

NEWSLETTER



Autumn 2023

Dear friends and supporters of Les Amis,



Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter. Every August, it is with great excitement that we translate, from French to English, the reports which come in from Burkina Faso, telling us all about how those who work for us over there have spent the money you have given. It is really wonderful to read about the tremendous amount of good work which continues, despite the considerable problems being experienced in Burkina Faso due to terrorism and inflation. Now, please make yourself a cup of tea and have a good read about all the ways in which YOU have contributed to the work being done and lives changed in what remains one of the world's poorest countries. Once you have read this newsletter, we would be so grateful if you would pass it on to whoever you think might be interested in our work. But for the moment let us now hand you over to those friends who will tell you, in their own words, how you have helped

How are your donations used?

THE YOANN FOUNDATION IN OUAGADOUGOU

Written by Brother Harry OFM Cap (**right**) a Franciscan Capuchin friar of the parish of St Pio in Ouagadougou



Dearly beloved sponsors, fraternal greetings of peace from Burkina Faso! In this year 2023 peace still remains the precious blessing for which we all yearn here in Burkina Faso, as well as in other parts of the world. Threat to humanity anywhere is a threat to peace everywhere. All gestures of solidarity, especially in favour of the smallest of the small and the poorest of the poor among our brothers and sisters go a long way in contributing to peace-building across the world. In that sense, your contribution towards taking care of the women and children in distress in Ouagadougou goes beyond simply ensuring food, medicine and health care for the sick and the needy onto a higher dimension, wherein humanity is restored in hope and dignity.



With your assistance we currently support 19 women in distress with food rations to allow them to rebuild their broken lives. We also take care of 20 children suffering from a range of disabilities. We regret to inform you that, in the course of this present year, two of our present beneficiaries of the project for the children have died. Then, in the wake of their death, a former beneficiary, also passed away. Though we are saddened by their untimely deaths, we are consoled by the fact that we were able, in our little way, to lighten their pain and make their existence dignified and worthy of a human person.

We also have happy stories to share with you. A three-year-old boy) and Chimène, a 2-year-old girl, **left** in yellow dress) are two children belonging to different families who did not cry at birth and have not been able to speak or sit properly ever since. Thanks to your donations, we have been able to cover the cost of therapy for them. Both of them have shown considerable improvement. Chimène, especially, has gained strength in her legs and is able to stand up on her own. Her speech is also improving. The doctors also advised the parents to buy a special



apparatus to support her back, and we will be helping with the cost of this.

We also helped Ibba (three-years-old, **right**) to undergo a simple operation (the cost was £80) to remove the extra tail-like growth of flesh which caused the little boy to suffer a lot of unbearable itching and sleepless nights. The operation was successful, and the innocent little boy has been relieved of his terrible suffering. However, he has to continue the treatment with medicines, so that it does not grow again.

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Names have been changed for this online version of this newsletter in order to protect identities

I want to tell you about an older woman who was struggling all alone to bring up her grandchild (her daughter died during childbirth). Recently, she suffered a lot to carry on her daily life as her crutches got broken. Coming to know of her situation, we helped to buy a walker for £23. She is so grateful that she is able to do her work again without depending on others to get about.

I also want to tell you about 8-month-old twins. Their father is a bike mechanic; their mother died shortly after the birth of the twins. Now these twins and the two older children, plus a toddler are taken care of by their paternal grandmother. She was not sufficiently well off to buy milk powder to feed the twins, and this pathetic situation was brought to our attention. We will be supporting the purchase of quality milk for these two suckling infants for another six months, the cost of which will be £316.



Last but not least, we would like to share with you the happy story of Ilbert, (left) who was a former beneficiary. Ilbert suffered from a congenital cerebral oedema, caused by the accumulation of fluids in the brain. As a small child a tube was fixed in his brain to evacuate the accumulated liquid. As a grown-up young man of 22 years, the brain cells had grown and blocked the tube, which caused the fluids to once again accumulate in the brain. As a result, Ilbert had a life-threatening neurological crisis. Immediate neurosurgery was required to remove the old tube and replace it with a new one. His mother could not afford the operation. But thanks to your help, we were able to help her with the cost and, by God's grace, on 14th June this year, Ilbert underwent the critical surgery on his brain successfully.



