

NEWSLETTER



Spring 2017



Dear friends and supporters of Les Amis,

Gillie has just returned from her annual trip to Burkina Faso and we are pleased to have this opportunity to share all her news with you in this newsletter. Importantly, we are happy to say that all our projects continue to do really well. Equally, we have identified further ways of reaching out to provide much-needed and life-changing assistance.

The Yoann Foundation and helping the disadvantaged

Gillie always ensures that her trip coincides with the Saturday in February when all the beneficiaries of this foundation make their way to the Franciscan friary in the suburbs to the south of central Ouagadougou. Here, she spends a morning with the 20 handicapped children and their mothers, and also the 20 women whose lives are sufficiently difficult as to need the help we can give to them.



Above is Sabine, a truly delightful girl who is growing up fast. Her mother still carries her around on her back, and there is no doubt that we will be helping her to find an alternative way of moving her daughter around. Brother Rozario, who leads this



project along with Pélagie (the mother of the late Yoann, after whom the foundation is named) has just undergone emergency heart surgery and has handed on the leadership of this project to Brother Apsalom (pictured **right**). He has asked us if it would be possible to extend this project to their mission to the west of Ouagadougou, and we are more than happy for this to happen.



Protecting and educating girls and young women ...

We see, as key to our work in Burkina Faso, the protection and education of girls and young women. Burkina Faso is a country which favours males and gives few rights to females. One of the biggest problems is the giving away of young girls to much older men who often already have other wives. If those girls know of somewhere to run for help and protection, then they run. If not, they are consigned to a life of servitude and misery. We are so happy to be able to help them.

.... in Baskouré, near Koupéla



At the refuge in Baskouré, to which girls running away from forced marriages can run, things are getting better and better. Specifically, the range of skills they are learning is becoming ever wider, equipping them to face

up to lives forever cut off from their families. Years ago, it was a case of brewing the local beer and weaving. Gradually, over the years, this has expanded to include making soap (both cakes of soap and liquid soap), perfume, vinegar and bottling/preserving the vegetables they grow. All these things they are then able to take to the market and sell. Every February, when Gillie visits, their welcome is always incredibly warm, and they delight in passing a happy hour of dancing and drumming for their 'Mama Gillie'.



.... in Koupéla

Last year a direct appeal was made to us by Father Gérard Yougbaré whose work in Koupéla is to develop training programmes for young girls. Since then we have been pleased to have been able to give him sufficient funds to sponsor seven girls through their training. **Right**, with Fr Gérard, are six of those girls, Clairene, Germaine, Laure, Louise, Claudia and Josiane.



.... in Gounghin



Just a fifteen-minute drive east of Baskouré is Gounghin where, amongst other things, we house and support ten secondary

school orphans who live together at St Monique's home. Over the years we have improved their living conditions with the purchase of beds for each of the girls and, at their request, tables at which to sit and eat their meals together. Gillie was amazed to see the truly fantastic library (**above**) which they are in the process of establishing, to help them with their school work.

For those ex-St Monique girls who have completed their secondary school education and would like to access further education, we have offered a fund to help them do so.



This aspect of our work has only been up and running for the last 18 months. Gillie was keen, therefore, to catch up with these girls to see how they are doing. Most are now studying at the University of Ouagadougou, though some are at university in Koudougou, to the west of Ouagadougou. **Above**, with Father Pascal (who oversees this aspect of our work) are Charlene, Léonois, Rosine, Chloé and Lisette who, between them, they are studying Economics, Law and Chemistry.

.... in Fada

At the St Joseph's Training Centre in Fada, owned by the Diocese of Fada but run by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, we are sponsoring the training as seamstresses of a number of girls who have run away from forced marriages. Over the years, we have improved their sleeping accommodation and built them a toilet. Added to this they are now building a piggery in the hope of being to add to their means of supporting themselves. They are all doing well in their training and are on their way to being completely self-sufficient.



With just a bit of help ...

