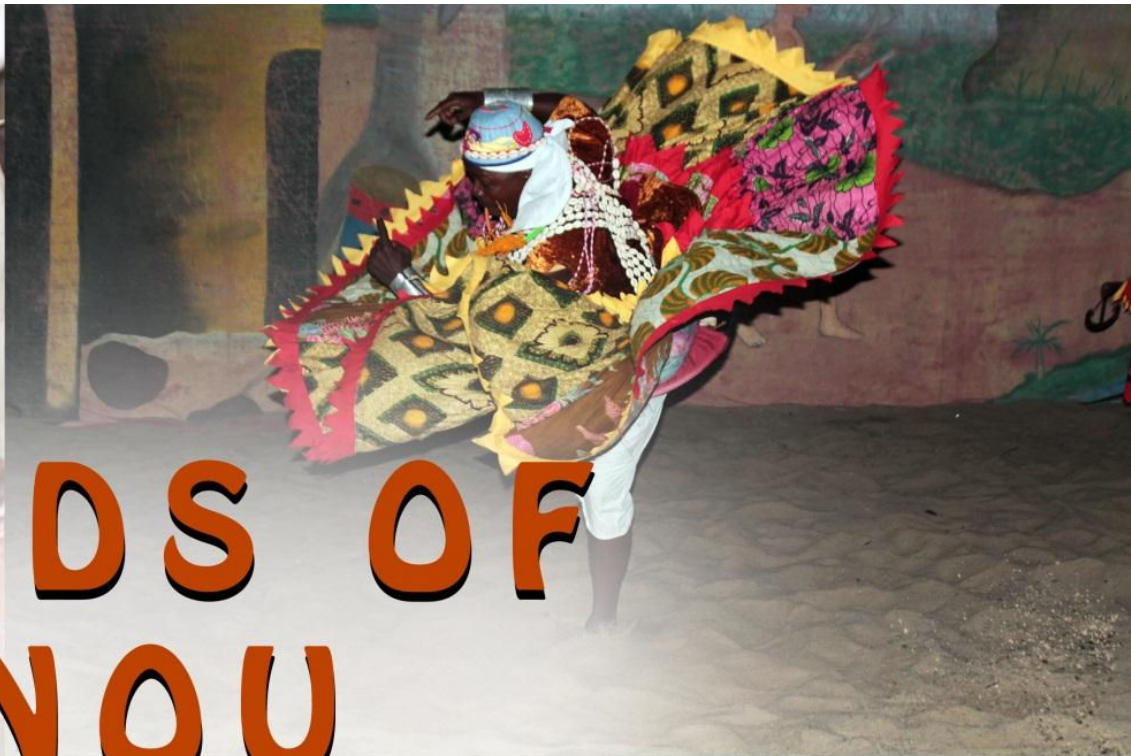
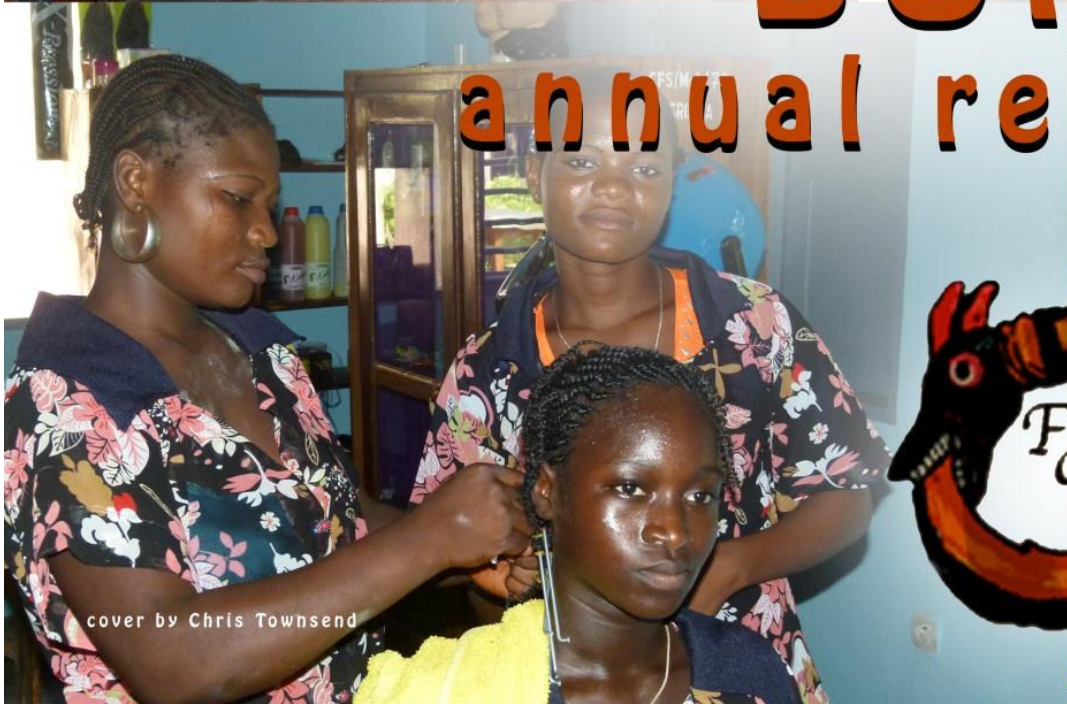