There so many small but life-changing interventions carried out through your constant support. I, for my part and also on behalf of Pélagie (right), bring you through these few words a slice of what we are doing with the funds that we receive and also present you the gratitude, which these women and children would have themselves loved to express in person.

FR PAUL NAZOTIN (below)



The security situation has not improved. On the contrary, the number of closed schools as well as the number of internally displaced people have increased. We have gone from 3,280 schools closed in December 2021, to 6,149 in May 2023. The number of displaced people rose to 2.06 million, an increase of 12% compared to the figures for February 2022. People seriously suffering from this situation are found in all walks of life. Even worse, inflation in Burkina is the highest among countries sharing the same currency in West Africa. Last January, inflation was estimated at 14.6% compared to 3.9% in 2021. These two factors (insecurity and inflation) combined are throwing more and more people into precariousness.

Over this last year, and by way of small examples, I have used Les Amis funds to help...

... a 17-year-old boy (right). Following a terrorist attack on his village, he came to settle in Fada, alone without a family. A car mechanic sensitive to his situation was kind enough to welcome him to his garage in Fada, to train him. I saw him last week. His boss is pleased with him and says he is learning well. He spends the night in a refugee shelter on the outskirts of town. It is planned that we can help him return to school if it suits him, or to continue his training in car mechanics.



... a blind man who lives alone in Salembaoré. He calls regularly for money to buy food. A friend, also from Salembaoré, is the intermediary who takes care of him. The Salembaoré region remains inaccessible due to terrorism. Many of those who can, have left Salembaoré and its region.

... Agénor (left), whom you have read about in previous newsletters. Gillie has confirmed that Les Amis will be sending funds to buy a much-needed moped for his mother, a real fighter, who is completely devoted to her disabled and heavily dependent child. Agénor always impresses everyone with his keen intelligence.

... with the repair of houses. Two ladies are very happy to have been able to repair their modest home on the southern outskirts of Ouaga. The roof was re-done and the wall raised for a total cost of around 700 euros. The two sisters are very happy and express their deep gratitude. I took it upon myself to use the rest of the money to help

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... **Perrine**, whose husband lost his job a few years ago and has not recovered. Perrine finds herself alone to take care of their three daughters and a twelve-year-old boy whom they have taken in. To complicate everything, the house where she and the girls slept, collapsed under the pressure of the violent rains of September 2022. Once again, the help of Les Amis was decisive for this family. The new house (**right**) is now inhabited, although the girls have no beds and sleep on the floor on mats. It saddens me a little, I who knew the same situation when I was a child, but I console myself with the idea that they have a roof to sleep under.



... **two young brothers (left)** who have chosen to breed laying hens. Very early orphans of parents who both died of HIV, they went through severe trials in life. They live in the slums on the southeastern outskirts of Ouaga. The neighbourhood they live in and their living conditions speak volumes about their courage and desire to succeed. They are looking for help to increase the potential of their breeding by adding broiler breeding.

A big thank you to Les Amis for your precious help!

FR LAMBERT SAWADOGO (right)

I am happy to send you some words as a report of the work of Les Amis for this year.

For several years, you have funded the training of women at the St Luke training centre. However, due to terrorism, this centre is now shut. Since then, as I wasn't able to get the women together as a group, I have given them funds to keep up with their activities.



Many of the people I help (mostly with disabilities) are from the region of Tougouri; these people have received help from Les Amis for many years. However, last March, everyone in the area of Tougouri had to leave, having been given a 48-hour ultimatum to do so by terrorists. I do what I can to help all these people who are now displaced.



Les Amis has helped me to keep girls in education, here is some news about two of them: **Adelyn (left)** attends college in Kaya and is studying for her Bacalaureate. **Gaëlle** is very fortunate to have been funded for her studies over the years. Having done her Masters, she will be employed by the Regional Hospital of Dédougou.

