

NEWSLETTER



Autumn 2020

Dear friends and supporters of Les Amis,

“If your father’s family and that of your mother have rejected you, God’s family welcomes you with joy. Dry your tears. All will be well.”



Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter which is in a slightly different format to previous issues. The font is larger, which may make it feel like a longer read (though, honestly, it isn't). We hope that you will make yourself a cup of tea or coffee and enjoy a quiet moment reading about all our projects.

Every year, much of August is spent translating, from French, the many reports which are sent to us from those we work with in Burkina Faso. Reading their reports is always wonderful as we realise just how much is being achieved thanks to you and your support. This year, we were very touched by the words expressed by Sister Irène to a young girl who had sought refuge at the St Joseph’s Training Centre in Fada, where we look after and train a number of girls. Sister Irène spoke these words to a tearful and traumatised young Denisha ([right](#)), *“Si la famille de ton père et celle de ta mère t’ont rejetée, la famille de Dieu, elle, t’accueille avec joie. Sèche tes larmes. Ça va aller.”* “If your father’s family and that of your mother have rejected you, God’s family welcomes you with joy. Dry your tears. All will be well”. This so perfectly expresses our ethos; we could not have put it better ourselves. Thank you, Sister Irène, for these beautiful words which will be our



guiding light for what we hope will be years to come.

We cannot overstate the good work that you do for some of the poorest people in the world, people whose lives are now blighted by terrorism. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled the north of the country and are living in tents in towns such as Kaya. The recent rains have made their plight more difficult (see [left](#), their flooded camps) and we continue to find ways to help them.

How are your donations used?

THE YOANN FOUNDATION IN OUAGADOUGOU

Written by Brother John Vianney OFM Cap ([below left](#)) a Franciscan Capuchin friar of the parish of St Pio in Ouagadougou

We, the Franciscan Capuchins friars in Burkina Faso, in collaboration with Les Amis - Burkina Faso are, through the work of the Yoann Foundation, extending our helping hand to 22 mothers struggling to raise their physically and mentally handicapped children, and also to 22 poor widows. In February’s newsletter you will have read about Lorraine, a young widow with four sons, and the help she is now receiving from one of the Les Amis benefactors. Since then, we have been able to complete the building of a second hut in which her older two sons will live. She had been finding it difficult and embarrassing to be in the same small hut along with her older sons. This timely help has been a great relief for her. Added to this is our contribution to a laptop needed by her son, Laron ([right](#)), for his studies.





Javier (left) is a 15-year-old boy suffering from a brain tumour. His mother had asked us to help her with the cost of an operation (£475) due to take place in March of this year. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out and only Covid patients were admitted to the hospitals. He had a second examination in June after which he has been on medication. After three months they will decide whether to operate or not.

The Centre Frère Flobert (CFF) is a training centre run by the Capuchins with the purpose of developing skills of the youth especially the girls of our locality. This centre gives training in computer skills and tailoring. For the past ten years CFF has introduced a scheme whereby each girl is given a sewing machine at the end of her training. For the past few years, Les Amis has agreed to pay a subsidy of £40 to each trainee. Eighteen girls benefited from this important project this year. We would like to express our profound gratitude to everyone who supports Les Amis Burkina Faso for what it has done for the poor and needy of our locality through the Yoann Foundation. Our sincere gratitude to all those benefactors who are unassumingly extending their helping hand to us. We thank you for having given us this wonderful opportunity to be the instrument in alleviating the pain and suffering of our people.



FR PAUL NAZOTIN (right)

The **Nongtaaba Association** is going from strength to strength. Fr Clément led a training session at the end of 2019, the theme of which was the rights of women and also hygiene in families. As a result of this training, the issue of hygiene was taken very seriously in several families. Also, as a result of the men's positive response to the first training session, there were even more men at the second training session. The involvement of men is essential in this kind of long-term project. The fact that the men of the village entered into regular dialogue with the women for the feminine cause is undoubtedly the greatest success of the association. This exchange with the men has become one of the principle benefits of the association, although at the outset this was not foreseen. As I have emphasized on several occasions, the association has proven to be a place of effective communication between women and men in the village. We are not yet at equal rights for women at all levels, but what is encouraging is that all subjects can now be raised and discussed with men. This is indisputable progress.



