

NEWSLETTER



Spring 2023

Dear friends and supporters of Les Amis,

We very much look forward to a time when Gillie can report back to you personally, after one of her trips to Burkina Faso. Very sadly, the country remains extremely dangerous due to the ongoing terrorist attacks. The French army is in the process of leaving Burkina Faso, the Burkinabé government having invited the help of the Russians in overcoming their security difficulties. All we can do is to continue to pray that this once very peaceful country can be restored to true stability and peace. Aljazeera (<https://www.aljazeera.com/where/burkina-faso/>) remains an excellent source of news about events in Burkina Faso. In the meantime, we are remembering Father Jacques ([right](#)), whom David and Gillie met some years ago in Ouagadougou. On 2nd January this year he was kidnapped and executed by jihadists.



As ever, and very thankfully, despite the security difficulties, our projects continue to run very smoothly, thanks to those who work with us on the ground, and thanks also to the donations we continue to receive from you.

THE YOANN FOUNDATION IN OUAGADOUGOU

This was where all our work began. Named after the late Yoann, a sufferer of cerebral palsy, this foundation serves the needs of disabled children, their mothers and other women in real need. They get together regularly at the Franciscan Friary in Ouagadougou where they are given money, sacks of rice and meals.



It was wonderful to get a video call from Brother Harry at last month's distribution of food and money, the very day Gillie would ordinarily have been there to help with the distribution. Mothers of disabled children receive not just the financial help that they need, but love and friendship from those who know how difficult and isolating it is to have a disabled child in West Africa. Pélagie (seen on the left of the photo), is the mother of the late Yoann, and has been key to the ongoing success of this project. Every month she, along with Brother Harry, meets with each of the women to talk about their needs and to encourage them through their difficulties.

PROTECTING AND EDUCATING GIRLS

The protection and education of girls and young women is really important to us. Burkina Faso is a country which favours males and gives few rights to females. We are so happy to be able to help them.

... Koupéla



In Koupéla we like to support, where we can, the work of OCADES (Catholic Organisation for Development and Solidarity). Last year we were approached for help by Fr Gérard: "I would like to ask for your help for the young girls of the village of Dimistenga,



situated 15 km to the east of Baskouré. With the help of some friends, this year I have been able to open a training centre for the teaching of sewing/couture for the girls, with 20 sewing machines. There were many girls who wanted to take part in this training due to not having had to chance to ever go to school or whose education has been stopped.

Fifty-eight girls asked to join, but I have only been able to take 40, which would mean two girls to each sewing machine.

The training has begun well, but I have a huge difficulty: we are working from a really simple 'hangar' [an open sided shelter]; this is not practical, and we would love to have a proper classroom for the lessons and to house all the material and machines. I have been given an estimate of £6,700. Could you help me with either the full sum or even part of it?" We are really delighted to report that the funds were given to us and work is now underway (above) to build the facility.



.... in Fada (Sister Michaelle Ouemenga)

At the **St Joseph's Training Centre** in Fada, owned by the Diocese of Fada, we sponsor the training as seamstresses of a number of girls who have run away from forced marriages.



The money which they received in the autumn is covering the purchase of food, health care, necessary repairs and tuition. At the moment, we are supporting seven girls, including Chelle (left). They want you to know that, thanks to your support, they are comfortable, safe and working hard. They eat healthy and regular meals and are able to make their own clothes. They are happy to be surrounded by so much affection.

Anna is doing her internship at Koupéla and is doing well in her job. At the request of her parents, Godelieve, having left St Joseph's in August last year, is now not far from home and continues to work as a seamstress, skills she would not have without your help and support over the years.

They want to express their deep gratitude for your support and love towards them.



REACHING OUT TO REFUGEES AND INDIVIDUALS

We love to give financial help directly to individuals whose situations in life are really difficult. The help we give to them is genuinely life-changing. We also love being able to help, in a very direct way, those who are fleeing from trouble spots in search of safety and help.

Father Lambert wrote to let us know how things are going in his town of Kaya.

"The security situation is getting worse; populations are still moving to the towns and other safer areas. For instance, in my region there are now almost 500,000 refugees. In my diocese, eight out of 14 parishes are no longer functioning; 19 schools are shut. Those schools which are still open are overwhelmed by the number of refugee children (some pictured right). Feeding them is difficult, and we are going to need some help with this between now and the end of the academic year.

