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Participation

Mali
Development
Group
Annual Report
2014



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

John Hedge (Secretary)
50, Friars Street, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10
2AG 01787 311590
john.hedge@malidg.org.uk

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

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	Andy Benson
Vice-Chair	Rob Spivey
Secretary	John Hedge
Treasurer	David Hedge

Working groups and Coordinators:

Project Work	Luke Hedge
Fundraising	Linda King
Communications	Janice Hedge
Public Affairs	Dan Price

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

Chair and Vice-Chair
of Mali Development Group



Welcome to our 2014 Annual Report: 15 years and still on our feet!

2014 marks 15 years of the Mali Development Group and our partnership with Malian voluntary groups working to make a better life for their people. During that time we've laughed and we've cried, celebrated success, coped with disappointment and been forced to come to terms with tragedy. We've been frustrated by the limits to our capacity but, despite this, believe that we have built a model of international development support that is effective, clearly sustainable, inclusive and egalitarian. MDG is a donor organisation – we raise money to support development work in Mali and though the amounts are not huge they are large enough to be significant at their destination. But we are also a support group with developed relationships of friendship and solidarity, of mutual understanding and respect. This not only adds to the enjoyment of being involved, it also brings advantages to the 'business' side, more easily enabling us to be flexible and adaptable in our funding arrangements. We nurture 'trust-based relationships' and, interestingly, there is evidence of mounting interest in this concept amongst the large international aid organisations, keen to avoid the shortcomings of 'performance management frameworks' that have swept the Western world.

Though we work to a model that has much to commend it, the circumstances that surround us remain pretty grim. Within the UK, austerity amidst rising inequality has made fundraising more difficult than ever and our income has

reduced in comparison to previous years. In Mali, the situation remains tense and unpredictable and we hope desperately for better times to arrive. Fortunately the work of our partners is located in areas away from the conflict zone (though the precarious position of displaced people in Bamako remains a concern). Nonetheless, Mamadou Kone, J&D's Director refers to 'tough times' for Malian NGOs and the significance in this situation of sustained long term relationships, as is ours with his organisation.

Despite the circumstances we have stuck to our purpose and have 'kept on keeping on'. In the pages that follow you can read about our work with Jeunesse et Développement, and Pensons à Demain, inspirational and committed work that makes a real difference to the lives of those touched by it. We are proud to be associated with the good people who are making these things happen.

At the same time our 'circle of concern' is wider than our 'circle of influence' and so we have again committed time and energy, through our Public Affairs Group, to the UK government's foreign policy towards Mali, working with Marke Saade, the Malian Honorary Consul to the UK, and using our efforts to promote to the public news of Mali and its extraordinary people and culture. The Mali Interest Hub (<http://www.mali-interest-hub.com/>) is the focus for this (and here you can hear the whole set of Sam Garbett's fantastic 'Mali Song of the Week' collection!).

The theme of this year's report is participation. In the pages that follow, you will find that each area of our work is covered by a Co-ordinator's report. This reflects our new working structure, which has been in place for a year now, and is working really well - extending the number and opportunities for involvement and offering more autonomy in the doing. Everyone involved in MDG does so as volunteers and this is important to us. We could do more if we

had more, so if you're interested to join our merry band please do get in touch. Lastly, we are pleased to offer a big thanks to all those who have helped us get this far, including the continued encouragement – financial and otherwise – from our members and supporters.

A message from **Mamadou Kone**

Director of Jeunesse et Développement



If Mali is to succeed in its efforts to recover its security, economic and political stability, it will be due to the efforts made by various public sector stakeholders, privately and in bilateral and multilateral partnerships. However, when we consider economic recovery as it relates both to productivity and the activities of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) the sad reality is that darkness remains on the horizon. A cry comes from my heart when I consider the disastrous financial state of national NGOs, which were once strong, sometimes very strong, but have now been reduced to a weakened state, on a par with start-up NGOs. When we consider intervention from civil society, and particularly when the NGOs that represent it are comatose, what kind of development for Mali and its communities are we talking about? If the situation does not progress, what will become of the NGOs? Confronted by the specific difficulties of the Mali context, what can be done?