The women also collected money for those displaced by insecurity [as a result of terrorism]. Small humanitarian initiatives like this can have a big impact on children's education and the sense of sharing to be communicated to future generations. Accompanied by the village chief, a delegation of women went to give their modest contribution to those displaced. From March of this year the economy slowed down because of the Coronavirus and many have found themselves in really precarious conditions. The demands for help have increased week by week. I help as many people as I can, mostly in terms of paying for school fees and for healthcare. Without your help and support my hands would be tied and countless people would be adversely affected.

FR LAMBERT SAWADOGO (right)

Dear Friends, I am happy to give you feedback about the different Les Amis projects which I manage. The past year has been very difficult for our country. The north central region, where I am, has seen the population of the villages literally empty thanks to terrorist attacks. The town of Kaya has received more than 600,000 refugees. A catastrophic situation loomed as aid was slow to arrive or was very poorly distributed. Most of them could shelter under the trees, but they lacked food and basic needs. The help from Les Amis has been tremendous. We entrusted part of it to the diocesan branch of Caritas. The aid you gave benefited more than 200 households who received food, kitchen utensils, mats, clothes, shoes and cash. Whilst giving aid, I had many sad conversations with people, including some pregnant women. One told me, "If I had known I would be in this situation, I would not have started the baby; I am not sure if I will be able to sustain the pregnancy as I don't have much to eat each day." Another woman told me: "My husband and my two sons were killed, the only reason I don't kill myself is because I am five months pregnant."



We have given help to every family of the victims of the terrorist attack on the church in Dablo in May 2019. We are particularly helping Pélagie (eight years old), whose father was among the victims. She was at the church when the attack happened and was brought to Kaya by her grandmother just after the attack in Dablo. She was enrolled in school and everything she needs is provided by Les Amis. Her mother had to stay in Dablo for thirteen months before she was able to leave, as the area was by then under terrorist control. She tried several times to leave when she thought it might be safe to do so, but was afraid of the terrorists who were besieging the village. One of the motorbikes on which she almost accepted a lift subsequently went over a mine, killing everyone. She was finally and miraculously able to get a lift from a military truck in order to join her daughter in Kaya. She is still psychologically traumatised.



Every week, at **St Luke's Training Centre** (CFC, **left**), women met in groups for their lessons in knitting, weaving, culinary arts, hairdressing, processing of local products (cakes, juices and soap-making, etc.). They were unable to complete the year because of the increasing threat of terrorism, with attacks just 10km away. Nevertheless, we were able to train these young mothers in multiple trades. The beneficiaries testify that they are confident that these professions will be important sources of income to provide for the needs of their families.



Gaelle (**left**) is a 22-year-old student of Bio-Medicine. This year, she should finish her classes and then undertake a second clinical internship. She is currently anticipating her second six-month internship and will need one term in the academic year 2020-2021 to complete her degree.

Albertina is a single mother; her training as a pharmacist was funded by Les Amis. She has finished and, after internships in several pharmacies, during which she was supported, she found a small job. She is raising her son alone.

Candie is a 20-year-old orphan and in her final year of university. She has been receiving help from Les Amis since her second year. Two years ago, she was the school's top student among the girls. However, she suffers regularly from strong migraines which, last year, forced her to miss her exams for the baccalaureate. This year, she was able to sit them in August.

Aceline is an 18-year-old orphan and still at school. She has benefitted for several years from Les Amis support for her education. This year, she has just passed her Brevet in this July session. Next year, she will start her second year towards the Baccalaureate. She is still much affected by the disappearance of her mother whose grave she would like to find in Ivory Coast.