It is now two years since we first became involved with **Abelle** (right and below left) who had run away from an abusive husband. She took with her a daughter and soon afterwards gave birth to a



Downs Syndrome child. Having been rejected by her family, she was in a desperate situation. Since then we have given funds to help with electricity to her house and the completion of a wall around her house. In the two years we have known Abelle, her life has really been turned around. Gillie was relieved to see her looking well and happy when she caught up with her in February. One of the things she has done to help herself is to invest in all that she needs to build a small house within the perimeter of her property in which she can install another small family, thus providing some companionship and security.



Many of you may recall reading about **Zoé** (right) in our Spring 2016 newsletter. She is the widow of the taxi driver who was one of a few Burkinabé killed in the massacre of 30 people in Ouagadougou in January 2016 by Al-Qaeda of the Maghreb terrorists. We gave Zoé and her five children immediate financial help last year, and Gillie was keen to see her again



this year, to see how things were going. We are very happy to report that Zoé has used our donation to set herself up in the business of running a café in a local market. Just one more push is needed to help her to buy 30 chairs, and she'll be well on her way to being completely self-sufficient.



Lotte (right) is a lovely lady whom Gillie met a few years ago. At the time, she was working as an electrician at one of the main electricity supply stations in Ouagadougou. Not long afterwards she lost her job and found it extremely difficult to get any other work. Not being married, this meant that she was in a difficult situation, with no income at all for some considerable time. With just a bit of funding from Les Amis she retrained as a teacher and is now happily working at a primary school in Ouagadougou and is secure.



Education, education, education!



This time last year we had the wonderful joy of seeing the completion of a new school built in the town of Manni as a result of funds from Les Amis. This was a much-needed school, providing secondary school education to those children leaving primary school in Manni. However, there

remains the problem of enough desks, and this is something we will be looking at as a matter of urgency. **Above** is a picture of a class of children sitting on the floor not for much longer, we hope!

Our favourite way of giving



Every February when Gillie travels to Burkina Faso, she takes with her two bundles of cash, each worth about £50. She takes these with the aim of pressing it into the palms of two complete strangers. The only criteria are that they be women and clearly in a desperate situation. The first such lady Gillie met in Fada, the other in Ouagadougou. We love to think of their joy that day when, quite unexpectedly and totally out of the blue, a complete stranger gave them money which will allow them to eat well for some time to come.



LOTS of gratitude

Thank you to all of you for your wonderful ongoing support. Thank you, particularly, to those who have set up monthly standing orders – these are invaluable!



Father Lambert's disaster!



Last September we related to you that Father Lambert's car had been totally destroyed by fire. Without a car, his work which requires him to cover 1,000s of kilometres every year in his role for the diocese and for us would have been impossible. Thanks to the many donations which were specifically given for this, we were able to help him to buy a replacement car. Here is what Father Lambert (**below**)

says: "I am very happy to send you these few words of gratitude. I could not afford another car, but with your prayers and financial help you have made it possible. It was a real spell in the wilderness between 11th June 2016 until I took delivery of my replacement car, a Toyota RAV4 [in November 2016]. I am so happy because I cannot carry out my mission without a car. THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!" Gillie would like to add her thanks because, without this car, her trip would not have been possible this year.



Want us to come and give a talk?



We are always pleased to give illustrated talks to groups however big or small, as this remains one of the best ways of telling everyone about our work. Please be in touch with us if you'd like us to give a talk to a group to which you belong.

A personal message from Gillie ...

I want to thank you all, personally, for your amazing continuing support. When I am in Burkina Faso it can be daunting to be faced with the many things which could (and need to) be done, and the many approaches which are made to us for help. The big projects are exciting, but, to be honest, few things give me more pleasure than to help individuals, especially when they least expect it. We are commanded to "open wide our hands", and this we can do thanks to you. If you are not able to give, then keeping us in your prayers would be much appreciated.



Thank you for continuing to help us to change lives.

**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

Les Amis – Burkina Faso

11 Mare Lane • Hascombe • Godalming • GU8 4JH

01483 208432

www.les-amis-bf.org.uk

gillie.nicholls@btopenworld.com

Registered Charity number 1120772

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

All names have been changed on this online version of the newsletter to protect identities

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