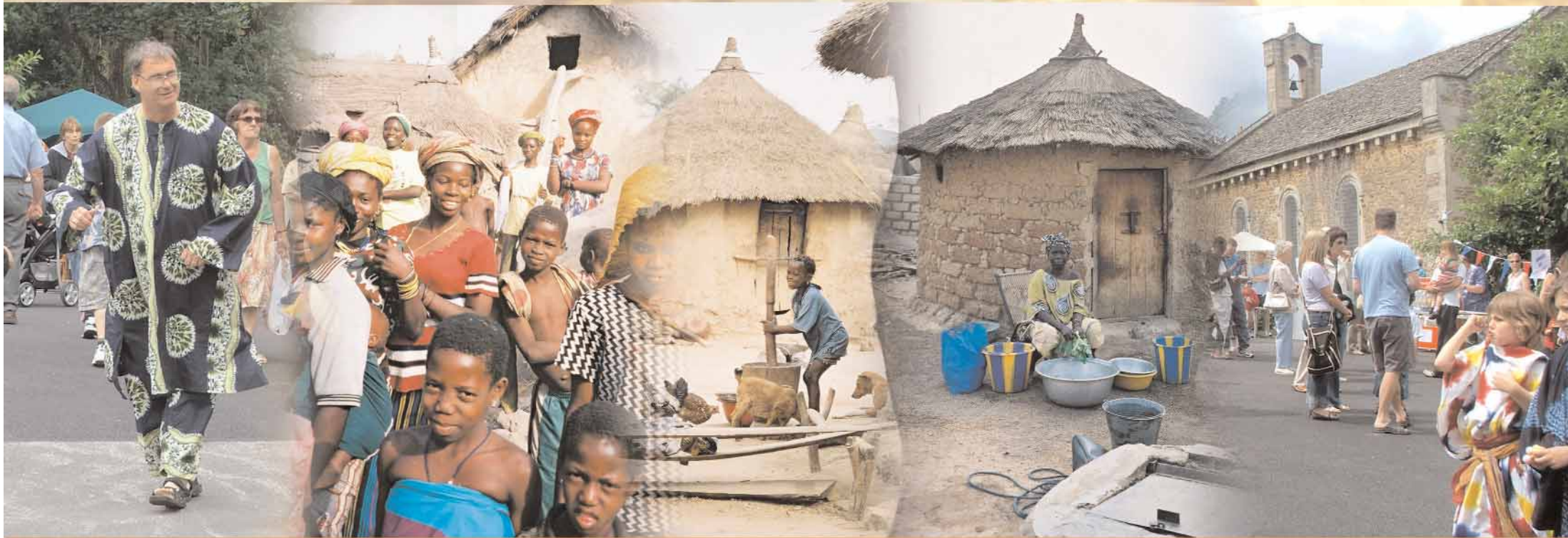


MALI DEVELOPMENT GROUP



Registered Charity 1088140



ANNUAL REPORT 2003/4

A Letter from the Chair Laurence Lalanne-Devlin

Dear members and supporters,



It seems only a few weeks ago that we were all assembled in the sunshine in Linda and Kenís garden for last yearís AGM! 2003/4 has been an effective and busy year with many achievements, which include:

- We have equipped our partners Jeunesse et DÈveloppement with computers.
- The Ntentou School at Koulouramini has been built, and the local people have been so encouraged by the work that they have themselves contributed the building of an extra classroom.
- We have continued to support the Manankoro project, with medical equipment and other practical support.
- We have funded football tournaments for young people in Bamako, enabling a good deal of health promotion work to be done in the process.
- We have obtained funding to set up the J and D peer educator Health programme for young people in Bamako.
- More and more kids here and in Bamako are learning about their very different lives thanks to our School Link projects. We have used disposable cameras, exchanged paintings and strengthened our contacts through the work of J and D volunteers.
- We have continued to support a horticultural training project at the Bolle Detention Centre, and are working on professional links for Bolle staff with U.K groups.

These personal and friendly contacts have deepened our relationship with Mahamadou Kone Director of J and D, and his staff, but have also helped our members in England to have a direct and personal stake in tackling issues of poverty, and the effects of unjust subsidies and inadequate Aid.

This year our Manankoro Womenís Project is the chosen cause for Kennington Overseas Aid. It has been a great pleasure for us to work with Kennington , who have mounted a fantastically varied range of fund raising activities. All this work, as well as involving large numbers of local people in learning about Mali and the Manankoro villages will raise sufficient money to make a huge difference to women in the 40 Manankoro villages.