Manette (**right**), 49, has been a widow for 12 years. She has children and grandchildren. Her son-in-law drowned two months ago and her daughter has returned home with her children. Having previously benefited from Les Amis help for training in knitting skills, this year we were able to acquire a knitting machine and yarns for her. She is confident of perfecting her skills and being able to gradually sell and live on what she produces.



Lina is 47 years old and has been widowed for the last nine years. She lives with her children, the eldest of whom is at university. She provides small services such as laundry, cleaning and household chores. Living in very difficult conditions, she benefits from Les Amis assistance for her day-to-day living.

Mahieu (blind) and **Madelon** (handicapped), pictured **left**, suffer great difficulties due to their disabilities, but are very brave. They have children and are able to undertake small activities. Les Amis has been able to help them since 2018.

Dear friends, we are still alive! It is thanks to the help that you have given through Les Amis – Burkina Faso. Thank you for being involved with Gillie in that mission of charity. We ask God that more be involved from one year to another. And may God never forget what you are doing for us.

PROTECTING AND EDUCATING GIRLS IN THE KOUPELA DIOCESE

Written by Fr Jacob (*right*)

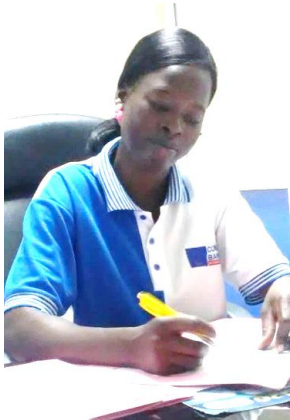
The 2019-2020 school year was completed, despite Covid-19. The results across the country were disappointing overall, especially in the provinces. But as far as the parish of Gounghin is concerned, they were good. The collaboration between the **nursery and primary schools** and **St Monique Home** was really valuable. The school result for the primary school was 100%. Thanks to financial support from Les Amis-Burkina Faso our children seem happy in their schoolwork and study well. Les Amis provided us with enough money to sponsor many poor children who attend the nursery school, and to pay the fees for 25 children at the primary school. Thank you for the funding which allowed us to repair the damage to the kitchen at St Monique Home (for secondary school orphaned girls). With what was left over, we were able to renew the equipment (a big cooking pot and plates, both small and large). Thank you, dear friends, for everything.



Ex-Saint Monique girls, now university students

Written by Fr Pascal Silga (*right*)

One often says that days go by but are never the same. This could equally be said of years! The academic year 2019-2020, or the year of Coronavirus! What a blow to Burkinabé education, previously tested by the ignorance of parents in the education of their girls, and now the new blow to education of terrorist activity since 2015. Les Amis support brought real help to 15 students in the 2019-2020 academic year.



Charlene (left) has no father and is the eldest of five. Thanks to help from Les Amis she has been able to study economics. At the moment, she is on a work placement with a bank and is really astonished to have been able to get this far in her studies. It would have been unthinkable without your help. We are hoping that this good fortune will continue to help Charlene to be employed after her work placement. Thank you, Les Amis!

Jean Pierre (right) is orphaned of both parents; he was their only child. He therefore has no older brothers or sisters to help him. With your help he has learned how to be a welder. He had good results, coming first in his class. A heart-felt thanks to Les Amis.



Naeva (left) studies at the university of Koudougou in the faculty of Biological Sciences. She is orphaned of both parents and has no bursary from the university. Naeva splits her time between university and selling vegetables. From time to time in the past she had to drop her studies in order to be at the market. This academic year she was able to give herself to her studies more fully. This is thanks to the financial help she gets from Les Amis.



Rosine (left) is orphaned of her father, and her mother is illiterate. Les Amis has been an invaluable support for Rosine. The financial help has meant that not only was she able to pay for her studies, but to look after her health (she is being treated for Hepatitis B, which makes her vulnerable to getting malaria, from which she suffers regularly). Thanks to Les Amis she can buy her medication (students do not have medical insurance). Long live Les Amis, which works marvels and brings such joy to the very poor.