FRIENDS OF BONOU

annual report 2011



cover by Chris Townsend



PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

By Peter Devlin

Welcome to our Annual Report 2011 which as in previous years shows how busy we have been, thanks to all our members' generous support, be it donations, sales of our products, sponsored marathon, Christmas hampers and the various enthusiastic endeavours of Oxford High School students as Barbara describes in her piece.

This year, 3 adventurous supporters went to Bonou (and Africa) for the first time and you can read how amazed and bowled over they were by what they saw and experienced and how enchanted they felt during the meetings they had with the girls and the villagers... They certainly got a very different image of Africa from the one of starving victims of war and famine that we constantly see reflected in our media! They really entered into the spirit of what we are trying to do and are all fired up to help us even more! Thank you Mary, Lisa and Christopher!

You will also be able to read what is happening to the first cohort of girls who "graduated" in 2010. The results are very encouraging without being 100 % perfect and Patsy clearly explains the remaining problems and issues to be resolved.

During 2011 through various exchanges, discussions and frequent direct contacts (Laurence went three times to Benin this year!) we have also come to the conclusion that 8 years on, we should review the way we have managed the running of the Centre and collaborated with Dominique and his team: a bit less "hands on" and a bit more strategic thinking and forward planning is called for. You can read all about that necessary evolution and the reasons for it.

Finally you'll be able to have a look at the all important yearly accounts that Mark had been doing for us since the start of the charity, keeping the Charity Commission and all our supporters happy! To my own surprise, I must admit, I discover while reading Mark's summary, that we have raised nearly £200,000.00 in 8 years! Not a bad score for a small charity composed only of volunteers and supporters... So thanks again to all of you!

We look forward to continuing to work with you in 2012 and beyond, for the benefit of our girls in Bonou and of the many primary school kids in Dangbo for whom we have been providing the 2 main text books (French and Maths).



Two big billboards in the streets of Cotonou, promoting the importance of education and sponsored by various foreign International aid organisations, including UNICEF or UNESCO. This is what they respectively say: "In 2015 such a school should not exist any longer and neither should unqualified teachers" & "If you can read this message, it means that you went to school. They did not! Let's work together"

AN EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME!

In late November/early December 2011 three "new" Friends of Bonou joined the two "old timers" Patsy and Laurence and came to Benin to get acquainted with our project and then to Ghana for a bit of well deserved R&R. A memorable trip by all accounts for Mary, Lisa & Christopher who launched themselves wholeheartedly into the adventure as you can read on...



An indispensable piece of kit for any trip to Benin: a fan!



At the Slavery museum in Porto Novo



Mary, Patsy and Laurence in Bonou



Kente" fashion models!



Lisa and some of our girls in the Sonagnon Centre



(Almost) stranded in Ghana following a problem with our 4X4



In the Ghanaian rainforest, Kakum "canopy walkway" ... scary!

Brilliant, Beautiful, Buzzing, Beguiling, Bonou!

By Mary Wade

My effervescent singing friend Patsy had been feeding me information, photographs and tales of Benin and in particular of the Sonagnon Training Centre in Bonou over the last two years. She invited me to various fundraisers for the project be they musical, gastronomic or bead-buying frenzies and she excited me with tales of her experiences in the little-known country of Benin and the fabulous work that was being done for the benefit of the girls at the Centre.

I was really impressed by the fact that it was such a co-operative venture, a journey together. The village was being consulted regularly and involved in the decision-making and it wasn't just a case of actions being taken because richer, educated and experienced Europeans considered their ideas were what the village needed and what would be good and right for them.

When Patsy casually suggested that I might be interested in seeing the centre "for real" she must have spotted by the demented enthusiasm of my response that I would indeed be *very* interested! The opportunity to visit such a project and experience a country alongside and guided by people who were either heavily involved in the project or actually living in Benin was a cultural learning activity of which I wanted to be a part. November was the time agreed for the trip with the vital and totally amazing Laurence.