Having received money from Truckfest, the highly successful Steventon based music festival last year we have been very privileged this year to become one of its major beneficiaries. This is a particular pleasure both because the festival attracts large numbers of young people, and because music provides one of the really strong cultural bonds between Mali and the U.K.

Our networking with other organisations has progressed in the last year. We are especially grateful to those larger organisations- ActionAid, International Service and the Methodist Relief and Development Fund- who work with

Jeunesse et Développement but also provide us, as a small and elearning organisation with advice, support and affirmation.

A particular feature of MDG's work so far has been its links with Criminal Justice in the U.K, as shown in our work with Thames Valley Probation area, the Oxfordshire Youth Offending Team, and financial contributions from prisons. As well as connecting effectively with our support for Bolle, this approach has enabled many people who normally feel marginalized from development work to make a real contribution.

This work is currently making a big step forward in our In I Che project, as our recently acquired Toyota Landcruiser is being prepared by the trainees at the Toyota Workshop in Aylesbury Young Offenders Institution, prior to Linda King and her team delivering it to Mali early in 2005. Linda writes about In I Che later in this report but I want here to acknowledge the massive support which Toyota U.K have given us.

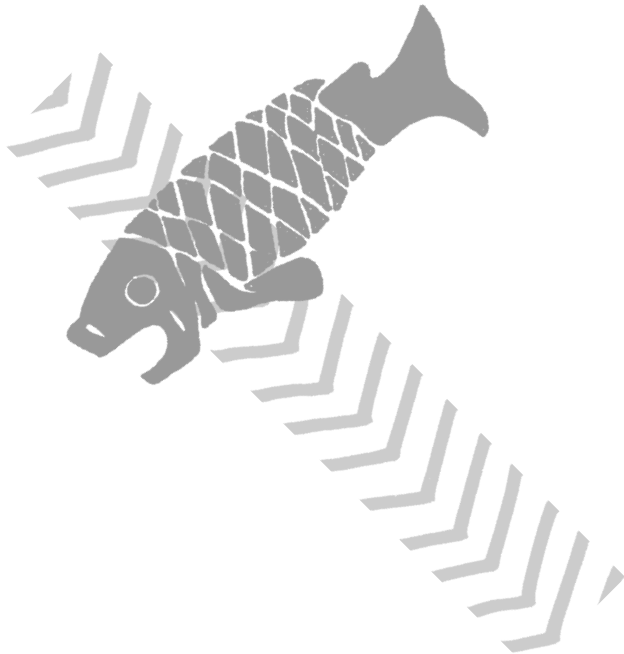
We continue to work closely with Friends of Mali, and will be collaborating with them on the planned tour by Kader Keita, the distinguished Bogolan artist in 2005. Sarah Castle and her FOM colleagues have made a major contribution over the last year to promoting awareness of Mali's fantastic film, art and musical life. We have also kept up our links with Mali Welfare Association who do so much to promote fellowship among the Malian community in the U.K.

Special thanks are due to all my committee colleagues. They have all worked extremely hard in the past 12 months. Particular thanks are due to John Hedge, our Secretary for his vision and determination in developing the organisation.

Mali Development Group came into being because Sue Upton of J and D wanted to see if an English link could be set up to support the work in Mali. Her advice and support has kept us going throughout, and we want to recognise her tremendous contribution now that she has moved to a new post with World Education in Mali. It's good to know that she will remain on the management committee of J and D.

Much is written about inadequate partnership between North and South. I feel that in our small way, we are involved in a real and empowering partnership: It recognizes that people in the South know better than us what they need; facilitates the achievement of these development goals by giving the right amount of money at the right time and not 'drowning' their capacities; increases the cooperation gradually and in close consultation, and last but not least, maintains personal friendly contacts to counteract the potentially erosive influence of money. I am confident that the next 12 months will bring exciting new developments in our partnership with J& D and I sincerely hope that you will all want to continue to be part of it, and thank you for all that you have contributed so far.