Because of the threats from terrorists, thousands of people have left their villages. This has had huge consequences in terms of fields left uncultivated. With the increasing price of cereals, this has created a permanent situation of famine in our region. Organisations like World Food Program, Catholic Relief Service, etc, are doing their best, but the situation of the lack of food remains.



We are very grateful to Les Amis for providing food for local schools (**left**); this has resulted in 13,000 meals having been served.

In a previous newsletter I told you about my 33-year-old cousin, Séva who, shortly after giving birth to a little boy, died due to the lack of an ambulance with oxygen. She left three children. With financial help from Les Amis the little boy is being looked after by my sister (**right**), and my aunt. He is growing well.



Dear benefactors, with the help we receive, we try not to leave anyone aside! With your help we can meet the basic needs of widows, orphans and people in need. May God keep you and bless you. You have shared with persons in need, may God now meet your needs. May God bless Les Amis; may He settle peace for ever in Burkina Faso and enable Gillie to come back! We miss her!

PROTECTING AND EDUCATING GIRLS

OCADES in Koupéla

Written by Fr Gérard (right)



Last year Les Amis granted us the necessary funds to build a much-needed classroom (**left**) for the benefit of the young girls of Dimistenga. The work is finished and a spacious room has been made for the benefit of 42 girls who are now registered for sewing training.

Below left, the girls wearing the uniform which they made for themselves



However, the usual work of OCADES is in the provision of training for girls and young women in crafts which help them to provide for themselves and their families. With your help, we were able to provide training in soap-making (**right**) to 42 girls.



I join the girls who benefit from the project and the girls' parents to say a sincere thank you for your financial support. May God bless you and keep you.

The Refuge for Girls in Baskouré

Written by Sister Léontine (**right**)



Thanks to you, we were, for another year, able to run this home for girls who find themselves in difficulty. Thank you for all you have been and done for us over the years and especially this year. There are 20 girls this year; fewer than last year, as some of the girls were able to return to their families after the reconciliation process that we carried out with their families.

The girls who are not at school learn skills. Yanie and Patrice (**left**) are learning to weave and make clothes with the cloth they weave. They will, in turn, pass on their skills to other girls. The girls also make handbags (**right**) and castanets (**below left**).

In addition to weaving, the girls raise chickens and pigs; they also have a donkey. Thanks to you we had water all year round for our needs and for the vegetables in our garden in which the girls grow maize, sorrel beans and okra. We have also planted 20 papaya trees – we hope to have fruit soon.

This year we welcomed seven new girls, some of whom are refugees from terrorist-controlled parts of the country, and others fleeing a forced marriage.

Some of their stories....



My name is **Clementine** (**right**) and I have been rejected by my father. He often mistreated me and, one day, he told me that I was no longer his child. That traumatised me. It was because of that that I ran away to the Sisters, because I could no longer cope with the insults and mistreatment. I have been warmly welcomed here. I am happy and am able to continue with my studies. Thank you to you, my benefactors.



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My name is **Aloyse (left)**. I ran away from my village because of the threat of terrorist attacks. My village is plagued with insecurity to the point that no school is open this year. Wanting to continue school with more peace of mind, I found refuge with the sisters. Currently all the inhabitants have had to leave my village because the terrorists chased them away and killed some.

My name is **Jacquie (right)**. I am from a village situated about 20 kilometres from Baskouré. Due to insecurity and terrorism, schools in my village are closed. I became very sad. This is how it came about that I went to the Sisters in Baskouré and expressed my pain and my desire to continue with school. The sisters welcomed and supported me. I was able to enrol in the high school of Baskouré and remain hopeful that, with your help, I will do my best to pass the exam for the 2023-2024 school year.



My name is **Robine (left)**. I came to the home because I fled a forced marriage. Indeed, given in marriage I was taken by force without any support from my family. Once there, every day I suffered humiliation. And my so-called husband even beat me. It was after all this that I was able to escape from the house to find refuge with the Sisters. I want to find peace, joy and above all I hope one day to find a man of my choice with whom to start a home.