Some common sights on the Beninese roads: Contraband petrol from Nigeria on shaky motorbikes, overloaded "bush taxis" including with live animals (on the roof!) and street vendors in the middle of the mad traffic!

I thought I was prepared for what I would meet there... It turned out that I certainly was prepared for much of what I would encounter in a country that was still developing and was short of much of the infrastructure and luxuries of our society but I was certainly not prepared for the amazing strength, positivity, vibrancy and generosity of spirit of the people I was to meet there. It was a truly awesome and indeed humbling experience, totally unforgettable and the cause of much reflection then, now and, I am sure, forever. I am so grateful to have been part of such a wonderful journey. There were so many spellbinding experiences that I could recount but I will concentrate on my first visit to the Centre.

The whole adventure of travelling along the major road from Cotonou to Bonou was an eye opener in every sense of the word. Motorbikes by the thousand, cars and giant battered trucks all surged enthusiastically along the road, overflowing with people or goods, with seemingly no concept of which side of the road they were on, let alone any lane discipline! Alfred our "best driver in the world" was calm, assertive and determined while we British gasped and held our collective breath as we sped towards the oncoming traffic!

I was very excited as we approached the village for the first time. We had turned off the smart new concreted road, bordered by busy shops stalls and markets, into the village and onto a dusty, bumpy, rutted track passing through an area consisting of quiet collections of straw-topped huts.



The village of Asrossa-Bonou on the beautiful river Ouémé

The explanation for the unusual quietude of the track was clear as we climbed down from our 4X4: We were immediately surrounded by a massive cloud of colour, smiling faces, cheering, drumming and enthusiasm. Women and men were dressed in a riotous array of vibrant kaleidoscopic materials, a mass of exuberance and good cheer.



These villagers clearly adored Dominique, Laurence, Paulin and Patsy but we, the “first-timers” e.g. Lisa, Chris and I, were treated to the same loving welcome. I was overwhelmed by the total joy and friendliness of these amazing people. For the first but certainly not the last time that day I could feel the tears welling. We were led in an enthusiastic, noisy and extraordinary procession to the centre of the village, accompanied all the way by singing, swaying, drumming and dancing. As a fairly quiet and shy Brit I was caught up in the contagious nature of this activity and was soon dancing along with the rest. As this mass of excited humanity approached the central area we were aware of three new participants in the crowd: the magical and mysterious Zangbetos. We were honoured by the appearance of three masked, illusory, guardian “haystacks.” They were to perform again later and we were to be entranced, intrigued and slightly disturbed by the power, excitement and mystique of these voodoo characters.

We were presented with a bouquet of local flowers and leaves then led to a sheltered area where we were given pride of place under a canopy on the locally carved, wooden, padded chairs. There followed entertainment from several village groups. Firstly the girls from the Centre sang us a welcome song. It was simply charming and very moving. Even though we did not understand the words we could hear our names as part of the song. The rhythm and movement of the girls was terrific and their vocal harmonies entrancing. After more extraordinary dancing and singing it was time for some important speeches. Paulin translated for us from the local language, Fon. I was impressed by the clear support of the whole community for this project. This was clearly **their** project which the Friends of Bonou were helping them to realise.

Laurence and Dominique replied to the speech and Dominique encouraged us all to learn together and to be open to the ideas and views of others so that we can develop effectively. We should also all remember, he said, that it is what we can give to society that should be the most important thing in our lives. After appreciative and enthusiastic applause the ceremony continued with more dancing and the reappearance of the Zangbetos. It was impossible not to be intoxicated and intrigued by these shaking trembling dalek-like haystacks. It was pretty perplexing to see that, when upended, there was no sign of any human dancer under the frame, only the appearance of various other animate and inanimate beings such as snakes, rabbits, tortoises and coffins! The Zangbetos were eventually led away by their ever-attentive minders. After an exuberant farewell song we were led into the peaceful haven of the centre to be shown around by the shy but delightfully proud students. They were very keen to display what they had learned and I was full of respect for what they had achieved.



The mysterious and magical Zangbetos

Everything we were shown and told made such perfect sense and I was looking forward to the workshop later in the week when future plans for the Centre would be discussed by the Village Elders, Friends of Bonou, members of the Management Committee and Centre Trainers. If only I had space to describe that stunning meeting as well but Lisa is doing this below in this report! We were shown the brand new dormitories for the girls. These were full of, not just any beds, but beautifully carved wooden beds. It must be fantastic for the girls not to be sleeping on the floor of the workshops any more. Finally we were treated to a fantastic lunch cooked by the girls and served to us with such grace and modesty under the watchful eye of their trainer. It was truly wonderful. All too soon we had to take our leave and set off on the bustling road back to Cotonou.