Gillie, we are all sorry that you cannot come to visit us, but the situation will be better one day, if only to visit Ouagadougou. We console ourselves with the hope that 'tomorrow will be better'. God bless each and every one of you for your charity towards us."





At the time of writing this newsletter, Fr Lambert told us about a young mother (Séva, **left**) who was in hospital with respiratory problems and needed an ambulance to take her to the capital city of Ouagadougou. Unfortunately, there was no ambulance which could provide the necessary oxygen for the journey, and that night, aged just 30, she passed away, leaving three young children aged between six and just three months. **Right** is Fr Lambert holding the youngest child, a boy, on the day his mother was buried. We will be sending financial help to this family as soon as possible. **If you would like to help us with this, then we'd be grateful to hear from you.**



FATHER PAUL



In our last newsletter, we reported on a new young lad whom we are now looking after. Agénor (**left**) came to our attention because he is severely physically handicapped, and his mother was finding it hard to cope on her own. We were subsequently really touched to receive this photo (**right**) showing his mother receiving a welcome embrace from Gillie's friend, Mariama, who had just given her some much-needed funds. She knows that she is no longer alone. Fr Paul asked Sr Emilienne (the doctor looking after Agénor) if there was anything which would help his



mother further. Here's his response: *"She needs a motorbike!! I am sorry, because it's expensive, as you know. Sr Emilienne explained to me that Agénor lives far from the hospital and that his mother takes him by bicycle. Agénor's foot dangles and gets caught in the spokes of the bicycle. Sr Emilienne, who is a courageous doctor, would like him to go to school next year! For this, a motorcycle is necessary because his mother will have to make at least two round trips to school per day. I don't know if Sr Emilienne will find a school that would agree to take Agénor as his disability is serious. If no school accepts Agénor, in my opinion, a way should be found to home school him. This will require an additional charge. But we are not there yet..."*

Readers, there is no doubt that we will be buying her the much-needed motorbike, and if this is something with which you'd like to help us, then please get in touch. A new motorbike would cost in the region of £1,000.



Like Father Lambert, Father Paul is critical to the success of our work. They, more than any others, reach out to individuals, such as a young lady from the town of Fada N'Gourma, whose husband exercises terrible abuse on her. With her meagre income as a nurse's aide, she managed to buy some land in Fada upon which to build a small house for herself. We look forward to being of help to her.

Father Paul has just reported on Perrine a woman we have helped in the past. She is a seamstress who has had the courage, despite her own financial difficulties, to take in four homeless girls. Her house (**left**) was recently very badly damaged by severe weather. We are hoping to help with the cost of repairing it.

AND WE WOULD LOVE TO GIVE MORE TALKS!



Gillie is looking forward to making an appeal in the parish of Cranleigh & Bramley over the weekend of 15th/16th April. Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to tell you about our work. Please do contact us if you would like Gillie to come and give a talk to whatever group you might belong to.

A personal message from Gillie ...

The death of a young mum is intensely sad; even more so when it could have been prevented for want of a bottle of oxygen. Les Amis may not be in a position to equip ambulances in Burkina Faso with oxygen, but we are in a very strong position to help pick up the pieces in the face of disaster. Thank you all, in advance, for your assistance in helping us to support those who are so vulnerable. I cannot imagine what it might be like to live in a country where life is so very fragile and difficult, particularly for those who have nowhere to turn in times of real need. I can only hope and pray that donations keep arriving, thereby giving real hope to those who would otherwise feel completely without hope.



Thank you for continuing to help us to change lives.

ANY CHANGES TO YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?



Moving house? There is always much to think about when moving house, and the last on your 'to do' list will be to let us know you are moving and to give us your new address. **However, if you'd like to continue to receive this newsletter, then please let us know you are planning to move or have moved.**

Can you still Gift Aid? If your circumstances have changed, and you can no longer Gift Aid your donations, then please don't forget to let us know.

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Our continued and heartfelt thanks to **Headline Design & Print** in Woking for printing this newsletter for us. They do a fantastic job, and we are really grateful to them.



The Trustees of Les Amis-Burkina Faso: Gillie & David Nicholls and Jude O'Mara-Spicer

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The poor will never cease out of the land;
therefore I command you to open wide your hand
to the needy and to the poor. (Deuteronomy 15:11)

In so far as you did this to the least of those brothers of
mine, you did it to me. (Matthew 25:40-41)

100% of money given is passed on to the needy. Yes, 100%!

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Most names in this online version of the newsletter have been changed to protect identities.