

How is your money spent?



Autumn 2014

This newsletter contains accounts of Les Amis projects written by volunteers who work so tirelessly for us in Burkina Faso.¹ They are the ones who know the individuals whose lives are being changed by your generosity. We think that what they have to say is inspirational and we hope that you will agree.



Pictured **right**, with Gillie, is Clemence², one of eight girls for whom it is impossible to live at home, all of whom we will be helping as they train to become seamstresses.

THE YOANN FOUNDATION IN OUAGADOUGOU



Written by Pélagie Ouédraogo (**left below**), mother of the late Yoann, and Brother Rozario (**left top**), a Franciscan Capuchin friar of the parish of St Pio in Ouagadougou

We, the Capuchin Brothers and Pélagie, are very grateful to Les Amis for the sacrifices you make and for the help that you are giving to the needy. **Your little help is a BIG GIFT to our mothers and children here.**



Previously you were helping 20 elderly women and 15 handicapped children. From this year you have agreed to increase the number of handicapped children from 15 to 20. Thank you so much. We are giving you, below, a little glimpse of those whom you are helping.



The Handicapped Children

Arnaud (right) is six years old. He was normal until he was one, when he fell sick. He can now no longer walk and speaks only a little. His mother did not want him and left him. It is now his grandmother who is taking care of him, and we help her.



Edouard (left) is three years old. He was born with sickness and neither speaks nor walks. For his parents he is the seventh child. In the beginning the parents disliked him, but now they accept him as he is. The parents were finding it difficult to know how to treat him. Now, because of your help, he is treated well.

Dorine (right) is five years old. On the same day of her birth she fell sick. The doctors couldn't find the reason for the sickness. Her parents, because of their poverty, did not treat her well and she cannot speak, walk or understand anything. Now, because of your kind help, the parents are getting weekly physiotherapy for her.



The Elderly women



Fabienne (left) was born in 1956. She is living with her elder son who is a night watchman. Fabienne recently had an eye operation which has resulted in slightly better sight. The family is very poor but, with your help in the giving of food, they are surviving.

Helene (right) was born in 1930. She survives by collecting sand on the mud/soil roads and selling it to builders. She is a very happy woman who prays a great deal and who gives thanks to you all.



Part of the work of this foundation is to ensure that the women and children get together socially in order to share their experiences and to offer mutual support. It was wonderful that, this year, Gillie happened to be here for one such social when she was here in February. Our 20 elderly women and 20 handicapped children think of you a great deal and with great gratitude. They pray for you. Our special thanks to Gillie for all the efforts that she is making to help the poor people of Burkina Faso. God Bless you all



FR PAUL NAZOTIN

Written by Fr Paul Nazotin (**right**)

The money which is sent to Fr Paul is spent in a myriad of ways. Countless individuals are touched by this charity through the work of Fr Paul and this remains, for us, one of the most powerful, important and exciting ways of giving - Gillie



This year I have been pleased to help a number of women by giving them money to buy **donkeys**. These are women, some of them young widows, who work very hard indeed to keep their families together and fed. They use their donkeys to work their fields and for pulling a cart. Having a donkey will give them a good chance of a much better crop from which to make a living and to feed their young families. The money that I am given by Les Amis I use in many different ways, the buying of donkeys being only one small part. I give money to **women** particularly who are in **really difficult situations**, such as being widowed or ill. Just one example is a woman who had regularly been beaten by her husband. She eventually left her husband, though was pregnant at the time. Unfortunately, the child to whom she gave birth is handicapped. There are some who say that this is her punishment for leaving her husband, despite him being very violent and abusive. The money that I give to her helps her to look after her child and to cover other expenses. I am always happy to help with the buying of **medicines** as these can be expensive. I also help young people by paying their **school fees** and by buying **bicycles** to enable them to get to school. You have been very generous in helping me to put a young man through university. It was years ago that you bought him a bicycle to help him get to school. Since then, he has progressed through university and is doing well. I have high hopes for him. I know, from Gillie, that there are plans to help more young people through university, with which I am happy to help. Thank you all so much for all that you have done to help Les Amis be as successful as it is, and for changing the lives of so many people.



BOULSA PARISH

Written by Fr Lambert Sawadogo (**right**)

Thanks to Les Amis we have been able to continue and expand our **teaching of literacy** to adults. Since September last year we have been able to delivery literacy lessons to 210 people. Learning how to read and write has given them all a greater sense of self-esteem and a greater possibility of finding work which requires literacy skills. It also helps them to read important information and instructions which are given out in the form of leaflets and newspapers. After three years of training, they can sit exams to enable them to pass on their skills by becoming a teacher. I will continue to use Les Amis money to offer literacy lessons to adults, and have plans for five to six centres/classrooms, with each centre being able to accommodate up to 40 people.