These questions are asked intentionally to call into question the NGOs, but also as an appeal to the Mali state and its development partners. Though Jeunesse et Développement has managed to weather the dramatic consequences of the current crisis up until now, there is no denying that its current financial situation is far from being satisfactory. This is due to the ending of institutional and established financial partnerships with the Stromme Foundation, Oxfam America and in the near future MRDF. A reduction in finance levels is also a reality that partner agencies have had to confront at the same time.

In spite of this, huge efforts are being made by some of J&D's partners to raise levels of support to overcome and address the consequences of economic crisis. Mali Development Group provides a model example for this and cannot be thanked enough for its unwavering engagement and resolve in supporting J&D financially, materially and with knowledge and expertise. I pray to Almighty God that both J&D

and MDG quickly recover economic, organisational and institutional stability, so that they can continue to play a significant role in supporting communities in need, wherever they may be. May God bless the partnership between MDG and J&D and ensure that the future actions of both be successful.

Project Group

Luke Hedge Coordinator

The Project Group links directly with our Malian partners on MDG projects and activities



The project group provides the main link with Mali and is responsible for monitoring the progress of MDG funded projects. As such the group effectively bridges the gap between MDG supporters and the grass roots work that takes place in Mali. This report covers our work over the last year with our two main partners Jeunesse et Développement (J&D), and Pensons à Demain (PAD). Both are longstanding partnerships- in J&D's case since MDG was first established to provide support in 2000.

J&D

The harsh financial realities around the work of J&D have been highlighted by Mamadou Kone in his message, and MDG is clearly regarded not only as a substantial funder of J&D work but as a source of moral support and encouragement. The last year has seen the final stages of our 10-year commitment to the Reproductive Health Peer Education programme. A huge amount has been achieved in that time to help the young people of Commune IV in Bamako help each other over access to advice and information on sexual health, and the provision of contraception. The final months of the project have been devoted to working with the different stakeholders - the young people, schools and health professionals on ensuring an ongoing legacy for the project. J&D plans to facilitate ongoing meetings of the Peer Educators, will maintain access to contraceptives and will sustain contact with the key schools involved. Our warmest best wishes and thanks go to Soumalia Moro the Project Manager, and his colleague Djibi, the lead Facilitator, for all that they have achieved over the years.

MDG funded work at grass roots level continues and prospers. Over the past year this has been most evident in the "Second Step" programme, which supports Women's Savings Groups in the villages of southern Mali in furthering their work for each other and their communities. Projects this year have included both provision of equipment (grain grinding mills) and access to training. We are funding some 4 projects each year, and this is likely to continue as a priority over the next 3 years. Another major priority for J&D is the longstanding need for a new 4x4 vehicle. The MDG Committee has now established a savings fund so that this substantial commitment can be met reasonably quickly. Any support towards achieving this as soon as we can would be really helpful.

Recent months have seen the beginning of the year long link between Sudbury, in Suffolk, and Yanfolila, in the Sikasso region of southern Mali, under the auspices of Rob Spivey's 2014/15 year as Mayor of Sudbury. A good deal of information has already been exchanged and we hope that the year will not only broaden awareness about the realities faced by communities in Mali, but also promote a spirit of solidarity and friendship and mutual understanding.

Pensons à Demain (Let's think about tomorrow)

PAD was founded by the charismatic and renowned artist Kader Keita who works directly with a large number of street children to help them realise their full potential.

The last year has been an eventful one. The continuing disruption in the north has increased the number of displaced children which has put pressure on services, but the project has been able to make very good use of its residential centre and is now to have support from the French town of Angers in building an additional shelter. One of MDG's longer-term aims

has been to help PAD to develop a wider range of funders and a stronger management structure. There has been progress on both in the past year, but we will continue to make this a priority in the coming 12 months. Kader's deputy, Sogodogou has just begun his final year in social work training, funded by MDG and this, too, is contributing to the development of PAD. Everyone in MDG recognizes the enormous contribution which has been made to this partnership by Tim Hewes and it is encouraging that he remains as committed as ever, despite the considerable frustrations over communication which have at times obscured the quality of the work undertaken by PAD. New and more systematic reporting arrangements are now in place.