This was a visit which has had a profound effect on me. It has left me with such a good feeling inside and a determination to be more thankful for my good fortune and to be less materialistic in a world which would surely benefit by learning from Bonou the true wealth of family solidarity, respect and social responsibility. I was certainly privileged to have experienced this welcome and I went on to experience so many other awesome happenings. It was simply the best time. I hope that I shall now become more involved with raising funds for this inspiring charity.



One of the 3 bridges on the Nokoué Lake in Cotonou

A GLIMPSE OF DEVELOPMENT IN ACTION

By Lisa Joyce and Christopher Townsend

The buzz of anticipation was apparent as the participants collected for the participative workshop, an event now familiar to the villagers in Bonou thanks to Dominique's skills and Friends of Bonou's readiness to listen and to get stuck in! We gathered our chairs around the shade of the paillotte's edge and we realised that it was pretty incredible to be a small part of the process that would decide the future path of the girls' lives and to see the development of the village unravelling in front of us.



Villagers gathered under the paillotte



Dominique in his role of workshop facilitator



Some very attentive participants!

At this point, we were happy to sit back and absorb it all through the very thorough translation kindly provided by Paulin from Fon and French into English. There were clearly some hot topics to be resolved, all of which had been discussed earlier in the year when Laurence was in Bonou 2 months earlier. The Elders and the Centre's Management Committee had therefore had plenty of time to think about it all and to have thorough discussions. Dominique acting as master of ceremonies and as the great facilitator that he is, didn't waste any time in getting down to business and once the meeting got going, it was hard not to get involved in the debate.

We were quite struck by the inclusive nature of the meeting and respectful consideration given to everybody's contribution. It seems clear to us that FOB is not a charity that tries to impose its ideas of what its members consider to be best, without first considering and digesting some of the fascinating, and sometimes unexpected opinions of those that have such a central role in Bonou. FOB recognises that its successes to date only exist thanks to collaboration with the people of Bonou and therefore work to ensure that the aims of the charity remain in tune with the community. It seems as though no meeting of minds takes place in Bonou until everybody in attendance has introduced themselves and enlightened the group as to what they do in their day to day lives. With such a good turnout, this took some time! These introductions, as well as being an interesting insight, helped the two groups (us the visitors and the villagers) to relate to one another, and to appreciate each other's perspective for points raised during the meeting.

We found the way that the women of Bonou raised their concerns to be quite striking: they have a presence and an ability to project their voice and point in a strong, convincing, yet completely feminine way. They spoke with such passion in their convictions and unfaltering surety that we have not witnessed to such an extent in the UK. Perhaps it was being surrounded by FOB members, with a common goal of empowering and achieving equality for the girls and women in their community. What is for sure is that the women at this meeting felt confident and entitled to project their views. This was great to see and something even the contestants on the *Apprentice* could learn from! We hope to take a leaf out of their book and will think of them in our work!

8 years on ...

By Laurence Lalanne, General Secretary

I was really encouraged and moved to read the previous two articles by Mary and Lisa & Christopher. It is thanks to such people's enthusiasm and commitment that Friends of Bonou is the charity that it is, an organisation "small enough to care, big enough to make a difference", still entirely composed of volunteers here in England, directly involved with people of a very different culture from our own but with whom we have a dialogue and from whom we know we can learn a thing or two as they, equally, know they can learn a thing or two from us.

Little did I know when I first put my foot in Bonou exactly eight years ago this January that **the education of girls** was going to be such an important cause for me, was going to take so much of my time and my energy, demand so much work and involve so many people! Eight years on, I am more than ever passionately committed and totally convinced that this **IS** indeed one of the best ways to help the development of Benin and of Africa more generally. And so are my "companions of struggle" (as it sometimes felt very much like a struggle!) e.g. my dear friends within the FOB committee and of course Dominique and his team without whom we could not have started anything.



Dominique singing with Dangbo children



Women in Bonou dance to welcome visitors

We have gained fascinating insights, ridden the waves of very daunting problems at times and found our way by “doing”, experimenting and listening rather than through applying tested management methods. Indeed what we do *in* Bonou and *for* Bonou is not simply sending money and getting some facts and results through reports and e-mails. The decisions we take are based on conversations, discussions and interactions and yes... arguments as well! and of course on relationships, originally mainly between Dominique and me but also now, increasingly, between the whole of the FOB Committee, the village’s Elders, the girls, the trainers and the parents ... as difficult as they have been!

Rest assured that these original traits which characterise the way we have been working in Bonou will endure but eight years is a long time and we all feel here as well as in Benin that it is time to pause, step back and reflect a little bit as like with every human enterprise, people evolve and move on to other adventures, other interests and other projects and their energy and their focus is not as engaged as it first was. This is actually a good thing and perfectly normal as none of us can stand still but have to embrace change.

