

## Sending letters and gifts

The best thing to do is to send all your letters and parcels direct to our office in Plön or Berlin. To protect the children we open letters and parcels because it is the only way to ensure that the contents are culturally acceptable from a Burkinabé perspective or they are suitable for children and young people. We take every opportunity to forward your letters as quickly as possible to your sponsored child by asking those travelling to Burkina Faso to take the letters with them. To send parcels and gifts we use our container transports which go regularly to Burkina Faso. The time it takes for a container to reach Ouagadougou varies considerably, roughly between 6 and 9 weeks. Despite the time factor this is by far the best and safest way to send Christmas or birthday presents because parcels to Africa frequently go astray when sent by normal post. Our office teams will let you know about deadlines for sending Christmas parcels through the

## Planning a visit?

Many sponsors have visited their children in the orphanages in the past few years. We encourage these visits and we now have the possibility at AMPO to accommodate visitors in simple guest rooms. If you are planning a trip please get in touch. We can provide you with travel tips and further information for your visit. The children are rather shy when meeting their sponsors, but they are happy to show

you where they sleep and take you round the premises. There are specific visiting hours for guests so as to avoid disrupting the daily routine in the orphanages. We would be glad to discuss dates and the best times for you to visit. We hope this answers some of the immediate questions you may have and we will gladly provide further information at any time. Just contact the team at our office:



Tel: 030 - 6416 5504 (Berlin)  
[info@ampo-intl.org](mailto:info@ampo-intl.org)

Wishing you joy and happiness in sponsoring,  
Your AMPO International office team.

## Contact in Burkina Faso

A.M.P.O. Managré Nooma  
Name of the child  
01 BP 3144  
Ouagadougou 01 Burkina Faso  
[orampo@fasonet.bf](mailto:orampo@fasonet.bf)

## Contact in Germany

AMPO International e.V.  
Blücherstraße 41  
10961 Berlin  
[info@ampo-intl.org](mailto:info@ampo-intl.org)

## What you need to know about sponsoring a child through AMPO International:



Dear sponsors and sponsor families,

You want to provide long-term support for a child in Burkina Faso. The reality of everyday life for children in Africa and children in Europe is extremely different and there are many questions some of which you may have asked yourselves already. These guidelines are based on frequently asked questions to facilitate your access to the world of your sponsored child. If you have any further questions we are here to help you. Call our office or send an email.

Your AMPO International team

## How do the AMPO children think and what do they expect?

The AMPO children and indeed the majority of children in Burkina Faso have no idea of the way we live and how we tick. They think we live in some sort of paradise where everyone is immeasurably rich and there is no such thing as poverty and need. Naturally, as sponsors you are also subject to these clichés.

In addition, terms like "give" and "take" have completely different meanings in Burkina Faso as in most countries in West Africa. Giving is the obvious duty of the person who has, and taking or asking is seen as a perfectly natural right and thus free of any negative connotation like brazenness or presumption. Particularly those who are well off have a positive onus of duty to support, especially in material terms, anyone in need who is in any way related to them.

Now just imagine the wishes, demands and expectations that are awakened in a Burkinabé child when it learns that it has a sponsor abroad.

Together with the educators in the orphanages we try of course to match these to reality. Nevertheless it may happen that if a sponsored child is asked what it would like, it could ask for a motor scooter or a trip abroad, just as easily as a ballpoint pen. So please do not promise them anything you may not be able to provide and that includes education abroad or a trip to Europe. Our goal is to enable the children to have a viable future in Burkina Faso and to protect them from disappointment.



## Briefwechsel mit den Kindern

The exchange of letters between you and your sponsored child is a great opportunity for both to get to know each other and to establish a link between two very different worlds. As sponsors you hope no doubt that you can exchange information and find out more about the lives of the children and young people and gain an impression of the individual's personality, living environment and activities. For the children this is often a major challenge. First, French is not the mother tongue of any of the children. The children speak their own native language. French is the official language and is often only learned when a child comes to AMPO and goes to school. Chatting freely, especially in writing, is therefore impossible for most children and they tend to resort to what we regard as stiff platitudes. That is why many of the smaller children attach their own drawings to their letters, which are often more informative about how they see the world than anything they can express in writing.

The educators often help them to write their letters. Writing about feelings and personal thoughts is out of the ordinary and alien to them. One on one verbal communication plays an important social role – not only because many people cannot read or write. Neverthe-



less, receiving letters from sponsors is a great honour for the children and they take great pleasure in responding to them. In addition, in Burkinabé society there is a strict hierarchy that is defined on the basis of criteria such as social standing, age and family circumstances. They are made manifest in corresponding expressions of respect and in behaviour. This means that anything really private is rarely or never expressed in letters.

So, please don't be too disappointed if you "only" receive a rather formal account of the latest trip, the holidays or some celebration in your next letter. From the children's perspective there are often

disappointments if they have to wait months for a reply to the opus they have taken great pains to compose, especially since they find it difficult to write letters. You don't have to reply in French. We will translate your letters to the children and vice versa, if you let us know. We try to send a photo of the child you have sponsored at least once a year for you to see how he / she is developing.



## Christmas and birthday gifts for AMPO children

Our children are always pleased to receive small gifts from their sponsors, which we will gladly pass on for birthdays or Christmas. As a rule all the children are happy when presents arrive, but we have to avoid envy or resentment if some presents are larger than others and so we check and apply the African principle of fair distribution at Christmas. We would recommend that you don't ask the children what they wish for, because this would just add to their expectations which are already fairly high anyway. For the educators in the orphanages it is also difficult if we receive expensive and sought-after presents for some children, like expensive watches, real jewelry or cellphones, when others receive more modest gifts (however well-meant and welcome). Please consider the follow-on costs as well. The children don't have money and so

they cannot buy replacement batteries for instance. So we have come up with a few ideas for presents of different price ranges, but of similar ideal value. Our suggestion is that somewhere in the range of 10 to 20 euros is appropriate for a gift. All kids, young and old, love sweets, biscuits and snacks. But please remember that chocolate melts in the African heat.



### Boys always love:

- Anything to do with football: t-shirts, shorts, shoes, knee-pads, footballs, sports magazines and stickers.
- Circus props: balls, rings, diabolos
- Music CDs
- Textiles: like a nice towel, t-shirts, rain capes, sweatbands, any kind of headgear (baseball capes, hats)
- School stuff: pencils, folders, pencil sharpeners, etc.
- Simple games like cards, ludo, games of skill or books for the appropriate age group, comics in French, teenage magazines, if you can get hold of them.

### Girls always love:

- Coloured hairbands, clasps, beads, ribbons, bows and anything else to adorn their really creative hairstyles
- Bodycare products, shampoo, conditioner, body lotion, wash flannels, nail varnish, brushes, nailfiles, creams
- Costume jewelry, rings, chains, earrings, watches, bracelets, the more bling the better
- Music CDs
- School stuff: pencils, folders, pencil sharpeners, etc.
- Anything for painting and handicrafts
- Women's and teenage magazines
- Textiles: like t-shirts, dresses, headscarves and towels