

Goals of Next Steps 2014 in Togo

Instead of presenting a long, boring list of busy things we plan to do during the months of June and July, why not take this to another level. For example:

God created we humans with 5 distinct senses:

1. **Seeing**
2. **Hearing**
3. **Tasting**
4. **Feeling**
5. **Smelling**

Our real goals for all Next Steps volunteers who have come to Togo are, we want every sense and fiber of their beings to be affected. Since God created us as "*sensory*" beings, we want to affect all 5 senses of each participant.

1. Seeing

You will certainly **see different things**, (you've never seen before) and without doubt, take lots of photos to remind you of your amazing sights in Togo. You'll see people, real people. The majority of the world's population basically lives like the people of Togo. You'll see people who have nothing materially, but are happy and smile as they go on their way. You'll see shocking things. You'll see sad scenes. You'll see children who are happy without I-Pads, I-Phones, and I-Pods. You'll see life in Togo through a North-American lens. It will challenge the way you think.

But, your trip to Togo will help you **see things differently**. You'll get a different perspective on life. You'll go home with a deeper appreciation of God's blessings and provision, and I predict that material things will not matter as much to you as before.

2. Hearing

You'll hear many strange sounds: from strange languages to the constant beep-beep of taxi horns. Children's laughter will take on a new meaning to you. You'll be impressed by the regular verbal greetings you'll encounter. Some sounds will initially make it difficult for you to sleep at night: roosters crowing, moto-taxis zooming by, the clatter of pots and pans of women preparing food in the neighborhood, and perhaps an occasional rumble of thunder.

But you'll also hear sounds that will forever be recorded in your mind: children singing songs of praise unto Jesus, people fervently praying, the sound of someone speaking in tongues as they receive for the first time the wonderful gift of the Holy Ghost, and I predict that some of you will hear the unmistakable voice of the Lord, speaking direction into your life.

3. Tasting

You'll taste some cultural delights in Togo that will set your taste buds screaming. Spicy, hot, real hot, sweet, salty, never bland, unique, WOW! The best fruits on the planet are grown and readily available on street corners within walking distance from SIL. The heavenly "*pistolet*" mango; the "*ananas brazza*" (native pineapple), you must try "*poulet à la sauce arachide*" (chicken in peanut sauce), foo-foo, bananas, oranges, fresh vegetables, etc.

But you're also going to taste of real life in Togo. You'll get a taste of what life is really like in a third-world country. You'll get a first-hand taste of missionary life in Africa. You'll get a good taste of how your Togolese brothers and sisters worship Jesus. You'll taste the bitterness of extreme poverty in the neighborhoods and villages, but also the sweetness of the abundant blessings and spiritual riches that these people receive as a result of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

4. Feeling

Your feelings will definitely be affected. You'll feel the intensity of the tropical heat and humidity. You'll feel the pressure of not being able to clearly communicate with everyone you meet. The cold-water showers will be unforgettable! (You'll go home with a different perspective on taking the "*Cold water challenge*") You may even feel a bit like a sardine when you go home (after being packed into the seats in the van). You will have highs and you'll experience lows. You will feel homesick at times. And then at other times, you won't even be able to identify how you feel.

But your sense of feeling will be elevated to another level. Your emotions will definitely be stirred. You will be overcome with compassion. At times you will cry, and at other times you will laugh. You will feel drawn to the Togolese people. You will feel a sense of responsibility because: "*To whom much has been given, much is also required.*" I predict that you will feel the presence of God in ways you never felt Him before. You will forever be changed!

5. Smelling

This one may be more of a challenge.

Oh the smells of Africa! Some are unforgettable to say the least. Some you'll never forget...but surely want to☺. From smelling the delightful aromas from local cooking pots, to the obnoxious smoke pouring from the exhaust pipes of trucks and taxis, your sense of smell will be challenged. Crowded altar services will introduce you to a world that doesn't always patronize "*Right Guard or Arid Extra Dry*" Open-air markets, the African village, the neighborhood, the child, your room at SIL, all come with distinctive smells.

But in the Bible, smells were often associated with pleasure or displeasure.

Some sacrifices were said to be a “*sweat savor*” unto the Lord, while others were a “*stench*” in the nostrils of God.

It is our prayer and intent that your entire Next-Steps-in-Togo experience will not only be a pleasant one, but that it will be spiritually agreeable to you. Much depends upon your own attitude.

Be open.

Be honest.

Be ready.

Be responsive.

Be changed.

These are our goals for Next Steps 2014 in Togo.