And this is precisely what we want to do in Bonou: embrace change and ensure that a necessary evolution takes place in the way we manage the whole project. Volunteering is a vexed issue at the best of time as our Prime Minister knows very well when he tries to promote his “big society” and Benin is no exception: Dominique and Paulin are both passionate about the “cause” and so might other people in Benin but the fact that they both have a relatively secure financial situation allows them, contrary to others, to give a lot of their time for free. It does not mean of course that all people with secure financial situations are prepared to volunteer; we know that from experience, here too! But it remains that the majority of people of Benin cannot afford this “luxury” and Dominique has understandably encountered some difficulty in finding people who are ready and able to commit their time and money to help him. Besides, both him and Paulin (as well as several of us here) are getting busier and busier on other things. So we have come to the conclusion that we need to use some paid people in Benin to help us manage the whole enterprise. In other words we need to “professionalise” the general management of the project if we want to continue giving the best possible education to the girls.

As the Centre is now “cruising along” happily and the mad activity of setting it up has abated somewhat, we also feel that our role is naturally evolving in any case: we don’t need to busy ourselves so much in the detail of everyday work and we feel we should all concentrate much more on the strategic issues and forward planning: for example getting the larger village community to benefit from the Centre expertise through the setting up of “cours communautaires” (community classes) for existing women-artisans or strengthening the girls skills and facilitating better professional development for the trainers. But the very crucial follow-up week-by-week still need to be done, if not by us or Dominique’s team, by somebody else!



The girls doing block-printing making cassava flour...

...and learning hairdressing skills

Of course we had already realised that such a necessary evolution towards employing paid people was on the cards when the paramount issue of proper transparent accounting could not be resolved by the villagers themselves. So for the last 2 and half years or so we have been employing Beninese professional accountants who go to Bonou every month and a lot of previous headaches have disappeared as our Treasurer, Mark can testify! As I explained in previous occasions, it is not that the villagers were dishonest and took the money for themselves (I am absolutely sure that it was not the case) but a written paper trail of every expenses, monthly balance sheets and yearly statements of accounts was not something they were used to doing nor had the know-how nor even understood the necessity for it! However the concept of "accountability to donors" is something that is *slowly* making its way into everybody's consciousness in Bonou! We also of course already employ professional people for the training of the girls in each of the specialities, including a new teacher for "management of micro-enterprises" who has started his classes during the *second* year of the girls' curriculum as we realised that starting during the third year was much too late. We have also paid for the trainers to attend some additional training seminars in the past.

But the new development is that we have now signed a contract with a local NGO with the necessary expertise and credentials in community development, called **Gamadec**, who will take care of overseeing how the girls' curriculum is implemented every week, their progress and difficulties, in what area their curriculum should be strengthened or changed and in what way etc... They will report to us and to Dominique

every 2 months. Gamadec will also take care of the home-economics classes and finally, they will revitalise the follow-up process of the girls from the first cohort, especially brushing up their “management” and accountancy skills which leave a lot to be desired... That task was till now resting on the shoulders of the present “Directrice” but in spite of her best efforts and her total dedication she could not really cope with that task which involves quite a bit of travelling around: she is not only the Directrice of the Centre but also the food-processing trainer and a new mother so following up the former girls as well, proved too much for her.

We therefore hope that the new involvement of Gamadec will allow us and Dominique to be free from having to sort out endless details and that we can instead all concentrate more on the “big picture” e.g. strategic planning and monitoring. For that we intend to create a sort of “Management Board” comprising the FOB Committee + Dominique & his team, who will meet at least once a year but hopefully twice, once in Europe and once in Benin. We have still to work out exactly the details of such an endeavour but once in place, it will hopefully allow us to be more attuned to the changing needs of the girls and of the village because our workload will be lighter and the day-to-day problem-solving will be done by others. We will also hopefully be more able to avoid problems *before* they arise, to resolve more quickly the ones which could not be anticipated and to carefully prepare the handing down of the Centre's responsibility to the village or/and to the local authorities... something which is a long way yet down the line!

So at the end of the year 2011 which started with the inauguration of our last BIG capital project in Bonou, the dormitory block, the result of several years of intensive fund-raising and ended with more distributions of primary school books in Dangbo, we are now entering a new phase, which I am sure, will be as enriching as the previous one but quite different in feel and content!



Patsy distributing primary school books in Dangbo



The new dormitory block in Bonou



Thank you! We love our books!

