

NEWSLETTER



Spring 2021

Dear friends and supporters of Les Amis,



At this time of year, Gillie would normally have just come back from her annual trip to Burkina Faso. She would have spent an extremely busy week tearing around the country visiting all our projects, coming back with a lot of information and photos to use in the ensuing newsletter. What a difference a couple of years can make!

Added to the ongoing threat of terrorist activity, which makes trips to Burkina Faso inadvisable for the moment, there is now the added problem of Covid-19, a pandemic which has affected the entire world, making travel impossible. Given the current difficulties in visiting our projects, we are often asked if this means that our projects are stalling or even grinding to a halt. The short answer is ...

No! Our projects continue as normal, unaffected by either terrorism or Covid-19

THE YOANN FOUNDATION IN OUAGADOUGOU

This was where all our work began. Named after the late Yoann, a sufferer of cerebral palsy, this foundation serves the needs of disabled children, their mothers and other women in real need. They get together regularly at the Franciscan Friary in Ouagadougou where they are given money, sacks of rice and also meals.



Thanks to the dedication and hard work of the Franciscan Capuchin friars in Ouagadougou and Pélagie, the mother of the late Yoann, this project is still working wonders. Despite the restrictions of Covid we continue to give help to the mothers of 23 disabled children and a further 20 disadvantaged women. This is a great relief to us as, without this help, and living in a country where there is no welfare support, these people would suffer in a way which we probably couldn't imagine. The friars have asked me to pass on a heart-felt greeting to you from these women: "Bark Pvusgo!" (gratitude/thanksgiving in Mooré)

In September we told you about Javier (left), who has been suffering from crippling seizures. Whilst still suffering from seizures, he is now undergoing rehabilitation treatment, and this is bringing some stability. He wants to say: "Bark Wusgo Yāmba" (which means "thank you very much").

REACHING OUT TO REFUGEES AND THE DISPLACED

"Burkina Faso is now the world's fastest-growing displacement and protection crisis with over one million people – more than one in every 20 inhabitants – displaced by surging violence inside the country. Many have fled multiple times in Burkina Faso's north and east." UNHCR



Thanks to Father Lambert, who is based in Kaya, one of the busiest towns in respect of coping with refugees, we have been able to continue our support of these desperate people. Father Lambert has, over the last year, been active in buying them the many practical things that they need.

Here is a picture of Fr Lambert, having stopped his car to give what money he has to the refugees he has just passed on the road.

PROTECTING AND EDUCATING GIRLS

The protection and education of girls and young women is really important to us. 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. 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.

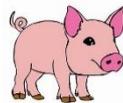
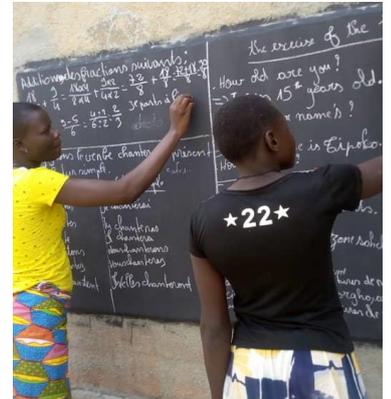
..... in Baskouré

In Baskouré we fund a refuge for runaway girls. There, they learn lots of different skills to help them secure financial independence until such time as they wish to marry. They learn to grow crops, to look after livestock, brew beer, embroider and make soap.



In our last newsletter we reported on some serious difficulties that they had suffered, including the loss of their pigs, the need to repair the dormitory roof and the destruction of their crops due to the poor state of the fencing. Thanks to the fundraising efforts of the Year 7 girls of Poyntz House of St Mary's School Ascot, their piggery has been re-established and is going well (**left**). Added to that, we gave them sufficient funds for the repair to the dormitory roof (**below left**) as well as one or two things which will be of great help to them, such as tables and chairs (**below right**), a blackboard (**right**) and the digging of a pit for the run-off water from the showers.

The cost of replacing the fencing to protect their crops will come to £800. If there is anyone out there who likes the idea of funding this, please get in touch.