Laurence LALANNE-DEVLIN



A Message from Mahamadou Kone, Director of Jeunesse et Développement

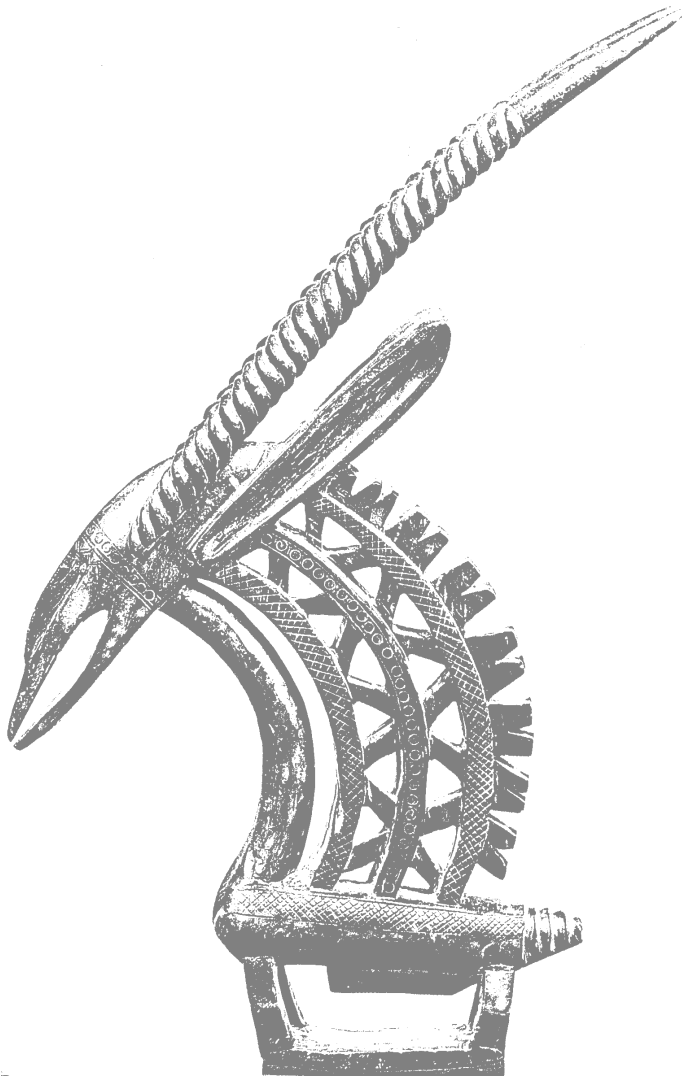
Greetings and best wishes to everyone in Mali Development Group. The partnership is based on both mutual respect and friendship. The work of Mali Development Group has made a major practical contribution to the programmes of Jeunesse et Développement, but also of real importance to us is the support and encouragement from our friends in England.

The work both in Manankoro and Bamako has benefited greatly from your efforts. What all the fund raising activities represent are solid achievements like the school at Ntentou, where the local community was so inspired by the new buildings that they have between them managed to add an extra classroom. We have just finished the second annual football tournament for young people in Bamako, also supported by MDG- this event enables us to reach many young people with vital health information.

MDG funding will now enable us to carry out a major peer education programme on reproductive health in Bamako, and the funding of a Link Worker in our Bamako team to support the partnership with MDG will also help us continue our work with young volunteers.

In October we will welcome Andy Benson and planning will start on the next J and D/MDG work plan. In January we will welcome Linda King and her team with the much needed new vehicle!

With many thanks for all that you do, and may the partnership and friendship with MDG go from strength to strength in the coming year.





Mali Development Group has two patrons. Violet Diallo M.B.E lives in Bamako, and for many years worked within the Foreign Office on cultural links between Mali and the U.K. Eric Ward has been a supporter from M.D.G's beginnings and is the main sponsor of the In I Che project. We asked Violet to send us her views about Mali, and how MDG fits into the work of J and D. Eric too has sent us a message, and we thank them both for all their support.

Violet

Living in Mali is like being at the centre of a soap opera. There are so many strands of the story going on simultaneously, it sometimes feels as though the scriptwriters have gone mad. What are we into this week, is it the threat of locusts eating half (at least) of the crops in the most vulnerable areas of the country? Or the intricate saga of decentralisation of administrative and financial responsibility for health and schools to local authorities who are still finding their feet, if not their chairs in a series of new town halls surrounded by the rainy season's mud and exuberant grasses? Or is it the fallout of the seemingly inextricable problems in neighbouring CÔte d'Ivoire which everyone is convinced has unfurled a wave of criminality on the roads taken by the most sought-after vehicles and cargo? No, for most people, life in Mali is still the hard routine of tending crops of maize, millet, rice and peanuts in the fields in the countryside. There is a great deal of mud at the moment because of the rains, but who minds the mud when there is a harvest to look forward to? In town life continues as usual, the market, the office - where everybody seems to be enjoying fistfuls of the first boiled peanuts of the current crop, and the endless cups of tea passed around.