Faron (right) is orphaned of his father. He is the eldest of other brothers and sisters as his mother remarried after the death of his father. In such a situation, Faron would normally have gone to work in the plantations of the Ivory Coast, or in the gold mines to earn money for the needs of his family. With your help, he has the joy and the privilege of being able to continue his studies. Faron is determined not only to raise money for his family but to honour Les Amis by succeeding in his studies.



The Refuge for Runaway Girls in Baskouré

Written by Sister Marguerite Marie (*below*)



The Baskouré home for young girls is situated at the heart of the community of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart, whose charism is the promotion of the fulfilment and development of the whole person. It is this major objective which prompted the Sisters of Baskouré, since 1960, to help the young girls of the region, forced into marriages to unknown older men, sometimes as old as their grandfathers. There are 25 girls at the moment: (17 have run away from a forced marriage; four have run away from abusive situations; four have come from impoverished families).

Thanks to your help this year, we have been able to pay the school fees, the supplies and food provisions (rice, maize, oil, beans, gombo, sumbala and a number of different sauces), repairs to our machines and the doors. In addition, we have been able to treat those who fell ill and were hospitalised. But we have had some major problems this year ...

- **Pig virus:** there is a saying which goes: “unhappiness does not come alone”. Along with the Coronavirus, we have had a virus affecting our pigs. Our region was affected by a pig virus which has totally decimated our piggery which had been very profitable for us. The husbandry of pigs had enabled us to improve the standard of our meals and the sale of pigs brought us extra income. We wish to restart our pig business after having disinfected the whole piggery, but we will need a bit of help for funding this.
- **Damaged crops:** we have an area of ground reserved for us where the girls grow crops. During the wet season (June to August) the girls grow peanuts, beans, maize and sorrel. But we have had a big problem in this because the fence protecting our land has been damaged: sheep, donkeys and cows from the village have had free access to the crops day and night, and all the efforts made by the girls to grow food have been in vain; they have not been able to harvest anything.
- **Damage to the girls’ dormitory roof:** we very much wish that the project to repair the girls’ housing could be achieved. At the moment, with the rainy season, the water is running into and damaging the ceiling.



We give thanks to God that our paths met so that, together, we can help the girls who are victims of all sorts of mistreatment and injustice. All the girls express their sincere gratitude to you. Here is the story of Pélagie ...



I am **Patrice** (*left*) and I am 13 years old. When I was eight years old my father promised me to a man who was old enough to be my father. When I was nine years old, my father died leaving my eight siblings and me. My mother was not able to pay for school. Five years after the death of my father my uncles had the idea of sending me to the house of the man to whom my father had promised me in marriage. In our village one must respect the wishes of those who have died, under pain of eternal damnation. My mother did not have any rights over or for her children. So, they chose a date to take me to my ‘husband’, even though I was only 13 years old. My aunt and mother told me the plans, and I decided to run away whilst I was on a trip to the market. As soon as I got to the market I ran to find the road to Baskouré because I had heard my friends talk of the refuge there. The walk was hard because I am small for my age. I walked through the bush, hiding at the slightest sound. I walked an entire day; during the night I slept under a tree. I was crying all the time because I was afraid. I arrived in Baskouré and, having asked around, I eventually found the refuge. From the first contact I was greatly relieved; I felt that I was at home thanks to the warm welcome I got from the Sisters and the girls. Today I enjoy life. I am getting a good education and training to prepare me for the future. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support.