..... in Fada

*At the **St Joseph's Training Centre** in Fada, owned by the Diocese of Fada, we sponsor the seamstress training of a number of girls who have run away from forced marriages.*

One of the girls, Véva (**right**), whom Les Amis has been looking after over the years, has been very ill with Hepatitis B. We were able to give sufficient funds for her treatment so far this year, and she continues to make good progress. With some of the funds we sent they were able to fix the girls' shower which was faulty, build a shed (**left**) and create a small terrace in front of the girls' bedroom. Our giving also covered the cost of training for two girls, one in sewing and the other in weaving. We were also able to buy a sewing machine which was necessary for their shop. They have reported a great increase in the cost of food at the moment; this is as a result of the farmers having been driven from their land by terrorists, and therefore having to abandon their crops.



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..... in Koupéla

In the town of Koupéla we give funds to OCADES which runs training sessions for girls and young women in the art of clothes making, growing and bottling of vegetables and the making of soap.

Like other countries in the world, Burkina Faso has been affected by the Covid pandemic. The situation has caused the Koupéla branch of OCADES to use part of the help received from Les Amis to teach women how to make hand sanitiser and bleach in the fight against Covid. Thanks to Les Amis, they have been able to provide health kits to two key groups: 1) the St Lazare Home (for elderly victims of social exclusions) in Koupéla and; 2) the



refugees from the north of the country who are now settled nearby in Baskouré and Andemtenga. These refugees are installed in areas without any sanitary infrastructure, and this has led to the spreading of diseases such as diarrhoea and malaria. In addition, the risk of spreading Covid-19 is very high in these environments. OCADES initiated the training of women in the production of sanitising gel and bleach as part of its contribution to the fight against Covid. Thanks to this training, they have provided the St Lazare Home and the refugees with bleach and gel to protect themselves. Those who benefit from funds from Les Amis are happy to be able to help others.



.... in Gounghin

In the village of Gounghin is the St Monique Home where we house and pay for the education of ten orphaned secondary school girls. .



Last year we heard that the kitchen at the St Monique Home had been very severely damaged in bad weather; they made an appeal to us to help them pay for the necessary repairs. We are delighted to have received a photograph of the new kitchen (**right**).



Also in Gounghin, we continue to support the local nursery and primary schools, paying the fees for a number of the children whose parents would otherwise not be able to send their children to school. It was lovely to get a photo of them (**above**), just before this newsletter was sent off to the printer.

REACHING OUT TO INDIVIDUALS

We love to give financial help directly to individuals whose situations in life are really difficult. The help we give to them is genuinely life-changing.



Three years ago, we reported on Morganne (**left**), a mother of young children who had just been widowed. We had given her the funds to set herself up in business as a seamstress, working from home. The big difficulty she has at the moment is that her in-laws would like to remove her children from her and reclaim the house. Life in many parts of Africa is so much harder if you are a woman! We are currently exploring ways of ensuring that Morganne retains the house and her children. If this story touches you and you would like to offer some financial help, then please be in touch with us.



For some years we have been helping Abelle (**right and left**), the mother of Alard who has Down's Syndrome. She had run away, whilst pregnant with Alard, from an abusive marriage. Having given birth to Alard, she was then blamed by her family for his being born handicapped. Over the years we have given her practical help, such as securing solar power for her house, the repair of the wall around her house and general financial support. The photo on the left was taken when we first met her; you can see from the photo on the right that Alard is growing up fast, as is his sister, Karine.



A personal message from Gillie ...

Who would have thought, a year ago, that the world would have all but ground to a halt because of a new and deadly virus? I do hope that you and your loved ones are keeping well and coping with the ongoing challenges.

In recent weeks I have noticed that the number of terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso seems to have reduced, and this has given me real hope of getting back to Burkina Faso soon, Covid rules and regulations allowing. Despite my having been unable to visit our projects recently, I am kept well-informed by those who work with us in Burkina Faso. So much is still being achieved thanks to your ongoing generosity.



One of the biggest problems, because of Covid, is being unable to give talks to groups. Given that this is the best way, by far, of raising interest and therefore funds, this is very concerning to us. Therefore, I have recorded an illustrated talk which you can access directly from our website. Just go to the 'All our Projects' page, at the bottom of which is a link to an online presentation via YouTube. Here is the link: (<https://youtu.be/Jehalll40aA>). I do ask you to share this link with your friends and family. Thank you.

A big thank-you to those of our readers who responded to my plea, in September, to consider the possibility of increasing the amount of their monthly Standing Order; we are very grateful.

Thank you for continuing to help us to change lives.

Any changes to your circumstances that we should know about?

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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** 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

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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)

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