collecting firewood is usually the work of women and children and a very time consuming task. For lighting the house the family uses kerosene lamps. Braima says this ends the day early as the lack of light makes it difficult to work or do household chores in the evening. Fode's family, like their friends and neighbours have a very small income and it is a struggle to be able to meet their basic needs. However, the families in the Brandao 4 community have a rich social life. During their spare time, Fode's family loves talking with friends, playing sports and listening to the radio. Sitting together with friends and neighbours around their little radio and listening to the news and music is one of the great pleasures of their hard life.

My message to you

I hope you have enjoyed reading about Fode and his family. The following pages will give you more information about their community and the way of life there. Hopefully this will give you a better idea of the problems they face, their expectations and their positive attitude. Life is not easy and the economic situation can make it even harder. However Plan will be working with Fode's family and all families within Brandao 4 to identify their most basic needs which may be in health, education, housing or income. Each individual will play a role and contribute what they can in terms of manual labour, local materials, technical expertise or financial contributions to ensure a brighter future for Fode and other children like him.

We hope that your friendship with Fode will be an unforgettable experience and that it will give you the opportunity to learn more about another culture far away. Your contributions will allow our team here to create opportunities for the family and their village community to help them solve some of their serious problems. Next year you will receive an Annual Progress Report, and we hope that we will then be able to show you some of the first proud achievements which Fode's family have made. Until then, thank you for giving Fode a chance!

Abduali Sanha
community volunteer