My name is **Raina (left)**. I am 12 years old. My mother died when I was eleven years old. My father re-married and that was when the miseries began for me and my brothers. We became the houseworkers for our stepmother. As our new stepmother never gave us anything to eat, we each of us had to do our best to get by. We felt that hunger would kill us. One day we looked, in vain, for our brothers. They had run away. I decided to go to my aunt's house. Having arrived at my aunt's house it became apparent that I would be mistreated there too, with not much to eat. My aunt was always at the market, coming back home drunk and beating me up. A year later – this year – one night I made use of a really bright full moon to run

away with my friend **Cadence (right)** who was older than me and whose father was forcing her into a marriage. She had investigated the possibility of running away and so I asked her to help me. We arrived at the refuge in Baskouré together. Running away wasn't easy, but we stuck together in the hope of a better future. We feel at home here at the refuge. All the girls like us and we live as one big family. Thanks to God for this refuge which has saved us, and thank you to you, a thousand times, for your help.



OCADES (Organisation Catholique pour le Développement et la Solidarité)
Written by *Father Gérard Yougaré (right)*

The money you sent to us in September 2019 covered the school fees for girls in really difficult situations and ensured accelerated training for those who are studying at training centres for women. In fact, the Covid-19 pandemic led to the temporary closing of these centres. We were able to support those who had to sit a professional



qualification exam by providing accelerated training. Amongst those who benefited from our help, we want to continue the story of **Beawa (left)** who finished her training in 2019 and who was able to set up her own business. She was orphaned of both her parents. She had been enrolled at the Sainte Thérèse Training Centre at Baadtenga for training in weaving and couture. Being an orphan, she was not able to pay her school fees and had decided to abandon her training. The Sister who is the director of the centre, having been informed of Beawa's situation, asked OCADES to include Beawa on its list of those girls being supported by Les Amis. Beawa has been able to benefit from this help for her whole training period. With the support from Les Amis and others, she has been able to open her own workshop in the town of Koupéla. She will be able to take care of herself and support herself because of her work. Beawa knows that the best is yet to come thanks to the help she has had from Les Amis whom she thanks warmly.



PROTECTING AND EDUCATING GIRLS IN THE TENKODOGO DIOCESE

Written by *Ab Pascal KYELEM (left)*



The general aim of our collaboration with Les Amis was to help a number of disadvantaged girls to access education. Thanks to the financial support received from Les Amis, the objective of this project has been fully realised. We targeted 14 girls, 13 of whom are young women and just one in nursery school. The donation from Les Amis is of great importance for the girls and above all for their families, and therefore for the whole of society. Here, we have a saying, "to educate a girl, is to educate a nation." The girls' families see the importance of education, but they don't have the means to pay for it, so this financial aid is a great support for the families. Not only do the girls appreciate the help they have been given, but they appreciate even more that there are people living far away who care about them. Knowing this gives them a good reason to work hard. Let me introduce you to some of them ...



Hello, Les Amis! My name is **Henriette (left)**. I want to thank you for all that you have done for me. I was born in Tenkodogo and I have undertaken all my schooling in the same town. I am a child of a polygamous family. Because of the number of children my father has had, he can't afford to pay for our education. Because of that, I have received help from you. I want to sincerely thank you all. I promise to work hard in class. This year I will be in my final year.



My name is **Belina (upper right)**. I thank God who put me into the hands of Les Amis. I am a daughter of the catechist and there are six in our family. Our father doesn't have a regular salary and it is therefore difficult for him to pay for us all to get an education and other things. Thanks to your help, I have been able to pay for my education this year, and I am really grateful. I know that it is God who has put me in contact

with you. I pray for you, that God will bless you. By way of a thank-you for all that you have done for me and my family, I am going to work really hard in class to crown your efforts for success. I greet you all.



Last, but definitely not least out of all the girls we have been helping, is young **Elaina, (right)**, who goes to nursery school.