As you all know there is so much to do in Mali that a group like MDG readily finds its friends. Whether it is through the partnership with Jeunesse et Développement; work with the Centre de Bollé for young offenders, or helping UK students and young professionals gain experience in Mali, the interest of the group in Oxford is important. As you also know, Mali comes far down the list of countries in the UN's league tables of development indicators and once you are in this situation it is very hard to claw your way out. Working on a small and practical level to encourage Malian development expresses the concern and support that are needed every bit as much as the huge-scale institutional cooperation that is needed to build roads, or overhaul ailing health and school systems.

It has been a pleasure to know MDG and a delight to be invited to be associated with the group. I look forward to seeing more visitors in the near future, and to be able to wish all of you, "In I Che!"

And Eric sends this message:

It is refreshing to see a charity that has so many enthusiastic people working for it. The money goes directly to where its needed without waste and the projects have been identified by local people as what they need. Congratulations to everyone involved with M.D.G.

Alphabet of help



Fundraising

Thanks to everyone who has contributed in any way in the last year. If we take Kennington Overseas Aid and Truckfest into account alongside our own programme of events we have had a whole alphabet of help:

- A** is for acting- Offenbach and Orpheus at Kennington.
- B** is for Bogolan workshop at last year's Tipi weekend, and Bootfairs as well.
- C** is cards designed by Andrea McLintic and Heather Bolitho.
- D** is for Drumming and money from SistaSlap for CD sales.
- E** is for Exhibitions and Photo displays.
- F** is for 5p pieces collected in bottles.
- G** is for Gift Aid- make sure you always sign the form!
- H** is for House Parties given by members.
- I** is for invitations to speak at churches and other groups.
- J** is for joining up new members.
- K** is for Kennington and all they have done.
- L** is for Linda our fundraising expert!
- M** is for Music- Offenbach, Barbershop, Cheese graters and Penny Swales.
- N** is for Newsletters.
- O** is for Online and giving through Charity Days on the internet.
- P** is for Pints and the trip round Hook Norton.
- Q** is for Quiz and a repeat planned for the New Year.
- R** is for Rowing and Laurence's marathon achievement on the rowing machine.
- S** is for all the Sponsorship she got.
- T** is for Truckfest, Toyota and Tipis.
- U** is for unusual prizes for raffles.
- V** is for volunteers who make everything happen!
- W** is for walking in Benson and Shipton, and wine and cheese as well.
- X** is for xceptionally generous standing orders!
- Y** is for Young People in schools who have given money and support.
- Z** is for the zoology and veterinary books donated for use in Mali!

We are keen to have as many events and activities as possible. If you would like to help in events or would like to organise something yourself, all contributions are welcome.



A message from the Chair of Kennington Overseas Aid.

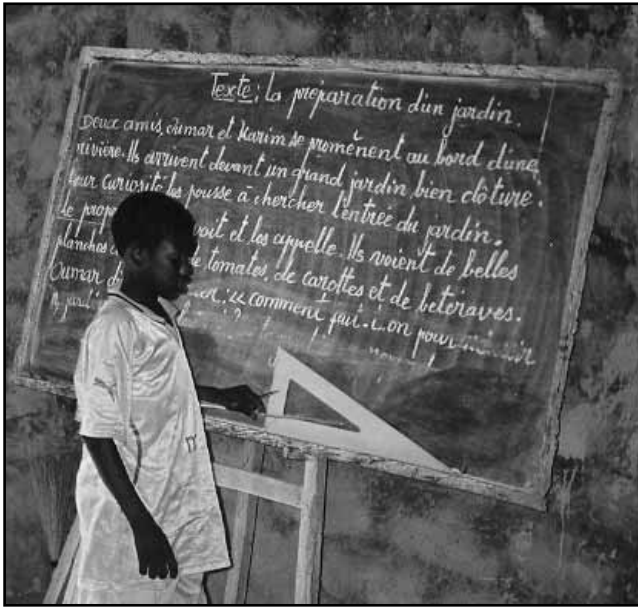
Kennington Overseas Aid is a village fund-raising organisation established 35 years ago to help those in the developing world less fortunate than ourselves. Each year a public meeting chooses the project and in 2004 the MDG proposal was overwhelmingly chosen. The Manankoro Women's Project aims to improve the standard of living of the people of the region by enhancing the status and economic power of women. This is exactly the kind of project that the people of Kennington like to support, so our fund raising has gone well, and at the time of writing we are on track at least to equal last year's record total.