The Project Group

Over the coming year the Project Group is aiming to further develop its reporting mechanisms with both PAD and J&D, to ensure that MDG funded projects can be better monitored and outcomes can better be communicated to its supporters in the UK. Over the coming year it will be important for the Project Group, in conjunction with all other groups, to actively promote the incredible MDG funded work that takes place in Mali. Another vital message is that despite all the pressures and tensions, work goes on safely and strongly.

To achieve these aims, the Project Group will seek to expand, and volunteers are sought to undertake translation and regular contact work, both written and verbally, with our partners in Mali. The Project Group should respond to Mamadou Kone's cry for help by raising awareness about the special and unique relationship that exists between MDG and its partnership agencies, as a model of good practice to be replicated and celebrated.



Fund Raising Group Linda King Coordinator

The Fundraising Group involves many members in raising money through events and activities

There is a core group of us who come up with ideas and organise events and schemes and then a whole larger bunch that we can call upon to lend a hand with various things as needed. What is great is that it doesn't all fall on one or two people doing most of the work most the time. Some of the skills that people contribute are things that they may do for a living, but there are lots of members and supporters with all sorts of abilities and amounts of time that they are prepared to give to MDG. The list is pretty amazing and so worth going through. In the last year we have had people volunteering to do sponsored events; write bids to trusts and other charities for funds; make pots, cards, edible things, growing bulbs, sewing and knitting items to sell; musical members have sung and played on our behalf; others have devised and organised a quiz, bridge afternoon and Christmas events; artwork has been contributed to publicise events, groups have been paid by other charities to dismantle staging, provide cream teas or act as car park attendants and at any event we've run there are always a band of cooks who will prepare delicious food, run the bar, sell raffle tickets and help clear up afterwards.

This is a remarkable bunch for whose help we are very grateful. We are always looking for more volunteers though so please get in touch if we haven't called upon you so far and you'd like to get involved: linda.king@malidg.org.uk. This could be because you've got some good ideas, could give us some time, or have skills that we haven't used so far, but could be handy.





Communications Group Janice Hedge Coordinator

The Communications Group produces MDG's leaflets and reports as well as managing its web site



This year the Communications Group decided that our first job was to update our leaflet to include new details about Mali and the Malians, a more organised approach about our work with communities, women, children and our partners, and some exciting new photos. We felt that we needed a more visual presence at the functions we attend and went ahead and produced two wonderful pull-up banners which are eye-catching. They both have details of our website, and this led us to our next project - a revamp of the website. And that is where we are today. Our original website is still available, but soon we will replace it with an easy to navigate site which has all our links to various social media sites and interactive hub page. A big thank you to Andrea Hewes for all her creative input in both these projects.



We have an email membership of about 500, who receive communications from us ranging from requests for help, to important updates on the situation in Mali, to invitations to fund raising and social activities. Please get in touch if your email address changes:

janice.hedge@malidg.org.uk

as we would hate it if you missed out on anything!



Public Affairs Group

Dan Price Coordinator

The Public Affairs Group works for better awareness in this country of Malian affairs and culture



This year the public affairs work has focused on increasing people's awareness of Mali beyond what they might have seen in the media the previous year. Our approach has been to look to build on the solid foundations of what was done last year, but in a more sustainable and participatory way.

2013 was an important year for UK-Malian relations. Mali made British headlines, primarily as a result of the conflict and subsequent foreign interventions. This difficult period for the region generated exceptional interest amongst the British public; Mali entered many people's consciousness for the very first time. A key challenge for the Public Affairs team this year was to keep up with this interest by providing a steady flow of accessible and sophisticated information about Mali's recovery, balancing this carefully with our enduring mission to promote and celebrate Mali's culture, society and people.