The management and availability of water is always a challenge, with the digging of wells being very expensive. We therefore have to keep the current **wells in good repair** and functioning properly. Last year, with Les Amis money, we repaired six wells. The water from the wells is for both animals and humans to drink, as well as for use in cooking and for washing clothes. Without the wells, the women would have to walk a long way to look for water. Some of the villages only have one working well; there may be 100s of people relying upon just one well. It is therefore essential to keep the wells working and in good condition. When I was young, there was a well we used to call 'the fighting well' because the women used to fight about who got to the well and when! This is because water is so terribly precious to us – we can never take it for granted.

Some of the money we received from Les Amis we used to install **solar panels**. These have saved us a lot of money that we might have used on electricity. With the money we have saved we are enabled to give more help to those who need it.

Future plans and hopes

- In Boulsa we have a **refuge for girls**. This refuge currently has 45 girls, with each girl costing us around £30 annually to cover the basic expenses. I am happy that Gillie has agreed to help cover this cost.
- It would also be great to have a bit of help for the **paying of school fees** for those children whose parents cannot afford it. Keeping girls, particularly, in education protects them from being given away.
- What I would like to do is to **develop gardens** around and near the wells, thus enabling locals to grow their vegetables more easily.

Merci! All our gratitude for your inestimable help which helps the poor to have hope for the future. Thank you so much for your generosity!

¹ All the accounts have been translated from the original French

² Many names have been changed to protect identity

PROTECTING AND EDUCATING GIRLS IN THE KOUPELA DIOCESE

Written by Fr Charles Ouemenga, Diocesan Bursar (right)

The Refuge for Runaway Girls in Baskouré

This year the refuge for girls in Baskouré housed 15 girls who are long-term members of the refuge, as well as three girls who were only with us for three months. Those three had been given away in marriage and had run away to the refuge; unfortunately they were threatened by their respective families and the village chiefs and, out of fear, returned to their families and were given to their new husbands. Despite our reassuring them that we would look after them, we were not able to prevent them from leaving us.

One of the longer-term girls at the refuge, Agathe, got married on 4th January 2014 at the parish church in Baskouré. It was a great celebration and joy for Agathe, for the whole community of girls and for the Christian community in Baskouré. She says thank you with all her heart for your financial support which allowed her to live at the refuge and to prepare for her marriage to the man of her choice. She is happy because she was given good training and a good education at the refuge.

This year, on top of the usual activities, we organised weaving training for all the girls. This training lasted one month; we engaged the help of a specialist weaver who came from Koupéla and who stayed with the girls for the month in order to train them. By the end of the training all the girls were very happy with what they had learnt to make, knowing that they are capable of making wonderful things. At the moment they have many orders for woven cloth, and people are very happy with the quality of their work. All this is thanks to your financial support. The girls also have a small field where they have sown okra, onions, lettuce, cabbage, haricot beans and other things. During the dry season these allow the girls to vary the sauces they make for themselves. Your help allows us to pay for rice, maize, sorghum, pasta, beans, oil, soap and condiments for sauces. Also, your donations pay for the weaving materials and clothes for the girls. At this time it is the rainy season and the girls work hard in their field growing millet, beans, peanuts and sorghum.

The financial help that you have given to the refuge covers the cost of school fees for the three youngest girls: Ophelia, Micheline and Mathilde. Your donations also cover the cost of electricity, repairs and health. This year several girls fell ill and the health costs were a little higher than in previous years. But thanks to you, each of them has made a good recovery. Thank you with all our hearts!

On behalf of all the girls, all those who have passed through the refuge and all those currently at the refuge, we thank you with all our hearts.

The stories of some of the girls at the refuge

Henriette

My name is Henriette and I am 16 years old. My mother has died and my father is in the Ivory Coast. After the death of my mother, my father took me to a village in Burkina Faso; he signed me up for school before leaving. I was with my paternal grandparents. I went to school up until CM2 class and just before sitting my exams they took me out of school saying that I was needed to look after the cows. This happened without the knowledge of my father. It is now three years since I was at school. In June 2013 my aunts revealed to me that I was promised to an old friend of my grandfather, and that unless I saved myself I would be taken away soon. I ran away to my maternal uncle and then to my aunt and it was from there that I came to the refuge for girls in Baskouré in January 2014. My paternal uncles came to threaten me with banishment if I didn't come back with them, but I didn't give in. When I think about it, I cry because I don't know what my future holds. I have been warmly welcomed by the refuge and am happy here. I am receiving training in many things in order to have a better future. Thank you to those who support us and who give us all that is necessary - by your financial help who give us all that is necessary to help us in our growth and overall development. May God bless you.