STORIES FROM THE GRADUATES OF 2010

by Patsy Townsend

I remind myself in writing this piece of the wonderful day we experienced in February 2010, when we attended the ceremony for the 'libération' of the first cohort of Sonagnon girls – their graduation! In the presence of the local king, the priest, many dignitaries and their families, the girls were fêted for their achievements during the three years at Sonagnon; displaying their newly acquired and well-practiced skills, their confidence and their determination. Nearly 2 years on, what have we learnt about their development, their survival out in the 'real' world and their successes?

Here are the stories of some of our graduates:

Marilyse and Rosine - Food-processing and fabric printing

These 2 Sonagnon graduates, Marilyse and Rosine, have set up a small shop together on the main road leading out of Asrossa – a good position to catch passing traffic. This is the longest standing of the girls' ateliers (workshops), set up well over a year ago. During their training they specialised in food processing and fabric printing and these are the products they sell in the shop. The shop is well stocked and the quality of their products is very good. We stopped to buy some fabric on our way through during our last visit. They are doing well and are supported by their families in their enterprise.



Marilyse and Rosine – proudly showing off their 'atelier'

Clémentine – Coiffeuse (hairstylist)

Clémentine is hairstyling and selling and buying hair products. She originally set up from home receiving a few clients there before saving enough money to rent (with support from her older brother) a small shop in Asrossa in November 2011. We are told she did some good business during the recent Christmas and New Year period. She feels she has raised her skills level since establishing her business and has demonstrated her tenacity to persevere and to save in order to establish her own 'atelier'. She is being supported to improve her financial management skills by Madame Kouti (Elizabeth), a member of the follow-up team.

Anne – Couture (sewing)

Anne was married soon after leaving Sonagnon but started work taking in sewing work at home, making outfits for clients. She identified some deficit in the skills she needed and she set about improving these areas. She then became pregnant and did not work for a period until after her baby was born. More recently she has continued to improve her skills and to save money for her workshop; to date she has saved 100,000 CFAS. She has demonstrated some real entrepreneurial skills and is being supported and encouraged in her ambition to set up her own 'atelier' in Affamé about 20 kilometres from Bonou.

Monique – Coiffeuse

Monique has not yet got plans for opening her 'atelier' but nevertheless is continuing to receive her hairstyling clients at home. Competition from other hairstylists is an issue locally and she has aspirations to open her workshop in Ikpinlé, a small commune where her uncle has a shop. She has started to save with this goal in mind.

The others?

Most of them are working but in a more unstructured way and from home, starting small and saving to buy equipment they will need when they do indeed 'launch' their business. 2 or 3 became married and/or pregnant and continue their work and use their skills in providing for their family.

Some of the Issues

- Sustained and effective follow-up: As a member of our follow-up team in Bonou, Paulin commented "The lack of follow-up is a systemic and endemic problem in Africa and one or two years is nothing in the African context; real achievements and profound change take a long time so we do need to provide that support for the girls" Indeed we are determined to provide that as effectively as we can and we trust that the involvement of Gamadec will help greatly in the matter. As part of the 'continuous education in the milieu' the girls are all being encouraged to start traditional forms of savings or 'tontines'. There is also little doubt that the girls who have succeeded, have for the most part had support from their families.

- Lack of assimilation of micro-management techniques: This appears amongst the most common problem among the girls who are currently being supported/mentored by Elizabeth; during their time at Sonagnon they had not fully assimilated or took on board the importance of the management of a small business. They are, almost without exception, failing to use the principles of financial micromanagement they had been taught, nor are they keeping proper accounts and records of their business transactions. With hindsight we have now realised that the micro-management classes needed to be introduced much earlier on in the curriculum and more professionally; this indeed has already happened with the second cohort of girls.
- The actual installation as a 'business person': This is the nub of the problem as there is no concept of starting small; either you start big or not at all and in the case of several of the Sonagnon girls they are waiting, working at home and saving until they feel they can start trading in earnest. It is not unusual for this to take two or three years.
- An expectation that the girls should know everything: The elders have pointed out that the villagers, seeing that the girls have gone to school, think they should know all there is to know in their field and should take care of themselves financially, without the incremental progress and support which are the norm in Europe. This is an ongoing issue that is being further discussed in the workshops we have periodically with the villagers, artisans and elders to shape future developments at the centre.



Dominique inspecting the girls' 'cahiers de gestion' (financial records) - Some 'street' hairdressing in the village



Friends of Bonou and Oxford High School

By Barbara Coyne



Friends of Bonou are extremely fortunate to have a continuing relationship with Oxford High School (OHS) which, in 2004, chose Friends of Bonou as its school charity. We would like to acknowledge and thank the students once again for their generosity. In 2011 a number of fund-raising events organised by various forms in the school, along with the Textiles Department Fashion Show in October raised a significant £734 for our charity. An FOB stall at both the Green Fair (March) and Open evening (October) helped profile the charity within the school community and provided opportunities for conversations about development and development challenges in Benin.



