



# New Horizons

Mali  
Development  
Group  
Annual Report  
2015

[www.malidg.org.uk](http://www.malidg.org.uk)



If you would like any other information about projects, or our work generally, please contact us

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If you would like to help financially:  
MDG cheques should be payable to  
Mali Development Group and sent to:

**The Treasurer**  
26, Emanuel Avenue, London, W3 6JJ

Please ensure that you give us your name and address together with a statement that you want us to treat this and any other donations you make as Gift Aid donations and that you currently pay sufficient Income Tax and/or Capital gains Tax to cover the amounts given.  
You can also access donation forms and membership forms on our web site:  
[www.malidg.org.uk](http://www.malidg.org.uk)

This also gives details of Standing Order arrangements – a great way to help us.  
You can also text a donation of £2, £5 or £10 by texting Mali22 to 70070, for example, Mali22 £5.

If you would like to donate your time and skills please contact the Secretary in the first instance, and he will put you in touch with one of our new working group Coordinators.

#### **Committee members 2013/2014**

Chair	<b>Andy Benson</b>
Vice-Chair	<b>Rob Spivey</b>
Secretary	<b>John Hedge</b>
Treasurer	<b>David Hedge</b>

#### **Working groups and Coordinators:**

Project Work	<b>Luke Hedge</b>
Fundraising	<b>Linda King</b>
Communications	<b>Janice Hedge</b>
Public Affairs	<b>Sam Garbett</b>



# A message from **Andy Benson & Rob Spivey**

Chair and Vice-Chair  
of Mali Development Group



## **Welcome to our 2015 Annual Report: steering a steady course...but changes lie ahead**

Last year's annual report highlighted the pressures on development support of the sort that MDG represents. This year's has to repeat the theme. Cuts to living standards at home, the continued uncertainties of the 'austerity agenda' and the increasing clamour of demands on those who are willing and able to donate has meant that fundraising remains a challenge. Within Mali, the political situation has stabilised but remains fragile and interruptions in international aid persist. And behind all this is the continued rise in global conflict and inequality that is creating such extraordinary events as the siege of the channel tunnel.

Surely the only real answer is a social and economic environment in countries like Mali that offers people there the hope and promise of a decent life. This is why – in our tiny way – we carry on doing what we're doing: supporting with money, and our skills where they are useful, "development on a human scale" through committed and effective voluntary organisations, run by Malians for Malians.

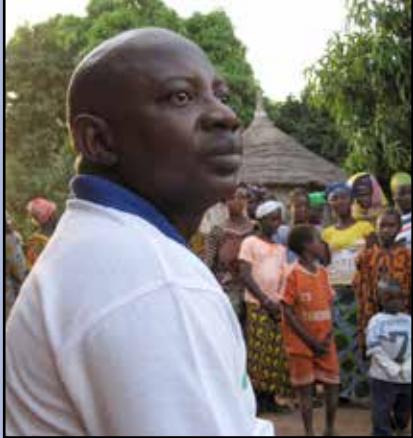
Our principal partnerships remain with Jeunesse et Developpement and Pensons a Demain and you can read about progress within these two organisations in this report. With respect to J&D it is fitting that we should mark here our tribute to Mamadou Kone, joint founder and Director of J&D, who left in April to take up a new post in Sikasso. Kone's contribution to J&D was gigantic and vital and he will be greatly missed. In his place we welcome Nouhoum Haidara, with whom we have already established a warm and effective working relationship.

Tributes are also due to John Hedge, MDG founder and General Secretary for the last 16 years who has also announced his decision to step down. Another hard act to follow, John has not only been the lodestar for MDG's progress and development but he has also been responsible for much of the legwork needed to make it all happen. Life without John at the helm will be a peculiar experience.

To lose two founders in the course of a few months may seem like bad luck or bad planning but we are looking forward to the coming year with anticipation and some confidence. J&D remains in good hands as does Pensons a Demain, steered by the inspirational Bogolan artist Kader Keita. Within MDG, our working groups, their co-ordinators and the main committee are working hard and well. We are about to re-launch our revamped website, the Mali Interest Hub is developing well (and we have passed our 100<sup>th</sup> Mali Song of the Week!) and, at the time of writing, we have our heads down completing a major stage 2 application to Comic Relief which, if successful, will be a game changer for us and for J&D, whose health insurance programme in Yanfolia is the subject of the bid. So much to play for.....