This year's activities have been particularly memorable to those organising events because of the close support we have had from the MDG organisation in providing information, literature and displays about the project, and in support of individual events, often as helpers.

We look forward to hearing about the progress of development in the Manankoro region in years to come, hoping that the seed that we are helping MDG to sow will bear fruit by providing the means to enable the Manankoro people to help themselves to improve their quality of life.

Clive Rodgers





Education Links

This year has seen us establish links between the Sangare primary school in Bamako and three primary schools in Bristol, Didcot and West London.

Sangare school has 6 classrooms and caters for approx 418 children aged 6-14yrs. French is the medium of teaching and in addition to the usual curriculum it specializes in teaching the students about agro-forestry activity and how to protect the environment.

The aim of the link is to develop the awareness of cultural differences and similarities of children in both Bamako and the UK. The challenge for the UK based schools has been how to integrate such work around the demands and requirements of the national curriculum and SATs. However all three of our enthusiastic lead teachers have devised creative 'workaround' solutions and some very exciting developments have occurred. To date we have started to compare and contrast life in Bristol, Dicot and West London with life in Bamako through the exchange of children's drawings and photographs.

MDG has provided for the purchase of disposable cameras so that our partner Sangare school children can take photos of things that are important to them - friends, possessions, family members, pets, livestock, meals, home school etc. Our three UK based schools are doing similar. Compared to UK standards, there is a paucity of resources available in the education system in Mali and therefore MDG also funded the purchase of some display boards for the exchanges received by Sangare School.

Both in Bamako and the UK there has been much excitement and delight generated when a 100 or so drawings and photo's drop through their school letter boxes from somewhere thousands of miles away. The 'oohs' and 'aahs' of curious children are the same on both continents as they compare and contrast the similarities and differences of their childhood worlds.

In addition to the Sangare school links we have also established a partnership with the staff from the Modern Languages Department of Didcot Girls School. They have generously offered their services in the field of translation and we look forward to be able to call upon them for assistance.

We shall be continuing all of this work over the next 12 months and it is through modest initiatives such as this, that the hearts, minds and attitudes of the next generation are shaped; this in turn, offers hope and optimism that a collective sense of responsibility may develop for the future well being of our increasingly global village!

Ray Fishbourne



Criminal Justice Links

During a fact finding trip in 2003, several trustees visited a Palais de Justice and the BollÈ Detention Centre in Bamako and it was through that experience that we could see the value of a criminal justice link.

BollÈ is a young offenders detention centre that caters for between 50-60 prisoners between the ages of 13-18yrs for periods ranging from 3-12 months. Most of the children are 'street children' and therefore not eligible for 'family placement' as an alternative to a custodial sentence. Family placement is a recently introduced new government policy as a means of reducing the prison population.

We are very grateful to Charlie Damon (a volunteer with J&D) who, in the earlier part of the year, was in regular contact with BollÈ on behalf of both J&D and MDG and did much to establish this link.

At BollÈ there is some adjoining land that the prison is trying to cultivate in order to teach the young people new skills and also to sell the produce commercially, thus enabling the young people to generate income to contribute towards their own release fund. MDG has funded a horticultural training project at the centre but these endeavours are made more difficult due to the fact that there is not a ready supply of water on site. MDG is aiming to fund a solution to this problem by providing a well and pump.

Three prisons have been approached, Latchmere House, Spring Hill and Huntercombe. All the Governors approached have been very interested initially but it is proving difficult to establish any lasting partnerships. An initiative such as this is not core work and despite the efforts of MDG it does require some time and commitment from those within the prison service. It is not surprising, therefore, that we have struggled as we've tried to compete as a priority in the context of severe overcrowding and the daily challenges facing the prison service.

However it is all not gloom and since our last AGM we have received a cheque for £200 from the Governor at Latchmere House, raised from the sale of budgerigars reared at the prison! This was a welcome and generous donation which is going towards the funding of the well and pump at Bolle.

Aylesbury Young Offenders Prison is a key partner in the In I Che Project, referred to elsewhere, and we thank both the Governor and the Area Manager for all the support and help we are receiving with this ambitious venture.

Elsewhere we are looking to develop links with the wider criminal justice system. Our long standing link with National Probation Service Thames Valley continues and we are grateful for the ongoing support of numerous members of staff. An approach has been made to the Oxfordshire Youth Offending Team and we are currently setting up a small project involving young people who are ordered by the courts to undertake some form of reparation. This is likely to involve the sale of self-produced goods, which in turn will generate small donations to MDG projects in Mali. The young people concerned will receive personalized feedback from the recipients in Mali.