Jacinthe

I was promised in marriage from my birth to an older man who already had two wives. He was in a neighbouring village to ours, and the youngest daughter of this man was the same age as me. Therefore, as soon as I turned 17 years old, my parents asked him if he wanted me as a wife. He said no, but that he was going to take me for one of his sons. Some time after that he said that he was going to some fields where he was growing things. My parents forced me to follow him. As soon as we arrived there, he began to make sexual advances towards me and I told him that it wasn't for his son that he wanted me, but for himself. I refused him, saying that I was going back to my parents. He tried several more times to attack me and because I kept on resisting he hit me hard, leaving me half dead. The following night he came to rape me, but I cried out as hard as I could. The neighbours came to save me. The following day I fled, despite the bruises and cuts to my body and a broken arm. I walked all day and all night through the bush to find the Sisters. They welcomed me and put me up for a week before taking me to the refuge at Baskouré.



Joelle

I was born in the Ivory Coast. At the age of four my mother became a bit deranged. My father left me with a neighbour and then took my mother to Burkina Faso. One year later the neighbour took me to her in-laws. That was when my misery began. The family did not want me and subjected me to hard labour. I was always hungry, always ill. The woman who had brought me there felt sorry for me



but couldn't help me. Her father-in-law ordered her to take me back to her parents otherwise he would kill me. It was then that the woman asked the Sisters to take me into the refuge whilst we wait for my father to come back from the Ivory Coast. It is in this way that I came to the refuge at the age of eight years old. The Sisters have helped me to get a birth certificate and to send me to school. This year I was in CP2 and will soon go into CE1. It is thanks to your financial help that I have been saved. May God bless you for ever.

Sainte Monique Home in Gounghin, in the Diocese of Koupéla

Written by Fr Joel OUBDA (top right) and Fr Pascal SILGA (below)

The secondary school girls

This academic year Les Amis once again supported the education of many girls in both primary and secondary schools. I will tell you here about four of the girls received into St Monica's Home thanks to the support we get from Les Amis.

Léonie's father died when she was still at primary school. Her mother therefore became a widow without any means of supporting the big family. The poor widow was on the point of taking Léonie out of school in 2010. It was in that year that Les Amis was able to intervene and pay for Léonie to attend school. Léonie's success is a crown in the efforts of Les Amis. Thank you so much for your help which contributes to a promising future for Léonie.

Manon, born in 1996, lost her father in 2005. Of the six orphans, Manon is the only one in her family to go to school because of the help of Les Amis.

Constance comes from a very poor family. The help that Les Amis gives has spared Constance from being married off too young and without any education. Thank you to Les Amis for having chosen education as a means of liberation and the full development of the girls.

Chantelle was one of the first beneficiaries of Les Amis in 2008. She has just finished her studies to become a teacher. This girl, supported by Les Amis will be a teacher from September 2014 - this miracle is thanks to Les Amis: your work has born real fruit. Next year there will be even more success stories to tell. Thank you again for seeing through all that you began years ago.

Primary School Children

Margot was born on 5th August 2000 and is the eldest of three children, all girls. Their father died in 2011 due to inadequate health care and poverty. One of her sisters is being kept in the Ivory Coast as a babysitter: this is typical of the disinterest in educating girls as they are only considered good for working in the home, education being seen as a waste of time for girls.



Suzette was born in 2005 and comes from a family of seven children. Her father died in 2011 since when her mother (above right) has been accused of witchcraft. This has had a terrible knock-on effect for the children. Thanks to Les Amis Suzette is receiving an education and her mother is able to work hard as a weaver to make ends meet.



Pauline (left); her father died following a short illness. Her mother, a very young widow was left with three children. She herself is ill and with no access to basic healthcare. The help that Les Amis gives is very beneficial in that it allows the widow to pay the school fees for Pauline and to take care of her fragile health. Thank you to Les Amis for comforting the suffering.



The Nursery School

Written by Sister Ella Béatrice SAWADOGO, the Headmistress (below)

Last year we had 95 children split into three groups according to age. We have capacity for 150 children, but due to financial difficulties many parents cannot send their children to school. Also, the lack of toilets for the children, or a kitchen by which to make them a midday meal, is a concern to us. The money that we received from Les Amis has allowed us to make contributions to many parents towards the school fees. As you can imagine, everyone was very pleased with this help. We give thanks to God for a good year overall, we give our infinite thanks to those who have helped us in one way or another. We are counting on more help for the success of the 2014-2015 academic year. Thank you!



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