Sister Léontine continues: But we do have some worries! The process of reconciling the girls to their families is very difficult, as the girls have been rejected by their families. But we keep trying. Financially, we need more help with buying equipment for their training and for feeding the animals for profitable breeding. Also, we urgently need to

replace many of the girls' mattresses (**right**), which are in a really poor state. We also need 20 stools and an additional table in their refectory, along with blackboards to help them with their studies. Dear friends, thank you so much for all the dedication and financial support. All the girls in the home say "BARKA" to you, that is to say 'THANK YOU' [in Mooré]. We pray that peace will return to our beautiful country so that Gillie can once again come among us.



We are still counting on your support to be able to help the young girls in the home.

St Joseph's Training Centre in Fada

Written by Sister Michaelle (right)

Great is my joy, at the end of the year 2022-2023 to express our gratitude for your terrific help, in many forms, which has helped us and our girls with their difficulties. With your support I was able to help our girls to have good living conditions and meals every day. The fund received covered many things and helped us in the care of our girls.



Eponine (right) is a fatherless girl who, thanks to the roadside check, was saved from the hands of men who had picked her up. She was brought here where she found friendship. She began her training in tailoring in order to prepare her for a future.

Nina (left) is an internally displaced student whom we welcomed into our home to enable her to continue her education. Her village was targeted by terrorists causing the closure of the schools. Having arrived in Fada and with nowhere to go, we welcomed her into our home.





Estée (left) is orphaned of her father, but her mother lives in a very difficult situation. It was through her aunt that we were able to welcome her and allow her to receive training in tailoring in our centre. She has finished the first year and passed for the second year. She is full of goodwill in learning to prepare for her future.

Clarette (right) is orphaned of both parents. She is a person with a disability who has found refuge with us. She is very happy with the other girls and is doing a little bit in sewing.



I give thanks to God for your work in favour of the needy and so many others. In my own name, in the name of the community in Fada and more particularly in the name of the girls, I want to thank you, and to give you an idea of the feeling of gratitude that we have.

Refuge for girls in Ziniaré

Written by Sister Irène (below)



With these few lines, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you for the help you provide in the care of the young girls in our care. We are very grateful to you. This year we welcomed a total of six girls (right)

Your financial support has allowed us to pay for the education and training of all our girls. Further to schooling costs, your support helped us to buy many necessities, including healthcare for the girls.



Fanet (left) has finished her training and is now able to weave. This was possible thanks to your much appreciated support.

Let me hand you over to our youngest girl (right)....

I am 12 years old and have been fatherless since the age of three. From the age of eight, I was given in marriage. I was the fourth wife of a man who was almost 70 years old. At the age of 10 I decided to run away, to seek work as a cleaning girl in a family. A man from the village, seeing my suffering, helped me to flee. This is how I arrived in Ouagadougou to work for a woman for eight months as a babysitter. But after eight months, the family that had been looking for me finally found out that I was working for this woman in Ouagadougou. They contacted her and threatened her, in order to push her to send me



back to the village. When I learned that I had to go back to the old man's house, I ran away again. With the little money I had, I took a taxi to find a new town and to try my luck again. This is how I arrived in Ziniaré where I found work with another lady, as a babysitter. But it only lasted three months because I was, again, discovered by the old man's family. It was again a case of threats and intimidation towards the lady for whom I was now working. The woman's husband, not wanting any trouble with the old man, ordered his wife to hand me over to the village. They had chosen a date in December to take me back to the village. I was convinced that, if I returned, I would no longer be able to escape. On December 14, the lady's baby was feverish, and she took him to the health centre. I took advantage of her absence to flee to the church that I knew about. When I arrived, I knocked on the Sisters' door and Sister Irène came out. I was shaking and I was afraid of not being accepted. But the Sister, seeing me and hearing that I was fleeing a forced marriage, took pity on me. She greeted me tenderly. On the spot I was comforted, and she said to me, "Do not be afraid, because it is Mother Mary who led your steps towards us. Everything will be fine, you'll see." Since then, the Sisters take care of me. They sewed clothes for me and I celebrated Christmas with great joy. That Christmas day was the best day of my life. My parents, having learned that I was with the Sisters, came to take me by force. The Sisters called the gendarmerie who came to take them. They were imprisoned for 24 hours before being released. After that they returned to the village without saying anything more. I am very happy to be with the Sisters. They love us very much and work hard to guarantee us the basic necessities.



