

# How is your money spent?



September 2010



This booklet contains accounts<sup>1</sup> of Les Amis projects, written by volunteers working from us on the ground in Burkina Faso. We think that what they have to say is inspirational and we hope that you will agree.

## **Protecting Girls in the Koupéla Diocese**

*From Ab Charles Ouemenga*

### ***The refuge in Baskouré for girls who have run away from home***

This year we have carried on in the same way as for last year in that we teach the young girls a skill, notably weaving, by the provision of thread for weaving and all the necessary equipment. We also teach them to read and write in their own mother tongue of Moore.

According to Sister Clarisse Nana, the Superior of the community responsible for this project, the teaching of weaving is going very well. It allows the girls not only to learn a skill, but also to be able to create an income by selling what they



*Learning to weave*

have made, an income which the girls use for some of their expenses. It is a great lesson in life for these girls who come from very rural communities where they are dominated and where they have no income or freedom in their decision-making. To learn, therefore, a skill and to sell their wares and to have an income, seems to us the first step on the long road to freeing these girls who have fled the prospect of a forced marriage.

The teaching of literacy is in its second and possibly final year. This is because only two years of teaching are necessary for the girls to gain a

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<sup>1</sup> All the accounts have been translated from the original French

certificate. We are currently awaiting the results of their exams. Those who have passed will have a valuable life asset.

There are plans to improve the accommodation, as the girls currently have only two dormitories, one of which is very leaky and unusable in the rainy season. We have submitted plans and quotes to Les Amis for the construction of three large new dormitories and also for the repair of the existing dorms and the purchase of 30 beds. We are currently awaiting final confirmation that the funds are in place for this wonderful new project which will transform the day-to-day lives of the girls.

### *The (20) primary and (10) secondary school orphans*

This year we have again been very happy to benefit from the support of Les Amis-Burkina Faso for the education of young orphans in the parish of Gounghin in the diocese of Koupéla. This help is of great importance for these young girls who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to go to school or study.

This part of our work is managed by Father Pascal Silga, the parish priest at Gounghin, in collaboration with a number of the Christian laity.

Father Pascal gives below some information about some of the girls who are being supported by Les Amis ....

*From Father Pascal ...*

Greetings!

It is a real pleasure for me to show you, once again, the gratitude and friendship of the Saint Monique hostel (the boarding school for secondary school orphans). The visit that Gillie paid us for a second time was a source of great joy for the ten girls. To know that we are remembered is already wonderful in itself, but to actually meet the people who provide help is even better.

### *About the secondary schoolgirls ...*

In the case of the ten girls supported by Les Amis, a great opportunity is offered to them to continue their studies for years to come. Thus better educated, they will be able to escape marriages forced upon them at a young age. With the support of Les Amis, the ten girls have enjoyed a nice environment to study in. We can illustrate this using two of the girls as examples.

Adèle Zombre was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade this past academic year 2009-10. Her mother died eight years ago; her father is ill with dementia. How could he take care of himself and send his daughter to school? Without the help of Les Amis, Adèle would not have been able to continue her studies.

Sibpoko Sandwidi, who has no father, comes from a family with three children. Her widowed mother refused to remarry in order to take better care of her children, all of whom went to school. Living off subsistence, money was extremely tight. Just as the mother was getting ready to withdraw her daughter Sibpoko from school, Les Amis stepped in and showed itself to be a real life-saver.

Her older sister, also with no father, had to work hard cultivating the fields during the holidays in order to pay for her studies. Their little brother had to stop going to school because of a lack of funds. He risked having to go to town to search for a job that he certainly wouldn't have found and would have left himself vulnerable to unemployment and juvenile delinquency. Les Amis has helped to open up a better future for all these young people from very diverse and very difficult backgrounds.

### *About the primary schoolgirls ...*

Nadine Nare and her twin sister Nadège, along with Rosine Waongo, are not orphans but their situations virtually rendered them as such. The twins' father is mad and Rosine's mother is mad. All parents struck by this unfortunate illness live on the streets. Their children are seen to bring bad luck because of the madness that afflicts their parents. The education obtained thanks to Les Amis will prevent a disastrous future for the twins: the practice of divination or soothsaying (for, according to local beliefs,

twins are strange beings endowed with supernatural powers that their families can make use of). The worst scenario for them would be being forced into a polygamous marriage, whereby they would both have to marry the same husband. With the education favoured by the school they attend, Nadine and Nadège will be able to avoid this.