There are two ongoing barriers to raising awareness and support for Mali, its profile in decision making circles and in the general public who influence them. Our approach has been to create a major opportunity in the former and increase awareness and support in the latter and we are always looking for more ideas on how to do this as effectively as possible.

The most important of these two approaches has been engaging with the general public. The Mali Interest Hub has been publishing weekly songs of the week – all chosen by Sam Garbett. This initiative led by Sam has driven increases in subscribers to the website, and has even attracted the interest of Malian footballers who have appreciated Sam's taste in Malian music. We also added some analysis of what is going on in Mali, and we hope to increase the volume of high quality content in the coming year.

Music has been our main focus in trying to talk to people about Mali and we have

been using the appearance of various Malian musicians in London to attend, set up stalls and directly talk to people about the work we do in Mali. This has been helped by the creation of an events calendar on the Mali Interest Hub which is slowly gaining more interest from a range of venues. We've even been working with Malian bands, with Sam building a strong relationship with rising stars Songhoy Blues.

The other arena that we are trying to operate in is to identify decision makers and organisations who are interested in Mali. Primarily we have been doing this by assisting the Honorary Malian Consul to Britain, Mark Saade, to hold an event focusing on Mali. The aim of this event is to bring together policy makers, business, academics, charities and people who are interested in Mali to participate and strengthen the growing connection between Mali and Britain. We have seen the continuing impact of our work in this area as the Foreign Affairs Select Committee published their report on the inquiry into North West Africa, with our submissions input being referenced throughout the report and informing the recommendation for the Foreign Office.

This has been assisted and accelerated of late with the arrival of a volunteer who we have placed to work inside the consulate with Mark to create this event. Jonathan is currently studying at University College London, and speaks fluent French which has been a great asset to Mark in working to set up this event. Listen out for future news about the event's progress.

In the year ahead we're looking to further develop our online presence, assist in the creation of a successful high profile event talking about Mali and then build on both to increase the numbers of people who are participating in the effort to build a vibrant relationship between Britain and Mali.

Message from Rob Spivey



the Malian Consul in Britain and Kevin McDonald, an expert in Malian culture. Musical Banquet held a concert at the local theatre in aid of MDG and we were able to raise over £300.

In the end, although raising money will be a bonus (and there should be some) the major objective of my year is to raise the profile of Mali in Sudbury and to show that in many ways the Malian people are very similar in their hopes and aspirations to us here in Britain, but unfortunately they have less opportunity to meet them.

Being the Mayor

In May this year I was elected Mayor of Sudbury, a small market town in Suffolk. I have been a Town Councillor since 2011 and after serving a year as Deputy Mayor it seems I had done enough to convince fellow councillors that I should become Mayor.

Of course becoming Mayor is a great honour and the Town Hall displays a list of Mayors going back to the 1300s (including a "John Hedge" in 1598!). So there's a great tradition and I have felt that tradition when attending events as Mayor - about 50 in the first 3 months.

The Mayor has a number of roles. They include being Chairman of the Council where I have to take responsibility for the day-to-day activities of the Council along with the Town Clerk; the Mayor is first citizen of the Town so has to attend many appointments either to open events, chair meetings or represent the town at events in the county - the best one of these was to attend the beating of the retreat at RAF Wattisham where I took the opportunity to have a close look at an Apache helicopter and a fascinating detailed explanation of how it works from an experienced pilot (it must be the boy in me!).

The other area the Mayor can get involved with is to promote and raise money for personal charities. Naturally I have chosen some charities that affect the people of Sudbury, such as Alzheimers, Stroke and Home Start, but I have also been promoting Mali Development Group to raise awareness of Mali in the town.

John Hedge and I have been to talk to the council specifically about how we can raise the profile of Mali in Sudbury and they were able to give us a very positive response. We have identified Yanfolilila as a town of about the same size as Sudbury. Yanfolilila is keen to have an exchange of information too and we have started that process.