ST JOSEPH'S TRAINING CENTRE FOR GIRLS IN FADA

Written by Sister Irène (below)



In these few lines we hope to express our sincere gratitude for the help that you have given to us in looking after the young girls who have run away from a forced marriage. From September 2019 to June 2020 we welcomed a total of ten girls, all victims of forced marriage. But at the moment there are just eight as two of them got married [to their chosen partner] and are happy in their own homes now. We paid for a sewing machine for one of them; at the end of her work placement she will be able to set up her own business and help with the upkeep of her home. Thanks to your support, three girls began their first-year apprenticeship in dressmaking. Two

were able to do undertake training courses in local workshops. One, in her first year, began learning to weave. Essentially, your donations enabled us to pay for tuition (the cost of which is rising) and to buy supplies and work materials. All the girls have worked hard, and their results are satisfactory. This year, the help you provided actually saved lives: in October, two girls were seriously ill, one with typhoid fever and the other with Hepatitis B. The money received from you allowed us to take care of them properly. With your help, we have been able to assure our girls of three meals a day. As well as training, health and nutrition, your help has allowed us to buy clothes for them and to make dresses for important occasions (**above**). Thank you so much for this precious help. They are well-trained to become, in due course, responsible people in their own homes. Thank you to Les Amis-Burkina Faso! Here are a few lines to tell the personal story of Denisha, below, who has just joined us ...



My name is **Denisha** and I am 19 years old. I am the eldest daughter of my mother. My father has, for the last five years, been affected by a kind of madness and we are without support. I had been given in marriage by my father's older brother to a 67-year-old man. Before the chosen day when I was to be accompanied to the man's house, I ran away. I went to my maternal uncle to ask for help. He refused to welcome me because he didn't want problems with my parents. That day I left my uncle's house in tears. I had been sold by my paternal family and rejected by my mother's family. I spent a day walking, hungry and thirsty. That day I drank water in

the bush which is usually drunk by animals, for I didn't want to approach anyone in case they recognised me. I arrived in Fada at nightfall. I walked around asking if anyone knew where the Sisters lived, and I found them. They welcomed me warmly and, when I told them my story, they touched me

deeply by saying: "If your father's family and that of your mother have rejected you, the family of God welcomes you with joy. Dry your tears, all will be well." And this is how it is that I have been with the Sisters for five months and I am very happy. They devote themselves with all their strength to help us to be fulfilled and to prepare us for the future. I came to the Sisters without clothes; I had nothing except what I was wearing. Today I have everything necessary thanks to your help. From the bottom of my heart, I am so grateful.

A personal message from Gillie ...

Despite not having been able to visit Burkina Faso for a couple of years due to the problems of terrorist activity, I retain wonderful memories of that fantastic country. I can smell the smells, hear the sounds, feel the hot sun on my face and the warm sand under my feet. I can bring to mind the joy of being with all those wonderful girls, forsaken by their families and communities, and now being looked after by loving religious Sisters. What fantastic work they do; we are proud to be supporting them.



Knowing of the security problems being suffered by Burkina Faso, many people ask me if our projects are still OK. They are! Our work continues and *will* continue for as long as we have your support. We are very conscious of the concerns and difficulties being suffered by many ordinary people and families both in the UK and around the world as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and lockdown. With this anxiety as a backdrop to so many lives, we want to take this opportunity to express our thanks to everyone who has been able to continue to support us.

Please could I appeal to you to consider the possibility of setting up a monthly standing order. If you have already done this, but haven't revisited it for a while, perhaps you are in a position to increase it a little. I never feel comfortable holding out the begging bowl, but trust that you will forgive me for having done so. Thank you all so much for the donations you have given this year. I hope that you have enjoyed reading the accounts of how your donations have been used.

Any changes to your circumstances that we should know about?



Have your circumstances changed since you started making donations to us? If you are no longer able to Gift Aid the donations you make, then please don't forget to let us know.

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 very grateful to them.



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

Les Amis – Burkina Faso

11 Mare Lane • Hascombe • Godalming • GU8 4JH
01483 208432
www.les-amis-bf.org.uk
lesamis@btinternet.com
Registered Charity number 1120772

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%!