Rosine Waongo, the only daughter and eldest child of her mentally ill mother who lives on the street, would have had to have stayed at home to do housework, preventing her from getting the modern education offered by the school.

Irène Parkouda had led an unhappy life after her father was killed on the Ivory Coast when war broke out against another country. Her father was not a soldier but a poor exile looking for work with his family. Irène's mother, who left to go back to their village, had no means of living and even fewer of putting her children through school; Irène now benefits from the chance to be supported by Les Amis.

Rachel Silga's father was killed by thieves in Benin while transporting merchandise. Her mother, having left the family home in order to remarry, left Rachel with her old, widowed grandmother. The latter had no concept of school and therefore did not concern herself with it. Thank you Les Amis for having helped Rachel so much in this regard.

Lydie Silga, her parents' only child, has no mother. Without access to the school that Les Amis has now permitted, Lydie would have been left illiterate and forced into an early marriage so that her widowed father might have remarried as well.

Nathalie Guietê's father died suddenly after a short illness. The family was traumatised and there was almost no hope for Nathalie. In Africa it is often uncertain as to what you are suffering from and as to what you die from, since it is very difficult to access medical care.

Rosalie Waongo has no father. He died during the Ivory Coast crisis. Rosalie's mother, who couldn't be there for him during his last days, was left traumatised. She has a vague hope of a better future, given the misery she has suffered.

Once again, we want to reiterate our warm thanks, and let us hope for the continuation of these excellent projects. We ask the God of Divine Providence to bless Les Amis-Burkina Faso and all those who support it.

*Abbé Pascal Silga, curate of Gounghin Parish  
Abbé Charles Ouemenga, Econome Diocésain*

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### **Father Paul Nazotin**

#### ***Working animals / livestock***

This year, for the first time, Les Amis financed the purchase of livestock to improve the lives of farmers. The future of Burkinabé farmers depends upon the rainy season which only lasts for four months. If this moment is missed, it is their survival which is threatened. That is why the provision of cows or donkeys to work the ground becomes a determining factor, for the harvest serves to provide families with food for themselves and food to sell, so that they can

provide for themselves, buy medicine and clothes, and send the children to school. Cows are the animals of choice for their efficiency, but they are also the most expensive. Les Amis has been able to help four families buy a pair of cows each. Leonard, who is the father of a seminarian (Vincent), began to experience serious economic difficulties. Leonard had a herd of cows which, over the years, became depleted either due to fatal illnesses common to cows, or were sold in order to pay school fees for his children. He was the first to benefit from a pair of cows which were put to work this season.



*Fr Paul*

The second family to benefit from a pair of cows - thanks to Les Amis - is that of Alphonse, a 46-year-old family man who lost his wife, Félicité aged 42, to cancer in 2008. In October 2009 he lost his eldest son, David, aged

just 17 years. He was left with five children to feed and to send to school after having sold his working cows in order to take care of his wife. With money from Les Amis he has been able to buy a pair of cows with the hope of increasing what he can harvest in order to cope with his daily challenges. The third pair of cows went to the family of Yaha whose wife became blind. Yaha, himself, is nearly 60-years-old and no longer has sufficient health or strength to work. His son is fit and well and it was to this family that a pair of cows was given. The fourth pair was given to another family of which I only know the difficulties through their seminarian son.

### *Victims of the winter 2009 floods*

Rita is a woman whom I knew when I was in the parish at Tambaga, a small village to the east of Burkina. She agreed to marry a man who was paralysed, despite the discouragement of those around her. Her husband decided suddenly to leave the village in order to go and live in Ouagadougou, 550km from their village, making her life far more difficult, for her husband is not capable of doing any work. They found a hut on the outskirts of Ouagadougou. The hut was not strong enough for the heavy rains of the last rainy season. Rita, who works long hours as a cleaner earns only £30 per month to feed her four children, her sister, her husband and to send the children to school. For a number of years a couple have been sending Rita a little money to pay for the children's school fees. However, in 2009, the problem of their flooded hut aggravated the situation. This woman has inundated me with messages to tell me of her joy when I gave her some money for the repair of their hut. I was very moved by the joy of this woman who never expected to receive such help as I was able to give her.

Another woman known to a friend of mine was coming regularly to her friend to ask for food supplies, and that was even before the floods of 2009. The floods in the winter of 2009 damaged their house, making their day-to-day situation even more precarious. My friend asked me to help this woman – her friend – and that was how I came to mention Les Amis. I gave her financial help from Les Amis as a contribution towards the repair of her house.