The criminal justice system is always a challenging environment in which to work and trying to develop MDG partnerships within it was always going to be tough. However we have had some successes and we intend to continue to explore more potential opportunities in the coming year.

Ray Fishbourne



The In I Che Project

When we were in Mali in 2003 we saw both how bad the roads are once you are outside Bamako and what amazing mechanics the drivers have to be at the side of the road and with very little in the way of tools.

It was very clear that the J& D vehicle would need replacing and so we were not surprised when this project appeared in the business plan we agreed with them. Then Ray Fishbourne suggested it would be good fun to drive a replacement vehicle out to Mali and the idea for the project took off. It is now much bigger than we envisaged.

We contacted Toyota UK who generously located a second hand, left hand drive Landcruiser for us in Germany and brought it back here. It's now at Aylesbury prison where the young offenders there will make it suitable for the Malian temperatures and hopefully fit some additional seats. Toyota has paid for part of the cost of the vehicle and some MDG members keen to be involved in this specific project have donated the rest.

Plans are now being made to get the vehicle to Mali, hopefully travelling early in 2005. Jack Taylor, a film student and one of our members, is filming the whole project. The education staff at Aylesbury Young Offenders Institution have been fantastic and Toyota have been brilliant, as well as our donors to help us buy the vehicle. We will keep members aware of the project's progress in the next few months.

Linda King

Report from the Treasurer

M.D.Gs income in 2003/4 was £18,383.14 and 57% of this came from donations, 22% from fund raising events (22%), 9% from Gift Aid tax refund, membership subscriptions (3%) and card sales (5%). There have been some very generous individual donations whilst fund raising events included revenue raised from the Steventon Festival, a Tipi weekend, courtesy of the Taylor family in Devon, and charitable sponsorship projects arranged by Members. Subscriptions rose in line with an expanding membership.

During the financial year 2002/3 we held and transferred money from ActionAid for Reflect, as a temporary facility until regional arrangements were made through the PAMOJA organisation in Africa. When this money is taken out of the calculations MDG's income this year from all other sources is almost 60% up.

Since the end of the financial year funds in excess of £20,000 have already been received, including funds pledged for the In I Che project, and the planned Peer Educator health programme. With considerable further funding coming to us this year both from Kennington Overseas Aid which will assist the Manankoro Women's Project and from Truckfest, our anticipated income for 2004/5 will show a further considerable rise.

All costs involved in running the organisation, including bank transfers, administrative and communication costs amounted to 3.7% of our income.

Our funding plans for the 3-year period beginning 1st April 2005 will depend on the new business plan, which will be negotiated with our partners this autumn, but we hope that we will with your support be able to steadily increase the work, which M.D. G can do.

Finally I would like to thank John Goolden our Independent Financial Examiner for his work in the last year.

David Hedge

The 2005/7 Work Plan

An agreed work plan is the basis of our method of working in partnership with J and D. It enables J and D to be clear with us about the work they need supporting and the projects they would like us to fund. It also gives us a means of planning ahead. Much of J and D's major project work is funded by larger agencies and this approach means that we can enable extra work to be undertaken in a flexible way as specific need arises. This approach also enables us to take on specific projects which we can keep our members informed about- part of our way of giving members a direct involvement in practical development issues.

These are three examples from our current work plan:

The Manankoro Project receives core funding from the Stromme Foundation in Norway, and the Methodist Relief Fund for the Reflect Education component. We have so far provided health equipment, transport for health workers, teaching materials, and a grain- grinding mill. With the Kennington Overseas Aid money we will help J and D provide a hugely increased programme specifically targeted at women with more mills, support for small business development, and targeted extra health and literacy work.

J and D was beginning development work in Kouroulamini, and the worker identified at an early stage the need for the school to be rebuilt and developed because of the growing population and the very limited facilities. J and D asked us to fund the school, and we have been able to do so.

J and D had piloted a peer educator educational programme in Bamako, focusing on reproductive health, and enabling young people to be reached in a highly effective and involving way. Money ran out and J and D has been able to find the money to enable this important project to continue.

With the help of an adviser and consultant, Andy Benson, who is volunteering with us, we are reviewing the current work plan and beginning discussions for the next 2 year plan, covering 2005/7. Andy will be visiting J and D in October to take this work forward and we will give details of the new work plan in our regular Newsletter.