Everyone involved in MDG does so as volunteers and this is important to us. We are pleased to offer a big thanks to all those who have helped us over the last year, including the continued encouragement – financial and otherwise – from our members and supporters. Here and in Mali we continue to make this partnership work and the world a better place for it. And for anyone wishing to join us you will be welcome – please get in touch.

## A message from John Hedge



### **Goodbye Kone and thanks for everything**

We first met Kone in 2002. He had just been appointed as Director at J&D and it was felt that he would benefit from a course in English at a language school in Oxford. He lived with us in Didcot for almost 3 months and as well as becoming amazingly good at English remarkably quickly, he rapidly became an established member of the family - and he still is as far as we are concerned!

Kone was with us during the World Cup and it was soon clear that he was a passionate football fan, and a great admirer of Manchester United. While he was with us we made a trip to Old Trafford and Kone was able to look round the Stadium, something he had always wanted to do. He took part in everything we asked with great commitment and generosity – despite being asked to talk at endless meetings and take part in lots of activities - he was not altogether thrilled about an MDG cycling event in the rain, I remember.



Sue Upton and Kone, 2003

Kone very quickly understood what MDG was about, and when not long afterwards a party of us made the first trip to Bamako and then the long and pretty arduous trip to Manankoro, Kone was on hand, with Sue Upton, to lead the way and help us understand. It was wonderful to see Kone addressing village meetings and explaining who we were and what we were trying to do - the fact that we had to raise the money and how we went about it.

As the relationship went on and we and Kone made further trips to each other's countries, the relationship with J&D developed strongly - based on the openness and straightforward approach which Kone always showed. Linda King remembers the trip when a team went to Togo to meet up with the Toyota funded vehicle which we had obtained for J&D. The idea was that Kone would meet them there, locate the vehicle and drive up to Bamako - in the event, the vehicle was late and a coup occurred in Togo! In a very tense situation Kone made sure that they all got out without harm

Kone was one of the founders of J&D. He and his great friend, Madou Diarra, now J&D's President, went together on scholarships to the Soviet Union - Kone had hoped for a course in Medicine but in the way of those days found that he had been allocated a place as an agronomy student. He and Madou both had to learn Russian from scratch, endured the cold and appalling racism and came back to Mali determined to help the development of their country. When no jobs were available they and others set up J&D as an indigenous NGO and everything went from there.

Kone's stint as Director was a long one – 15 years, and he presided over the growth of an amazing and very committed NGO, which earned the respect of all the communities they worked in as we discovered during our visits. When conflict came to Mali life became very difficult but Kone

and his colleagues persevered, and managed to sustain the organisation even when funding became much more challenging.

Kone continued to study and obtain further qualifications. Earlier this year he went to Burkina Faso to collect his master's Degree. He was then taken on by a Swiss NGO, Helvetas as an Education Programme Coordinator based in Sikasso, the region he knows so well, though he is also managing work in Mopti and Timbuktu.

God bless you Kone for all that you achieved with J&D and all our best wishes for the future with Helvetas. We will certainly stay in touch and MDG members will never forget you.

We know Nou, Kone's successor, very well as he has worked for J&D for a long time and also knows MDG well, so as well as farewell to Kone, a big welcome to Nou. It is pleasing that we have been able to work so closely with Madou and Nou in developing our current Comic Relief bid, so we look forward to the partnership going forward into the future after a successful transition.

# A report from John Hedge

Secretary of Mali Development Group

## J&D and the Yanfolila Mutuelle

We asked members earlier this year to contribute to a special appeal for this vital J&D project. The Mutuelle is a community health insurance scheme to providing the financial security for local people to seek proper help with their health needs.

Within the area, local clinics, and District Referral Centres (small hospitals like the one MDG supported in Kolondieba) provide basic coverage of health care services. But most people have to pay for treatment in Mali, and although costs are low, many people have very little to spare. That leaves many unable to use the service, relying instead on traditional methods or just hoping for the best! Through the Mutuelle, people can save in advance against the time when they need the help of the health service.

We gave you several practical examples, such as Fanta Sidibé.

### Fanta's story

Fanta is from the village of Dalada, situated 25 kilometres from the town of Yanfolila. She is 25 years old and married with 5 children, 4 boys and a girl.

She cultivates just over an acre of land, given to her by her father and on this grows peanuts, which she both sells and uses for the family. She also grows and sells other vegetables.