A substantial amount of help has been given to a family, one of whose sons, Constant, was a seminarian. Constant died from a kidney problem as well as leukaemia when he was in his fourth year of major seminary, leaving his father poor and living on the absolute minimum in Ouaga. When his father's house was very badly damaged in the 2009 floods, the seminarians got together and, with the help of funds from Les Amis, helped to rebuild the family home, to everyone's great joy.

Further financial assistance was given to families in Fada and Manni, as contributions to the repair of houses damaged by the rain.

Help for the victims of the floods was also given for the buying of food supplies for those whose fields had been destroyed by the water.

### *Miscellaneous giving*

This category is referred to by Gillie as 'give away' money and the help given in this respect is very diverse. Here are just a few examples of how I use the money.

Madeleine is a girl whom I mentioned in the previous report in which I said that I had envisaged helping some people in a more substantial way in order to secure greater financial independence for these people. Madeleine is one of these people. She left a convent where she had taken refuge in order to escape a forced marriage. She decided not to depend financially upon her brothers and sisters so as to avoid being forced into a marriage. It was in this context that I gave her some Les Amis money to help her to make a living. Recent news is that she is preparing to marry freely next December, which shows that all year she has been able to support herself and make her own decisions.

Jean-Baptiste and Thomas are examples of students who study far from their village and who experience real difficulties of every sort as a result. They go to the Lycée at Baskouré and lack even the basics for their studies. After dark, for example, they would study with torches. I have been able to buy them modern storm lamps and batteries. However, they eat only one meal

per day and always the same meal: haricot beans which cost less and which fill them up for longer.

Lucienne is a girl who had taken refuge with a widow in order to go to the lycée at Pouytenga. Unfortunately, this widow who is very generous and very Christian has a son of poor mental health. He tried to rape Lucienne several times which resulted in Lucienne having to run away without knowing where to go. With the help of Les Amis, she was able to pay for decent lodging for six months whilst finishing school.

The help given by Les Amis has been used to pay children's school fees, to buy food and to provide medical care for a great number of people. This type of ad-hoc giving achieves a lot and people are very grateful for this.

### *The construction of a village shelter*

I asked for help from Les Amis for the construction of a shelter at Nyorgho. In fact, this money had originally been asked for the repair of the roof of a village school. In the end, the state repaired the roof. That is why we asked that the money could be sent to us anyway for the building of a shelter to serve as a place for school children to study in their village.

A French NGO has experience of solar panels installed in schools. The success of schools is improved in those schools which have light, allowing those who wish to study to do so in the evening. When they get home from school the students and pupils do various jobs for their families since, for want of decent lighting, they can't do their school work in the evening. Some teachers don't even set any homework because it is so unlikely that it will be done. The village school has been given solar-powered lighting by this French NGO but unfortunately the school is situated so far that many pupils cannot go there at night to do their homework because of the distance. Parents also worry that studying at school in the evening is merely an excuse for the children to go wandering about. A construction near the pupils' houses would reassure the parents who would be able to check that their children were, indeed, studying.

This village shelter has been built thanks to Les Amis. The women of the village got together through the year and have contributed to the construction

of the shelter by carrying water and gravel. They, too, expect to be able to use the shelter for their monthly meetings and other activities. The men, who have seen that the shelter would be useful for many village activities, also made some essential contributions towards it. Unfortunately, the shelter doesn't yet have any lighting. This is because the NGO in question can only commit to fitting the solar panels once the shelter has been built and is in place. We are now, therefore, waiting for the NGO to come and review our request for the solar energy panels which will cost in the region of 3000 Euros.



*The villagers working together to build their village shelter*

### ***Help for Nicolas***

Les Amis has given me funds to help Nicolas, who is very intelligent but whose origins are very humble. Nicolas has shown his determination to work hard and would do very well at university. Without the help of Les Amis, Nicolas might not even have been able to attend his secondary school. It is also thanks to Les Amis that Nicolas will be able to go to university. He was successful in passing his Baccalaureate, despite going to school very far from his village and living in very difficult conditions, with bad housing and malnourishment being just two of the problems. He works hard as a builder during the holidays in



*Nicolas in February 2010, taking a brief break from his work on a building site in a village between the town of Fada N'Gourma and Fr Paul's village of Salembaoré*

which he earns £30 per month which he puts towards his studies. To go to university would be very expensive for this humble but intelligent boy, for it would be necessary to find lodging, transport, money for food and other small necessities.

