



Welcome to our latest MDG Newsletter.

Hello to all our supporters from MDG in our last newsletter of 2018. A short one as we all have our heads down with on-going fundraising and with our partners Pensons à Demain and Jeunesse et Développement, both of whom continue to ply their skills in Bamako and Yanfolila.

I'm pleased to report that we held another successful AGM at the beginning of September, though sadly, again, lost our annual cricket battle with the Bank of Montreal team. But thanks again to them for sponsoring the event. News from the AGM was that your committee was re-elected but the cherry on the cake was the election of three new members to our team – Judith Hartley, Ben Holt and Wilfred Willy. You will see from the brief bios in this newsletter what a wealth of wisdom and experience they will bring to our work and I welcome all three warmly.

As 2019 approaches we are preparing for the year ahead, maintaining continuity but also tackling new challenges. Here in the UK we intend to intensify our programme of grant applications to support work in Mali and take the steps necessary to re-design our website and improve our communications with our members and others by bringing MDG more centrally into the digital world. We also want to explore new ways to bring the wealth of Malian arts and culture to a wider audience in the UK. In Mali, Jeunesse's Mutuelle programme in Yanfolila will be coming to an end; we await the report of an external evaluation of this project. We will need to negotiate a new agreement with J&D about future work priorities and, hopefully, continue to support the further development of Kader Keita's ground-breaking work in Bamako.

We always welcome new interest and involvement. If you would like to know more about where we are now and where we might end up, please do get in touch with me – andy@malidg.org.uk or give me a call on 01284 789216.

Andy Benson
Chair



My name is Wilfred Willey, but all my friends call me Willy. I was born and grew up in Bamako, the capital of Mali. Although I now live and work in London, I regularly visit Mali and maintain a constant connection with the Malian community in the UK. I was the president of the main Malian community organisation

(MCC) for many years. It is while in this role that I came across Mali Development Group (MDG). Via different collaborations, a conference on Mali amongst them, I became an observing member, working on the peripherals and occasionally appearing as a speaker at the AGMs. This led to more involvement and eventually I became a member of the Committee earlier this year.

I've always adhered to the ideals of MDG and its methods of assistance: a bunch of volunteers who put their competence and skills together to empower local populations in Mali to help themselves. I find this extraordinary and I can see the impact this is having on the target areas and the recipients. Many other and bigger charity organisations can certainly learn from this model.

As for me, I am looking forward to getting stuck in and use my connections in the Malian community here in the UK and in Mali to bring another perspective and I hope to be up to the task. There's a lot of new ideas that can be brought in and maybe used to inform the British public more about Mali and raise its profile. The country has been going through some difficult time since 2012, but there are still a lot of opportunities that can be highlighted and used to the benefit of potential investors, business people and Malian people.

I remain optimistic that Mali will find its way out of this crisis though the culture of peace and brotherhood that makes this country truly unique!



I first came across the Mali Development Group (MDG) when I was planning a trip to Mali, for the Festival in the Desert near Timbuktu, in 2010. I have long had an interest in travel, world music and international development, so

when I heard about this Festival in such an exotic location, I was hooked. I didn't know anything about the country beforehand, so I contacted MDG for information and advice. My trip to Mali was wonderful, and I found it to be very rich in culture, of every kind, and the people so open. It was fascinating. On returning I was able to keep up my interest in Mali by becoming a volunteer for the MDG, and helping with the Facebook group, Mali Interest Group.

My professional background is in charity finance and administration, having worked for several charities in the UK, and recently, through the services of an organisation called 'Accounting for International Development' experienced a trip to Burundi, Central Africa to support small scale NGOs there, and subsequently worked for Y Care International as Assistant Management Accountant. I am currently working part-time for another London-based environmental charity, supporting NGOs in the Central African region, among others. I speak French and am a member of my local Alliance française.

I am very pleased to join the Committee and look forward to helping MDG continue to work with its long-term partner organisations and projects in Mali, and especially to continue raising the profile of Malian arts, music and culture in the UK.

Judith Hartley



Ben specialises in causing trouble and helping organisations adapt to a changing world. He is currently Co-founder of a disruptive innovation business set up by Cancer Research UK, Britain's largest charity, to unlock radical new ways to address social issues.

He is a technology and communications expert, previously leading CRUK's award-winning Technology Innovation Team. He spent many years in the

humanitarian sector, working around the world with Medecins Sans Frontiers/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) leading on digital transformation and disruption, and as a logistician with the Red Cross.

He has also worked as a journalist and, while chasing a story in West Africa, founded a start-up social enterprise with Malian artists to give kids in poor communities access to art, music and education.

Fundraising

After many really hot days over the summer, the Ride London 100 mile sponsored cycle event took place in rain all day and really unpleasant conditions. Our fearless rider was Susan Handy. Her partner in cycling unfortunately had to pull out due to ill health. Susan is a great chatter and with about 24999 other cyclists around her, the absence of a mate shouldn't be a problem. However Susan reported that the weather was so bad, everyone just had their heads down and got on with peddling. Susan has so far collected more than £1600 in sponsorship money and there is still occasionally money coming in from clients of the hair salon that she runs. Her hefty medal for completing the event hangs up on one of the mirrors where Susan cuts and styles. We are very grateful for Susan's fantastic support for MDG.