She has been a member of the savings and credit association in her village since 2010, and she started subscribing to the Mutuelle in 2013.

Before she joined she could not afford things from the dispensary, and instead was using traditional herbal remedies, but these did not work well and she regularly fell ill with malaria. Since joining the Mutuelle things have been much better. As she says:

*'This year I have been to the community health centre in Yanfolila in February and in July because of malaria. My prescription*

*costs were 6330 FCFA (just over £8) and 15850 FCFA (just over £20).'*

She paid herself, from her savings, a total of just over £7 for the two consultations and prescriptions and the Mutuelle paid the rest (just over £21). This has made a huge difference to her access to health services- as she says:

*'My last illness was a severe case of malaria, I arrived at the health clinic in Yanfolila sitting on a moped, almost lying on the driver, exhausted and weak. That day the doctor gave me serum. If I hadn't subscribed to the mutuelle I would not have managed to face all these expenses.'*

### How are things going now with the Mutuelle?

The reasons behind our appeal this year were that previous funders had, despite a very positive external evaluation, decided not to continue funding. J&D came to us and needed urgent help to maintain the scheme, restore local confidence and enable it to become self-sufficient. The generous response of our members and others has enabled J&D to continue supporting and developing the mutuelle. Our strategy has been to use the money you donated to help the project leader Tiori Diarra:

- Build the membership
- Work closely with the health centres
- Develop the project's local links in the 35 villages which the Mutuelle covers, strengthening local committees and supporting village representatives. The project has been further strengthened as our main J&D priority by having our Link Worker, Tanty Samake move to the area to provide training locally.

Tiori Diarra has kept us closely informed of the work being done, and there has been encouraging progress all round. A key priority both for MDG and J&D has also been the development of a major

bid to Comic Relief, which is presently under final consideration. The bid not only covers 3 further years funding of the work with the Mutuelle but major prevention programmes on Ebola and Malaria.

We will continue to keep you informed of progress, but a big thank you to everyone who contributed- it has made progress possible, and we now have fingers and everything else crossed that our bid to Comic Relief succeeds.



Kolondieba Hospital



Ebola Prevention  
Yanfolila



Tanty

## Project Group

### Luke Hedge Coordinator



Tanty Samake, link worker



Young woman learning the art of Bogolan, at Pensons à Demain

It has always been important that the projects funded through MDG are sustainable in the longer term and visits have been undertaken by our link worker Tanty Samake throughout the year to ascertain their legacy. Some of these legacies are highly significant and continue to make a real and important difference to the lives of local people. The school in N'tentou, which was built with MDG support in 2004 now has 145 pupils over three classes. In Kolondieba, where MDG funded the construction of two hospital blocks for the treatment and children and women experiencing high-risk pregnancies, just under 372 women and children were treated in 2014.

MDG has always and will continue to work with communities at a grass roots level. In Lemouroutoumou the establishment of a grain mill by MDG in 2004 allowed women the time to engage in market garden activities, leading to greater income generation and later the establishment of a school for the village. The grain mill in the village of Kambali, also funded by MDG, proved successful and a further three mills have been purchase subsequently and the equivalent of £8000 in profits are currently available for the community.

Although MDG continues to support these smaller projects, much of the current focus of MDGs work over the last year has been on maintaining the "Health Mutuelle" in the Yanfolila region. This project, focussing on ensuring wider access to primary health care and better Ebola and Malaria prevention, is subject to a Comic Relief Bid and this is discussed further in this report.

MDG continues to contribute significantly to the important and unique work that "Pensons à Demain" undertakes with street children in Bamako. Well respected by the Malian Government, which makes its own contribution by paying the Electricity and Water Bills for the project, the focus is on training and educating young people living on the streets of Bamako.

The project continues to work intensively with around 20 children and young people for each intake, almost all of whom are accommodated by the project, and they receive education and tutelage in the Malian art of Bogolan with the internationally respected artist Kader Keita. Pensons à Demain is currently expanding and a new building is being constructed, providing further education and studio space. A particular focus this year in the education of young people has been on Ebola prevention and basic sanitation. The project aims to expand the outreach work that it does with street children and is seeking funding for a vehicle to enable this to happen.

Political difficulties and conflict in Mali do not detract from the significant progress that has been made in terms of development in recent year and it is increasingly important for organisations such as MDG to maintain their involvement.