ENABLING FURTHER EDUCATION

Written by Fr Pascal Silga (*right*)

Thank you once again to Les Amis for its financial help which supported the students during the year 2022-2023.



Fleur (left), who is newly admitted to the baccalaureate does not have a father. Her mother, being a widow and a depressive, is seriously struggling to take care of the food and school costs of the children. Support from Les Amis will certainly alleviate Fleur's schooling worries.

Apolline (right) has just passed her Baccalauréat. She is orphaned of her mother. Her father would like to push her for university studies, but he is unfortunately very poor. Support from Les Amis will help Apolline to dare to venture to university.



Ember (below left) sat her baccalaureate in 2021. Unfortunately, before starting university, Ember's dad had a traffic accident. With no support due to her dad's disability, Ember signed up for the cut-and-sew classes. She has had very good results, and this has led her to Senegal since June for a refresher course. This was possible thanks to Les Amis.



Rosine (right) Thanks to Les Amis, Rosine, who has no father, opted for a field of study hitherto reserved for boys – construction! She is doing well thanks to her 'father', Les Amis.

Simon (below). Beginning at university in 2021, this student is moving into his third year of Civil Engineering and is very grateful to Les Amis. Simon rightly considers the support of Les Amis as a real lever that allowed him to be able to continue with and be happy in his studies.



We were pleased to help this lady (**below right**). She is the widow of a gold miner who died in Guinea. The search for a better situation led her husband to search for gold. Unfortunately, a cave-in caused the death of the husband. With help from Les Amis, she was given a sewing machine, which will help her to support her children.



Dear benefactors, we'd like to fund the much-needed items at the home for girls in Baskouré: 20 new mattresses, 20 stools for the refectory, a new table for the refectory, the repair of the cupboards and a blackboard. The overall cost of this will be £1,900. If you would like to help us with any of these items, then please get in touch with us.



A personal message from Gillie ...

Reading all the reports which come in during August is a bittersweet experience for me. It is wonderful to read about all the successes of our work, but very painful to read about all the people and places I know personally from many previous visits; people and places I am, for the moment, unable to visit due to terrorism and the risk of kidnap. I want to take this opportunity to thank you all very much for continuing to touch the lives of so many people, and for making our ongoing work possible.



There are many adults and children whom we have been supporting for years, now. It was in February 2015 that I first met Abelle and her Downs Syndrome little boy, Alard (left, with Father Paul). It was a miserable encounter. She was living in great difficulty without any support at all. I remember crying as she disappeared into the gloom of her little house, followed by her little girl and her toddler, Alard. No money, no help, no prospects, no love, just plain misery. Eight years later, and thanks to you, we are still with her, still helping and supporting her and her little family.

Regular payments into our bank account form, by a long way, the majority of our annual income. If you are able to give to us regularly, then here are the bank details you need: Sort Code **40-22-12**; account number **21490869**; account name '**Les Amis-Burkina Faso**'. Thank you!

WE WOULD LOVE TO GIVE MORE TALKS

There is no doubt that showing pictures and talking about our work, and giving everyone the opportunity to ask lots of questions is the very best way of raising interest in our work and, therefore, the financial support we need to enable us to carry on funding our many projects. If you are a member of a group, no matter how small or big, do ask us to come and give a talk. Here's how you can get in touch with us:



01483 208432 or **07792 654798** or **lesamis@btinternet.com**

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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** (<https://www.helloheadline.com/>) 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

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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)

"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."

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