

# NEWSLETTER

March 2010



Dear friends and supporters of Les Amis,

We are getting this newsletter off as soon as we can following Gillie's recent trip to Burkina Faso. Once again, she was impressed by all the good work being undertaken and the results being achieved by those who work with us in Burkina Faso on the various projects that we currently run. There are so many lives which are being touched by you, personally, through the donations that you have made. We continue to work primarily in two locations: Ouagadougou (the capital of Burkina Faso) and Koupéla (a small town two hours drive east of Ouagadougou).

## In Ouagadougou ....



*Adama, the most delightful girl who is both mentally and physically handicapped and who has to be carried by her mother absolutely everywhere*

The **Yoann Foundation** for disabled women and children continues to play a crucial role in the lives of 20 women and 15 children. On Monday 8th February Gillie met with the team of volunteers who run this important foundation for us in Ouagadougou. They ran through their excellent administrative procedures and also the finances for the last year. It was impressive to see how thorough they are and with what devotion and integrity they are working for us.



*Gillie, with some of the women who receive help from the Yoann Foundation*

The following day Gillie spent the morning with the same team of volunteers distributing financial and practical assistance (food, mostly). There are many severely handicapped children including, now, a Downs Syndrome little boy. Each and every one of these children is just delightful and much-loved by their devoted mothers, despite living in a culture which finds handicap difficult to accept. Pélagie, who distributes the aid to these mothers, and who has first-hand experience of living with a disabled child, reminds them that, with the Yoann Foundation, they need never feel alone or ashamed. This, we are sure, is just as valuable to them as the practical assistance which we give. Gillie met Narcisse, a boy who has been badly burned on his left hand and who has also, more seriously, incurred very bad burns to his left leg. His leg was burned in such a way as to have caused his knee to be locked into a bent position and his ankle into a straightened position. Extraordinarily, a few days after meeting him, whilst in the town of Fada to the east of the country, Gillie had the good fortune, quite by chance, of meeting and getting into conversation with a French surgeon who specialises in the treatment of legs! This surgeon expressed his willingness to see Narcisse on his way out of Burkina via Ouagadougou. We have since heard that he has given the boy a full examination and left the Yoann Foundation a summary of the treatment which Narcisse needs in order to save him from being very handicapped for the rest of his life. Thankfully, he was also able to tell the mother that the burn had become infected and took responsibility for treating that himself. But that is just one of many stories of how God is working with us to bring relief to some of the most vulnerable people.



*Narcisse, with the seriously burnt leg*

## Moving on to Koupéla ...

The work which the Diocese of Koupéla undertakes for us in nearby Baskouré and Gounghin concerns, primarily, **assisting girls**. It was good to meet up with Sister Clarisse who, with two other Sisters in Baskouré, looks after the 27 girls who have been forced to run away from home, more often than not due to a forced and unwanted early marriage. Gillie spent time with them and saw them learning skills which will equip them to be self-sufficient and able to take control of their own lives. They learn to embroider, to read and write, to weave and to make beer which they sell. Whilst there, Gillie learnt that an American charitable organisation which has hitherto paid for all their food is now unable to continue to do so. This is causing them some concern, as it does us. Father Paul Nazotin and Sister Clarisse will be looking at the accounts and will let us know what sort of sum this amounts to over the year.



*Some of the girls in the refuge in Baskouré learning how to embroider*

Basically their needs are approximately: 30 x 25kg sacks of flour; 168L of oil; 5 x 100kg sacks of lentils; plus the cost of the transport. We are hoping that this will be a manageable sum for Les Amis to take on completely.

In nearby Gounghin we continue to put 10 girls through secondary school and 20 through primary school at a total cost to Les Amis of £3,500 per year. This continues to cover everything: fees, uniform, educational material, meals, etc. These girls may well not have the opportunity to attend school without this assistance.

On the subject of schooling and school work, one of the chief difficulties experienced by children and young students, particularly from the outlying and more remote villages is that, without electricity, they are completely unable to do their homework in the evening once the sun has gone down. Plans are underway to look at the construction in one such village of an outdoor shelter, lit using solar panels. For the moment we have set aside the sum of £5,500 for this project and are now waiting to hear exactly how much it will cost to provide this important facility for the young people who really want to study, work hard and make something of themselves.

### Cows and donkeys

As you may remember from our previous newsletter, Les Amis has embarked upon the exciting new project of helping farmers to buy livestock. This came about since the parents of a seminarian (with whom Gillie is in touch) lost their cows. Such an event is a serious blow to farmers who rely upon such animals for the cultivation of their crops. Land worked by hand quite simply isn't going to yield the same amount of food as land worked by cows or donkeys, and this can mean the difference between eating and starving. We are very pleased to have been able to help farmers to buy much-needed cows (at a cost of £500 for two cows).



*Livestock is critical to the lives of farmers and the community*

### What else?

Many of you will have heard of the devastating floods which hit Burkina Faso in the autumn of last year, particularly many areas in and around Ouagadougou. We were pleased to be able to send £1,300 worth of assistance which was distributed to those directly affected by the floods which caused, for many families, the loss of absolutely everything.

In Ouagadougou Gillie was very pleased to meet Mr Nandziga, a gentleman who is completely blind and who was given the funds with which to make some chairs. With this assistance he was able to make four chairs which he sold immediately.



*The chair made by Mr Nandziga*

### Money Matters!

Despite the ongoing recession and, therefore, the financial concerns people have, we have been able to maintain the good work which, with your help, we began two and a half years ago. We are deeply grateful to you all for the donations you have felt able to make to us. We would very particularly like to thank all those who have set up regular Standing Order payments into our Les Amis account. At the moment, donations made in this way are worth just over £400 per month to us. We cannot stress enough how valuable these regular gifts are. On top of that, we have been able to claim, in Gift Aid, an amount which really does make a big difference to how much we give. Therefore, if you are a tax payer and making a donation, we would be very grateful if you would consider completing a Gift Aid declaration form. If you need one then you can either visit our website (see below) or contact us and it can be sent by post.

Gillie will be giving a talk at St Edmund's Catholic Primary School (The Drive, Godalming) on **Tuesday 23rd March 2010** at **7.30pm** in order to feed back to you on her recent trip and to answer any questions that you may have about the work of Les Amis. We are always pleased to have opportunities to give illustrated talks about our work, so do let us know if you would like us to deliver a talk to any group to which you may belong, however big or small.

In the meantime, we cannot thank you enough for all that you have personally done to support this charity. We are still proud to be able to say that every penny given to Les Amis goes directly to individuals.

*The Trustees of Les Amis-Burkina Faso: Gillie & David Nicholls and Adrian Godfrey*

### **Les Amis – Burkina Faso**

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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)