What is clear is that the work that we do has and will continue to have a lasting impacting upon generations of people in Mali. Over the coming year, using the revamped MDG website, we intend to evidence this more clearly, with greater use of visual information and case studies.

## Public Affairs Group Sam Garbett Coordinator



It has been another turbulent year for Mali. I am very proud of the work the Public Affairs Group has done in response to this and to meet our aim of increasing awareness in the UK of Malian news, politics and culture as well as MDG's project work. Enjoyable though this has been our work has been chiefly concerned with conveying, contextualising and explaining a tragic story. This year civil and military violence became an immediate reality every Malian has to contend with; not just those in the north, or outside Bamako. Ebola struck and threatens, like war, to break out again. But within this there are other stories. With Mali's political, security and economic recovery appearing to stall it has been difficult to balance the obvious successes in other areas of Malian life, particularly in sport and culture. There have been peace agreements also, and epidemics were contained and routed. From here and as a Group, what are the key messages we need to promote? What image of Mali do we want to help portray? What image exists in the minds of Britons already, if at all? And where does MDG's important developmental work fit into all this?

It is has been made abundantly clear in our public affairs that MDG's projects are needed more than ever. To support this, the approach we have taken this year is strike that difficult balance; encourage concern and understanding for Mali by incorporating serious and difficult issues within the experiences that make people adore the country in the first place. This report offers an insight on how we went about making this happen and how we

will expand this into the future. So, with that, it gives me great pleasure to pen my first contribution to the annual report as Public Affairs Coordinator since I took over from Dan Price in 2014. As many of you know, Dan was a tremendous Coordinator and I am sure you are relieved to hear that he continues to do wonderful work for MDG. Since I've stepped up he has often lent me his great strategic mind, vision and attention to detail. I must extend special thanks to him for this.

African music popularity in the UK continues to grow. Mali's phenomenal music and performing arts is therefore the centre-piece of our Public Affairs strategy. On the Mali Interest Hub ([mali-interest-hub.com](http://mali-interest-hub.com)), our 'Mali Song of the Week' (SOTW) feature has been used to introduce a whole range of different aspects of Mali's current affairs. Each week, a topic and song are married to produce a short article. This year the SOTW blog celebrated its 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday, its 100<sup>th</sup> edition and reported from Glastonbury Festival. I strongly recommend you check out the page and tune in each Wednesday for a fun way to stay up to date with everything Mali.

The Mali Interest Hub has also published longer, in-depth pieces on Mali's history and politics, produced by MDG volunteer Jonathan Marriot. One of MDG's key assets is its specialised experience with working in Mali in a focused manner. We recognise that we can provide an important commentary and perspective on Malian affairs, specifically to the English speaking world. As with all organisations, our online presence is increasingly important with presenting this message and our work here is vital to supporting MDG's general aims and objectives, particularly in fundraising.

In addition to his work on the Hub, Jonathan has continued to assist the Honorary Malian Consul to Britain – Mark Saade – in his tireless work to raise the official profile of Mali here in Britain. Jonathan's work has involved administrative support,

event organisation and identifying key UK stakeholders. Over the coming months and years we will maintain this important relationship and build new ones with other organisations. We envisage the Hub having an important role in this and as it gets busier we'd love to have your input too, so please get in touch. Anyone got their perfect 'Mali Song of the Week'?

Looking ahead, we have already set some broad aims for next year. We have been so lucky to work with a range of very talented and dedicated people this year, from University Professor Kevin McDonald to ever-popular Malian band Songhoy Blues, among countless others. We're delighted to be part of this network and are gearing up to play an even more active role in this regard. We're already planning some great events, collaborations and projects for the coming year, so watch this space.

On the whole, we have found that focusing on Mali's cultural assets has made the country more accessible to people living in the UK and places MDG in a stronger position in raising awareness and funds in the digital age. Unknown to most, Africa has well and truly joined the digital age. A 2013 report found that 9 in 10 adults had at least one mobile phone in their household and though internet coverage remains limited, individual Malian's are as active on social media as much as those in any other country. Here, as MDG's public presence changes, there are opportunities for fostering an ever more valuable bond between Britain and Mali.