I calculated what would be necessary for his lodging, the minimum for food, and also a moped (plus petrol) to get to university, and Les Amis has given me this sum. However, it will be necessary to wait for the university year to begin in order to know how it goes financially. Thanks to the help of many people and especially my friend Valéry, we have been able to organise accommodation for Nicolas in a university residence where the rent costs almost nothing. By luck, it is just a 30-minute bicycle ride (for this year, for things could change next year). Nicolas continues to use the bicycle that was bought for him six years ago with funds raised by Barrow Hills School, where Gillie works as the school chaplain.

When Gillie came in February she gave me a sum of money to give away. The only thing she stipulated was that half of it be used as a fund for the seminarians of St Irénée, which they could access in times of real need. The rest of it will be used by me as money to be given away at my discretion.

*Ab Paul Nazotin*

### **The Yoann Foundation**

*Brothers Harry and Vianney (Franciscan Capuchin friars)*

*Pélagie Kabré (the mother of the late Yoann)*

*M François Compaoré and Mme Carine Compaoré and other members of the Secular Franciscan Order*

This year The Yoann Foundation, which is one of the projects of Les Amis, has looked after the needs of 20 women and 15 children in Ouagadougou. The criteria for extending help to these women and children remain unchanged: that they have suffered a disability which has meant their abandonment by their family or that they are living a life of destitution or great difficulty. A team of us administers this fund and the distribution of the aid we give to the women and children: myself (Pélagie Kabré, the mother of the late Yoann), Brother Vianney (a Capuchin friar in Ouagadougou) and François Compaoré (a member of the Secular

Franciscan Order in Ouagadougou). I should add that a number of members of the SFO are also very involved with the running of the Foundation and whose help is invaluable to us.

The women and children come to the Franciscan friary in Ouagadougou on a regular basis in order to receive aid either in the form of direct financial help or food supplies. The financial help that we are able to give covers many things for the women, such as housing costs, medical and physiotherapy expenses for their disabled children and, importantly, help to start up small businesses.

For instance, Bibata Traoré (16 years), one of the girls whom we have been assisting financially, has been a deaf mute all her life. This year we arranged for her to be fitted with hearing aids, and this has resulted in her being able to hear a certain amount. However, given that she has had no previous knowledge of her local mother tongue, there remains now the task of helping her to acquire language skills.



*Bibata*

Young Narcisse, (6 years) came to our attention during the course of this year. He had been badly burned on both his left hand and his left leg. Because of his burns, his knee is locked in a bent position and his ankle in a straightened position which has rendered him very disabled. When Gillie was in Burkina in February 2010 she happened to meet a French doctor specialising in leg surgery, and this doctor very kindly took a look at Narcisse for us. He diagnosed that the burn (already two years old) was still open and infected. Since then we have had the wound treated and only when it is fully healed can we look at the possibility of surgery to correct his leg and foot (his foot is now atrophied). When he was last seen on 9<sup>th</sup> August, when his mother came to collect her money in order to buy medication and bandages, the wound had dried on the front of the leg, but was still raw and unhealed on the back of the leg.

Pascaline Ouédraogo (12 years) is a girl who lost the use of her feet. We are looking at possible ways of helping her to regain the use of her feet, and this treatment is ongoing.

Hendrix Ribgolongo (10 years) has a serious kidney problem. Unfortunately, according to his doctor, he is too young for them to consider dialysis as a treatment for him. The medication he is currently taking as an interim treatment for his complaint is very expensive, and this has meant that we have had to increase what we give to his mother for his medical expenses.

The work of Les Amis and, very particularly, the Yoann Foundation, came to the attention of a French charity called '*Graines de Joie*'. We have been delighted by the way that they have helped us, financially, with the needs of the women and children on our books. Indeed, on 17th July 2010, we were really pleased to welcome them to the big social get-together organised by the Yoann Foundation for our beneficiaries: the women, children and their family members. Our social events are important ways of ensuring that the women and children have the opportunity to meet and share their experiences. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the United Kingdom who has given money to Les Amis. Without your help and support we simply could not do what we are currently able to do. Thank you very much ....

*Pélagie Kabré*

# YADA CARDS

Mr Oumarou Yada is an artist who makes the most wonderful cards. He paints oils onto cotton and then the cotton is stuck onto the card. Every single card is individually painted by hand and is therefore a unique work of original art.

We are delighted to be able to help Mr Yada by selling his cards here in the UK. Without such support he would find it very difficult to make a living.

Cards costs just £2 each and are available from our website and also from Gillie directly.



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