One of the OHS students, Hester Underhill, has recently established a lunch- time club at the school in an effort to raise awareness of FOB and to get the girls more closely involved with the charity....

"The lunch time club I run for Friends of Bonou is attended by a group of wonderfully enthusiastic girls from the lower school and a handful of year 13s. When I suggested the idea of doing an Assembly [about FOB]... they were thrilled and the effort they put into helping me with the

whole presentation was outstanding...They suggested that we find a way of engaging with our audience, and came up with the idea of a short quiz with multi-choice answers. In order to give students some idea of the context [of Bonou], the quiz was on Benin and they were asked to raise their hands to guess the right answer to questions such as "What is the literacy rate in Benin?" and "What is the population of Benin?". We also made a Powerpoint presentation with pictures of girls at the Sonagnon Centre which were particularly popular with the audience. The club's next project is a cake sale, a chance to put their enthusiasm for baking to good use whilst raising money for the charity! It will also be a great way of getting girls from the bottom and top years of the school to work together, something which the club has been successful in doing so far."

It is always a challenge to come up with creative and engaging ways of fund-raising and the girls are hoping to hold a significant event or two in the coming months. Alongside this however, is the important recognition by the OHS girls of the significance of education being made available for young women not much older than themselves in Bonou. As one OHS student has observed, "We share a lot with the Sonagnon students who are determined to succeed and become valuable and respected member of their communities."

Treasurer's Report

By Mark Bale

Over the course of 2011, we have continued to fund the running of our chief project and success, the Sonagnon Centre. As The Friends of Bonou's formal accounts show, this costs some £11,000 a year to run, to which must be added the cost of paying a firm of accountants in Benin for the work that we commission from them.

My report last year mentioned the enormously generous anonymous donation of £28,000 that we received from a single donor, which enabled us to build and pay in full for the dormitory at Sonagnon. In this last year, we have fitted it out, paying about £3,500 in early 2011 for bunk beds and other furniture. Possibly the best £250 or so spent in 2011 was money spent at Laurence's instigation during her visit to Benin in September, on tests for, and vaccinations against, typhoid at Sonagnon. Happily, the outbreak was stopped in its tracks, and all the girls and trainers are well.

Over the course of 2011, we have continued to receive monthly summaries of income and expenditure at Sonagnon, prepared by and provided to us by ExCCA, a firm of accountants in Cotonou, who visit the school regularly, to prepare monthly accounts and to assist the staff at the school in bookkeeping. The accountants' fees are fairly heavy (at nearly £2,000 a year) compared to the other costs of the Sonagnon project, but for the long-term viability of the school, and for us here in the UK to know what is going on so that we can help direct things at a distance, not to mention the long-term willingness of supporters here and in France to continue to give money to The Friends of Bonou, we think it essential that the accountants' work continue. At the time of writing, we are expecting to receive their summary accounts for Sonagnon for 2011, in a few weeks' time.

In 2011, The Friends' income came as usual from a variety of sources: the larger part came in the form of standing orders from committed supporters, and the associated gift-aid tax refunds. The remainder of the funds received came partly from the sale of bags made in Benin, and necklaces made by Laurence here in the UK from beads made in Benin; and partly from irregular but very valuable donations from other supporters. Chief amongst these, and worthy of a special mention, is the Oxford High School, who for some years now have had The Friends of Bonou as their special charity.

Incidentally, I refer above to the formal accounts for The Friends, which are prepared each year to 5th April, and lodged with the Charity Commissioners. These are available for anybody interested, to see on request. If you would like to see them, we can let you have a copy in the post, or as a PDF version. They can also be seen on the Charity Commission's website.

A summary of the main figures from our accounts since our inception in 2003 is given below:

	22.3.03- 12.7.04	13.7.04- 5.4.05	Y/e 5.4.06	Y/e 5.4.07	Y/e 5.4.08	Y/e 5.4.09	Y/e 5.4.10	Y/e 5.4.11	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Donations received	4,564	4,715	3,939	5,914	9,277	6,037	12,843	38,551	85,840
Tax refund		786	821	1,152	1,352	1,313	1,585	9,298	16,307
Grants for dormitory						25,981			25,981
Contributions from Les Amis de Bonou	2,099	718	1,907	2,371	1,630	2,287	2,703	2,584	16,299
Profits from fund- raising activities		1,788	6,357	6,122	28,818	3,971	4,822	6,548	58,426
Administrative expenses (inc. local accountant)	(101)	(538)	(323)	(889)	(687)	(1,308)	(2,614)	(3,503)	(9,963)
Bank deposit interest						60	18	12	90
Profit on exchange					<u>895</u>	<u>1,641</u>	<u>(1,435)</u>	<u>(86)</u>	<u>1,015</u>
Funds available for charitable purposes	6,562	7,469	12,701	14,670	41,285	39,982	17,922	53,404	193,996
Transfers to Benin for development work	<u>6,370</u>	<u>3,618</u>	<u>12,816</u>	<u>13,890</u>	<u>22,266</u>	<u>22,829</u>	<u>48,769</u>	<u>50,149</u>	<u>180,707</u>
Increase/(decrease) in funds	<u>192</u>	<u>3,851</u>	<u>(115)</u>	<u>780</u>	<u>19,019</u>	<u>17,153</u>	<u>(30,847)</u>	<u>3,255</u>	<u>13,288</u>
Funds bought forward		192	4,043	3,928	4,708	23,727	40,880	10,033	
Increase/(decrease)	<u>192</u>	<u>3,851</u>	<u>(115)</u>	<u>780</u>	<u>19,019</u>	<u>17,153</u>	<u>(30,847)</u>	<u>3,255</u>	
Funds carried forward	<u>192</u>	<u>4,043</u>	<u>3,928</u>	<u>4,708</u>	<u>23,727</u>	<u>40,880</u>	<u>10,033</u>	<u>13,288</u>	

This table above shows that up to 5th April 2011, we had paid over for our projects some £180,000 since we started spent as follows:

Restocking of pharmacy	1,000
Building of maternity block in Health Centre	12,779
Building of Sonagnon girls' training centre	14,976
Repair of walkways at Sonagnon	5,161
General repairs at Sonagnon	6,411
Building of library at Dangbo secondary school	22,902
Desks for local secondary school	2,400
Building of dormitory block at Sonagnon	57,286
Furniture for dormitory	3,591
Running costs of Sonagnon, from term 1 2007 to term 1 2011, inc.	44,071
School books	3,711
Football kit for local school	498
Yearly excursions for Sonagnon girls	405
Evaluation of graduating girls	824
Start-up kits for graduating girls, including micro-loans	1,284
Payment for local accounting, and local training courses	3,408
Total	180,707

GET INVOLVED!

As you have just read in the Treasurer's report, we depend for our work on generous donations from Friends and from members of the public who like what they hear or read about us and decide to support us and also on the very successful sale of our extensive range of Fair-Traded products (unique beaded necklaces, bags and purses of all sorts, dolls, aprons, kitchen gloves etc...).

But Friends of Bonou is all and foremost a members' organisation and we would like you to get more directly involved if you can. Here are a few suggestions:

- ☐ I would like to have a sale of FOB products in my home, church, sports club, local group etc. Please send me a "Sale request"
- ☐ I would like a speaker to give a talk in my home, church, sports club, local group etc about Friends of Bonou work and our guiding principles. Please send me a "speaker request"
- ☐ I would like a speaker to give a talk in my home, church, local group etc about the "History and Cultural Significance of West African Glass Beads." Please send me a "speaker request"
- ☐ Please send me information about leaving a legacy to Friends of Bonou in my will
- ☐ I have other ideas and I'd like to tell you! Please do indeed at laurence@lalanne.fsbusiness.co.uk
- ☐ For the moment I would just like to give a donation or set up a standing-order. Please complete the form/forms in the next pages and send them back to us

**THANK YOU FOR CHANGING THE LIVES OF GIRLS
WHO WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE VERY POOR PROSPECTS!**

DONATION FORM

Yes, I want to give The Friends of Bonou £.....

This time ☐

Regularly ☐ by setting up a standing order (Please fill in the form on the next page as well)

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Email

Phone number.....

Please send this form + the GIFT AID declaration below to the FOB Treasurer:

Mr Mark BALE - 106 Staunton Road – Headington - OXFORD OX3 7TN

GIFT AID DECLARATION

I want The Friends of Bonou to treat all donations I have made since 13th July 2004 and all donations I make hereafter as Gift Aid Donations, until I notify otherwise. I am a tax- payer.

Name:..... Address:

..... Date:..... Signature:.....

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

(to be sent to your BANK, not to us!)

To the Manager of.....Bank
 Address.....

Post code.....

My account details are as follows:

Name of Account
 Account number
 Sort code

Please pay the sum of £.....to The Friends of Bonou on the of each month
 commencing on..... and until further notice.

Recipient bank details are as follows:

Name of Account: The Friends of Bonou
 Bank Branch: Lloyds Bank, 87 London Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 9AB
 Sort Code: 30-94-04
 Account Number: 01901663

Signed.....
 Name..... Date