Toumani and Sidiki Diabate  
(Picture credits - Youri Lenquette)

## Communications Group Janice Hedge Coordinator



We have at last launched our new, redesigned website and it would be great if you could peruse it and let us know what you think of it. It is still a work in progress, and we are hoping to add some more tabs to include a gallery page, shopping and links to other connected sites. If you come across an article or news item elsewhere that you think would be of interest to us, then please email me at [janicehedge@btinternet.com](mailto:janicehedge@btinternet.com) with the link or a copy of the piece with the possibility of uploading it or adding the link. We are always interested in informing our friends and members of Malian news and keen to keep the site up to date and relevant.

**[www.malidg.org.uk](http://www.malidg.org.uk)**

## Fundraising and Finance Group Linda King Coordinator



The general financial situation and the lack of knowledge the public has about Mali and MDG means that fundraising is not always easy. Nevertheless we have had another good year and are very grateful, once again to lots of people who have given their time and talents to help us. Mostly (??!!) they have enjoyed themselves in the process.

There have been 2 big sponsorship events undertaken on our behalf this year. Jess Garbett swam a mile in open water in Ipswich in June and then my 2 younger brothers, Pete and Steve cycled 100 miles through London into Surrey and back in Ride London 100. The 3 of them raised around £2800 altogether! Pretty amazing!

There are some other people making significant contributions. The group that turn up 3 times a year on a Saturday evening to take down the staging at Dorchester Abbey and replaces the choir stalls bring in £750 a year. Our Mali Development Group Catering Corps is gaining a reputation for putting on a good spread and being efficient organisers of a variety of events. We started out offering catering to anyone booking the wonderful village hall in Stadhampton (Oxon) but have also provided food at other venues. The largest event we have managed was for 100. Since the last annual report the Catering Corps has raised about £6000. The annual cricket match against the Bank of Montreal is a really good fundraiser provided we can keep the rain away. Around Christmas time we can sell cards, gifts, mincemeat, Christmas puddings and other items in various markets. A local Ramblers group made £450 on a race night which they gave to us and our members donated £1400 to us from their winter fuel allowances. For the second year a group has acted as car parking attendants at a steam rally in return for a donation to MDG. In addition to all of this we have regular income from a small number of standing orders. This is very welcome as it is regular and dependable. For all our other fundraising, we plan as well as we can and then cross our fingers that it will be successful.

If you have any suggestions for other things we might do for money, you would like to help, or book the services of the Catering Corps, then please contact linda.king@malidg.org.uk



Jess Garbett



Pete and Steve

# Financial Report

## David Hedge

Mali Development Group Treasurer



### Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015

The charity met its financial objectives during the financial year whilst adhering to regulatory requirements, including the maintenance of minimum financial resources. Annual accounts are reviewed by an Independent Examiner who we are pleased to say has agreed to continue in this role on a voluntary basis.

MDG, as a volunteer based charity, has been highly successfully having received approximately £630,000 since inception in 2001.

### Income

Gross income for the latest financial year rose 11%, compared with the prior year, to a total of £42,791. This reflected a 19% advance in revenue from donations and subscriptions to £32,879. As in prior years, this included regular member payments plus all individual, corporate and trust donations.

A considerable element of donation activity was focused on the vital Mutuelle appeal relating to the community health insurance scheme being developed by Jeunesse et Développement (J & D) in southern Mali. This appeal was highly successful and funds raised, including an allowance for Gift Aid refunds, amounted to approximately £11,000. Many people made vital contributions including John and Gill Hedge (£2,935), Just Trust (£3,000) and Nick Hards (£1,000) whilst further funds are expected from the appeal. As mentioned elsewhere, it is hoped that future development of the project will be supported by a substantial bid for 3 years funding to Comic Relief.

The partnership with J & D benefited from continued assistance from various companies and agencies including Just Trust, Ramboll UK Ltd. and the Creative Agency, Brothers & Sisters. As projected, funding for the J&D Reproductive Health programme ceased during 2014, having

operated for over 10 years, benefiting in the last four years by generous funding from the Guildford Academic Associates Trust.

The partnership with Kader Keita's organisation, Penseons a Demain (PAD), received funding including a highly valuable £8,500 from The Patsy Wood Trust, a £1,000 contribution from Just Trust and continued generous financing from St Helen's Church PCC, Abingdon (£1,250 annually for 2014/16).

We are grateful to all regular donors, both individual and organisations. Continuing commitments and assistance from organisations like the companies already mentioned plus Trusts and Foundations are most helpful in underpinning our work and giving a strong foundation for our own fundraising activities.