We have visited local schools to arrange future talks to the children about Mali; we have met with a local photographer about having a camera exchange (or whatever the latest technology method is!) so that children can exchange photographs and get to know more about each other's life styles.

We have also arranged a series of talks throughout my Mayoral year at the main library in Sudbury and we are hopeful that we can attract speakers like Mark Saade,

Financial Report

David Hedge

Mali Development Group Treasurer



Financial Report for the year ended 31st March 2014

MDG met its financial objectives in the financial year whilst also keeping required records and adhering to regulations 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 successfully received in excess of £600,000 since inception in 2001.

Income

Gross income for the latest financial year amounted to £38,413 and this was achieved within a challenging economic environment. This represented a reduction compared with the prior year although receipts were exceptionally high for that period. Nevertheless, revenue continued to be sufficient for MDG to proceed with work as planned. Information relating to income in the year is summarised as follows:

Total donations and subscriptions amounted to £28,680 and, as in prior years, this included regular member payments plus all individual, corporate and trust donations.

Funding for Jeunesse et Développement (J&D) benefitted from continued support from a number of companies and agencies including Just Trust, Ramboll UK Ltd. and the creative agency, Brothers & Sisters.

Also, the J&D Reproductive Health programme continued to be funded entirely (£15,000 on an annual basis) by the generosity of the Guildford Academic Associates (GAA). GAA have enabled the project to operate for 2 years longer than anticipated, and although MDG's involvement will finally cease in September, J&D

has in recent months developed plans for sustaining key elements of the work into the future.

The partnership with Kader Keita's organisation, Pensons à Demain (PAD) continued to benefit greatly from the involvement and financial support of Tim Hewes. Valuable assistance and contributions also continued from St Helen's Church PCC, Abingdon with the receipt of £1,250 in fiscal 2013/14, as part of a 3-year annual commitment that has recently been renewed for a similar period. Additionally, PAD received a specific grant from Just Trust of £1,000 to assist operations.

Funding for our third partner, Sahel Eco, was in the form of a further award by The Funding Network for £925.00.

We are grateful to all regular donors, both individual and organisations. Continuing commitments and assistance from organisations like the companies already mentioned plus Birchwood Community, Lawful Associates and The Sydney Franklin Deceased Charity Community are particularly helpful in underpinning our work and giving a strong foundation for our own fundraising activities.

Fund raising produced annual income of £4,152 with details noted elsewhere in this Report and activities were efficiently coordinated and managed by Linda King. Revenue included the benefit of Bank of Montreal's valuable and generous sponsorship of another summer cricket match where overall receipts for MDG were approximately £1,150.

Gift Aid tax refunds, increased 37% to £5,161 compared with the prior year as we benefitted from a higher level of refundable contributions. 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 £38,035 in 2013/14 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 62% of this total with 28% transferred to PAD. Also, £1,000 payments were made in respect of both the Sahel Eco partnership and for special aid assistance that was urgently needed and this was distributed via Sue Upton.

MDG's other costs and overheads, such as secretarial expenses, insurance and printing, are modest in line with the charity's 100% volunteer identity. They accounted for below 4% 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 2014/15 reveal income of £14,500.

- This included receipts for PAD of £8,500 from the Patsy Wood Trust and £312.50 from St. Helen's PCC.
- Also, £500 related to the Roger Vere Foundation, over £1,000 from catering for a wedding and more than £300 from a Concert arranged by Rob Spivey in Sudbury.

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

Transfers to Mali this financial year total £14,000 to J&D, including conclusion of Reproductive Health payments, and £7,500 for PAD, including £1,000 for tuition fees.

We believe that our exchange rate management has proved advantageous, since the CFA is tied to the Euro, and our payment timing ensured that we took advantage of this.

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

The charity's total bank current and savings account balances, after the first 4 months of 2014/15, amounted to approximately £27,500. Funds are held via Scottish Widows Bank and Virgin Money for savings and Lloyds Bank for operating purposes.

David Hedge, Treasurer,
Mali Development Group
August 2014



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