Otherwise our fundraising has generally involved catering for different events in the South Oxfordshire area. We are very lucky to have a large group of people happy to cook, serve and wash up to benefit MDG. Thanks to them all for their hard work, generosity and comradeship whilst we work.

Linda King

AFC Sudbury sends kit to Mali

As part of the gradual development of links between Sudbury and Yanfolila the Deputy Mayor and MDG member, Rob Spivey, has been in contact with AFC Sudbury, the town's semi professional football club, who play in the Isthmian League.

The MDG members who went to Yanfolila in January this year learned directly from the mayor of the Commune about the importance of football in developing community links and participation. He had founded a cup competition, and MDG members Sam Garbett and John Hedge were involved in the presentations at the end of the first final.



Sudbury's donation of a full set of first team kit, complete with town badge, as below, will be taken to Mali by Sue Upton this month and Mayor Siddibe will use the kit as a prize for next year's competition.

We hope to keep the link with AFC Sudbury going as part of the town link.

There have already been talks in the library, a school event, and a visit by the Malian Consul in the UK, Mark Saade. The Town Council and the Commune Council in Mali have exchanged information about their respective areas, and recently the Mayor of Sudbury sent a message of good will to her opposite number in Yanfolila.

John Hedge



The team trying on the kit for size!

MALI DEVELOPMENT GROUP v BANK OF MONTREAL Annual T20 Clash

Merton College (Oxford)

SCORECARD:

Bank of Montreal: 126 ALL OUT (2 retirements)

Mali Development Group: 91

Bank of Montreal beat Mali Development Group by 35 runs

A winning partnership of Wheeler and Thompson, with many excellent individual performances on both sides, saw Bank of Montreal battle to a triumphant, yet not always comfortable, victory at Merton College.

Sam Garbett Reports:



The final scoreboard

Blessed once again with the sunshine of early September, this prestigious and highly-anticipated fixture in the MDG sporting calendar loomed large. With both teams in fine form and high-spirits, it was no surprise both were eyeing victory, MDG potentially for their first in the fixture's history.

Bank of Montreal batting first, the game started slowly, cagey, yet BoM were able to display hints of the batting prowess to come. In a flash, MDG struck in the 7th over taking 3 wickets in as many balls. BoM slumped from 33 – 0 to 33 – 3, wiping out a fine and assured display in the opening exchanges. The new BoM batsmen, visibly rattled, saw their fourth wicket fall a mere 6 balls later. MDG were back in the game.

At least they thought as much. With the mighty Thompson and Wheeler now at the crease, the match-winning partnership was now underway with a rocket launched off to deep point. A flurry of runs, BoM were back in control. Not even MDG Chair Andy "Hurricane" Benson, so prolific with ball in hand at this ground in previous meets, was unable to make inroads. Working well with Wheeler, Thompson found the boundary several times to see BoM march on to a comfortable 82 – 4.

Blackburn stepped up to fill the large vacated boots of the retiring Wheeler, with Thompson finally felled by Neil, whose ball ripped through the stumps to whoops of delight and relief of the onlooking MDG members. Blackburn, partnering with Margets, dealt with mounting MDG pressure. A pair of dropped catches the only blemish on a set of finely fielded overs for MDG restricting gains to 96 – 6.

Chaos swept through the closing overs. A wicket, a dropped catch, and a possibility of a run-out, saw the start of Sandhu's time at the crease begin only as wildly as it ended. Not only were the stumps a wreck, but the Umpire was somehow felled in the mayhem, such was the fury of Chris Tallis bowling.

Tallis bowled Lui in the 19th to leave Captain John Gale the last, but certainly not the least, of the BoM men to face MDG's bowlers. The games' only six coming from Gale in the closing moments to set a final score of 126.

Never a reason to doubt that this could be the game that MDG triumphs, and expert defensive play saw MDG cruise to an early score of 0 – 0 after 12 balls. The situation improved shortly after, with Margets claiming a mere two wickets for a return of 14 runs. MDG needed a hero, which it found in the form of Dan who chalked up a rabble-raising four. Despite being bowled by Sandhu shortly after, the MDG now believed.

Again, this optimism took a knock from a reformed Lui, returning to this ground in colossal form to blast away Chris Tallis who had begun to find some form. With half the innings played, the talismanic Tony Ebdon joined Rob to produce MDG's finest batting of the game. Awe-inspiring sweeps and several boundaries heralded cheers of Rob's "11th over massacre" scoring 17 off 5 balls. BoM's fantastic fielders were suddenly no match for MDG, who were ruing the poor luck of earlier overs. Ebdon walked for a knife-edge lbw decision, to be replaced by James who contributed to the cause with some boundaries of his own. MDG crept up to 71 for 6 with 4 overs of the match remaining.

The MDG challenge was running out a steam, as Rob was caught behind by the BoM wicket-keeper who had put in an impressive display throughout the innings. Neither Hurricane Benson nor Sam Garbett could make sufficient use of the remaining overs, so despite the mighty contributions of Steve in the closing stages MDG had to settle for a valiant score of 91.

The cricket match was preceded by the charity's AGM and lunch whilst the whole day raised about £850 for MDG. Our thanks go to all those who attended and, in particular, to Bank of Montreal for their sponsorship and friendship.