Fund raising produced a 32% rise in annual income to £6,103 with the diverse activities noted elsewhere in this Report and activities were very efficiently coordinated and managed by Linda King. Revenue included the benefit of Bank of Montreal's continued valuable and generous sponsorship of another summer cricket match where overall receipts for MDG exceeded £1,200.

Gift Aid tax refunds amounted to a slightly lower £3,447 and the benefit received from these refundable contributions is very important. We work hard to be as efficient as possible in claiming Gift Aid, as it constitutes a useful element of annual income.

### Expenditure

Outgoings amounted to £45,970 in 2014/15 and this was principally comprised of quarterly Malian transfers to meet agreed funding needs in accordance with Work Plan priorities. Those directed to J & D represented 64% of this total with 30% transferred to PAD.



# Financial Report

## David Hedge

(continued)

MDG's other costs and overheads, such as secretarial expenses and bank transfer charges plus expenses related to public liability insurance and printing, are modest in line with the charity's volunteer identity. They accounted for below 6% of income.

Outgoings are subject to approval by the Executive Committee of MDG and, as indicated above, they involve on-going dialogue with partnerships.

Transfers are made to J&D and PAD on a quarterly basis, normally to coincide with the Malian Calendar Financial Year of January to December. MDG receives regular progress reports from both organisations and funding priorities can be adjusted based upon both feedback and new information.

### The Current Financial Year (four months in 2014/2015)

The initial 4 months of fiscal 2015/16 reveal income of £12,680.

This included a Gift Aid tax refund of £2,823.40 with regard to income generated in the seven months to 31 March 2015. A £1,400.00 contribution from the office of the Sudbury Mayor, generously made via Rob Spivey.

Various Fund Raising activities, for example the £860 emanating from a Quiz and Raffle.

Monies received for the Mutuelle appeal, including £1,000 from Penny Waterhouse. £500 transfers received from both Andy Benson and the Franklin Trust.

Outgoings continued to be predominantly in respect of quarterly transfers to J&D and MACH and this will continue in line with regular and project requirements.

However, depending upon the outcome of the Comic Relief bid relative to the Mutuelle project, it is anticipated that this

part of the charity's activities will become crucially important and MDG will need to become fully focused upon such involvement, including extensive monitoring, and liaison with Comic Relief.

MDG remains focused on developments within this area and upon the progress of relevant projects during the current uncertain times. We continue to work closely with partners, and recognise that our on-going support is more important than ever in these very challenging times for Mali.

The charity's total bank current and savings account balances, as at 31 July 2015, amounted to approximately £26,000. Funds are held via Scottish Widows Bank and Virgin Money for savings and Lloyds Bank for operating and deposit purposes.

## Tributes to John

"I remember John asking 'Well would it be useful to have a small group of supporters in the UK?' and I said that it probably would, which turned out to be something of an understatement! I remember MDG's first amazing visit to Manankoro when I played the role of Debbie the tour guide and we were all a bit nervous of the hunters who came out to welcome us with their unreliable and very loud muskets. John quickly got the hang of making the obligatory speeches and there was certainly a warmth to the visit over and above my other NGO funder encounters villager experiences.

Quite impossible to do justice in a few words to so many years of partnership and support led by John in his unassuming but determined and effective manner, but important to say that MDG has made and continues to make an inestimable difference to J&D, especially in the current political uncertainty.. Many words to describe John – inspiring, dedicated, loyal, but one of the most import things I've learned from him is how to recognise, encourage and value whatever people are doing to help. I try to copy this, but still have a lot to learn! It's an honour, a privilege and a wonderful experience being part of the MDG /J&D partnership, which wouldn't have happened without John, but which I am sure will go on into its next incarnation with him as an elder statesman in the background. Thank you John and thankyou MDG"

Sue

"John got in touch with me when he was thinking about setting up MDG and asked if I'd like to be involved. Having worked with him professionally I knew that it would be great fun, interesting and rewarding, and it has been! What a great organisation he founded. Thank you".

Linda

"Proud to have been involved with MDG all these years, proud to be your sister-in-law. Thank you."

Janice

"John has been a great inspiration and a wonderful example to follow, from the day he founded the charity with such high and achievable aims. His tireless and imaginative work to help those in Mali has been truly life-changing for so many people and his time as Secretary of MDG will be remembered with great fondness. In every respect he is and always has been a good friend as well as my older brother.

Cheers".

David

"Thoughtful, persuasive, informed, committed, strategic, political, practical and very, very tall .... John is in all respects a BIG MAN! It has been a great pleasure to work with him inside and outside of MDG".

Andy

"Thank you for giving me an opportunity to take part in this great initiative related to John. I am so sorry I do not have the possibility to tell more about this great person, who is John, but I will just talk with my heart. For me, John is not only an MDG member or a British Citizen, he is as a father to me who at any time, any moment is ready to invest himself and all his resources in order to help others individually or as a group, a community, a village and then, why not a country? Today, if it was up to me, I would give him the status of Malian, and citizenship to all the supported communities.

I am sad about John's decision, even though it is a real need, but I am confident that he will never be far from our day to day development action as he is such a great part of it. Dear dad John, thank you for different support, your different advice, your different contributions to my professional career. I will never forget all the good actions you have contributed to J&D's development, for Malian community development and for my own development as well. Rest well after so long and for all the good works you have done".

Kone

"Pendant les 15 années (2001 à 2015) de partenariat entre MDG et J&D, John est un responsable exemplaire de part ses compétences relationnelles avec J&D qui s'explique par sa ponctualité dans les échanges partenariaux par emails. Aussi il a un savoir faire et un esprit de franchise, de respect, d'analyse, de compréhension, de persévérance et de réception dans son travail avec J&D. plein de succès à John HEDGE dans son rôle de secrétaire général de MDG et vive le partenariat de J&D et de MDG".

Tanty

"John Hedge: The body of a second row forward rugby player, with a heart of gold, prodigious mind, listening ears, compassionate eyes, voice of wisdom, stamina of a horse, nimble footed – I kid you not! (I must be one of the few people who have seen him Morris Dancing!) and very dear friend. If he was a tree, he'd be an Oak - and I'd hug him".

Tim

"John, it's been a privilege to work alongside you at MDG. A man of vision with an eye for the achievable, you have steered us through thus far. You remain both an inspiration and a role model. Love Pat".

"The term MDG Secretary does not do justice to the work that John has done since he founded MDG some 15 years ago. To me he has been a colossus in every sense of the word. He has provided the spirit, vision, inspiration and leadership to the organisation. Primarily it has been his drive and energy that has enabled MDG to become the remarkable support that it is today, helping some of the most impoverished communities in Mali.

He has helped communities overcome adversity through diligently creating any number of opportunities with partners in Mali. Of the many projects John has championed I think those involving water are a lasting legacy and symbolic of all he represents. Water is essential to

sustaining life and growth and I think it is very fitting that he has in effect acted as a conduit to carry the promise of a better life to rural communities in West Africa. An uplifting example of altruism at its best - Thank you John!"

Ray.

"I have had the privilege of knowing John long before MDG's inception. He and Gill have been great friends and hugely supportive to me personally over the years. One of the wonderful aspects of John is how he encourages people to be the best they can be. In 2003 when the first trip to Mali was being planned, I said 'you will have to take a photographer' to which he replied 'You are the photographer Andrea'. It was this one comment that made me pack my bags and go on an extraordinary trip with MDG to meet some wonderful people, both within J&D and in the organisations that we visited and learn a little about a very special country".

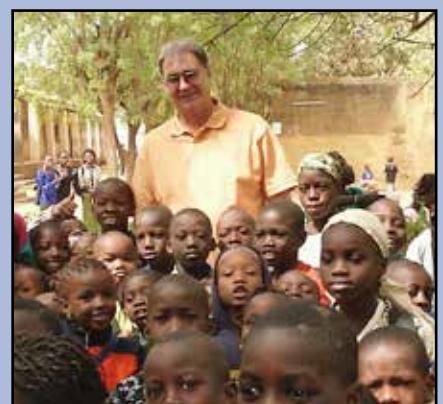
Andrea

"John is one of the most warm and cheering people I have ever met. For as long as he is associated with the charity he will attract people to it and with his kindness and humour will encourage great things from them."

Sam

Thanks John for all your exceptional work for MDG and for the help you've given to me personally to understand what things are about. You'll be a hard act to follow.

Rob





**Mali  
Development Group**

[www.malidg.org.uk](http://www.malidg.org.uk)

Charity number: 1088140

