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www.malidg.org.uk

From the Chair....

Welcome to our last newsletter of 2015, a year of many changes - some good, some deeply worrying. As I write, we continue to try and understand and come to terms with the implications of the attack on the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako. It is a feature of the chaotic and confused situation in Mali right now that it is not even clear who was responsible for the attack, let alone where it might fit into the immediate future for the security situation in the country. Of course, it is only when there is an attack that touches on western interests that we hear of it here; Malians have to cope with the threat of such violence on a routine basis, especially, but not exclusively, in the north of the country. We hope for peace and stability in Mali in 2016.

When other donors have been withdrawing support from Mali, our strategy within MDG has been the exact opposite, as we feel that continuing practical support to our partners in Mali, and the solidarity that lies behind it, is more important than ever. And in this context, we were delighted to be told by Comic Relief that our funding application for Jeunesse et Développement's mutual health project in Yanfolila has been approved. This major grant - £400,000 over 3 years - will secure the project's future and make a big difference to the availability of health care to people of the area. Our other work with J&D and with Kader Keita's Pensons à Demain will, of course, continue.

If you've already had a look at our 2014 Annual Report you will know that John Hedge, founder and General Secretary of MDG resigned from his position at our AGM in September. There are plenty of fitting tributes to John's huge contribution in that report but it is appropriate for me to repeat here too our thanks to him and our admiration of his skill and commitment.

Lastly, I am truly happy that at our last meeting we were able to co-opt Sue Upton to the MDG Management Committee. Sue - whose work with J&D really started the whole idea of MDG more than 15 years ago - brings incomparable insight and experience that we have already been able to use in the drafting of the Comic Relief bid. Welcome Sue!

Andy Benson
Chair

At the last AGM John Hedge decided that it was time for him to step down as Secretary of MDG. It's the sort of day that you know will come eventually but when it comes, you also realise it will be a big wrench for both sides. In this case the cliché that the leavers' contribution has been immense is absolutely true. John was there at the beginning and has been at the centre of everything that has made MDG what it is. So, as they say, follow that. At least I can say I've been on the committee since 2008 and John's neighbour since 2006 so I have been close to the action!

The big challenge now is managing the Comic Relief money over the next three years. The committee had already been sketching out thoughts on how to manage the Comic Relief bid if it was approved and now that it is we can hit the ground running. It will be an exciting project MDG but I'm sure there will be many helpers and supporters who will help to make it a success.

Rob Spivey
Secretary



Our partner, Jeunesse et Développement, the NGO based in Mali, has recently changed its email address. It is now www.jeunesse-et-developpement.ml. You are also able to access the site via a link from our own website.

I was very honoured to be elected Mayor of Sudbury in May 2014 and some of the duties of that office allows the Mayor to raise money for and promotion of charities they are interested in. I decided that besides supporting 3 local charities I would look to promote a link between Sudbury and Yanfolila in Mali. The two towns are of similar size and there seemed to be a number of opportunities for the cooperation and promotion of Mali in Sudbury.

John Hedge and I set about planning a programme. This included a series of talks at the local library talking about aspects of Malian life and history; talks and concerts at a local church; securing the commitment and support of the local council; organising a photo and letter exchange between a local school and pupils in Yanfolila; organising talks and a Malian art day at the local school.

I'm glad to say that we were able to do good work in all these areas. At one of the library talks we were given a talk by Mark Saade, the Malian consul in the UK and subsequently Kevin McDonald, a Malian expert from the School of African Studies gave a presentation – he also went to the Thomas Gainsborough School (TGS) to give a well-received talk to Year 8 students. The exchange of photos and letters between students at TGS and Yanfolila proved very popular at both ends of the exchange as did the Malian art day at TGS given by expert Bogalan artist Tim Oelman. John Hedge and I spent a day talking to several Year 10 classes about Mali resulting in a wide range of well thought out questions from them.

The talks to the local church were also fruitful and they pledged to donate part of monies raised by them over a year to MDG.

On the whole, John and I felt our promotion work was successful in raising the profile of Mali in Sudbury and for gaining a number of new members (including the likely next Mayor of Sudbury) but also for raising funds. Besides the money raised for the church I was also able to make a donation of £1,400 to the cause. A good base on which to build!

Rob Spivey
Secretary

Finance

Income for the first eight months of the 2015/16 financial year for the charity amounted to nearly £26,000 and it is estimated that, for the full year to 31 March 2016, this is likely be largely unchanged. Donations were strong with steady personal giving plus good contributions from Ramboll UK and Just Trust whilst fund raising came from numerous sources. Also, a gift aid tax refund has contributed to a satisfactory and sound financial position for MDG. During the year to date, quarterly transfers continued to be made by the charity to both J & D and PAD. As from April next year, there has been an amended Gift Aid Declaration requirement and, whilst those in existence

remain valid, we plan on updating some old ones as the new ones are an improvement.

David Hedge
Treasurer.

Finance and Fundraising Group

Our large band of helpers has been very busy since the last newsletter. We are now willing to consider doing anything for money! Our specialities are car parking, stage dismantling and cooking! Our last event was cooking Christmas lunch for 45 members of our local Ramblers group. Due to the generosity and the chefs who donated their ingredients as well as their skills and serving ability this raised £760. There have also been lots of other people who have contributed time, sweat, hard work and cash to support MDG. Several people, Jess Garbett, Steve and Pete Ward have put themselves through gruelling activities to get sponsorship money for us and the gracious cricket players of the Bank of Montreal have again turned out to beat MDG at cricket without it looking too much of a one sided affair. Very many thanks to you all.

If you would like to help from your armchair you could nominate MDG to receive contributions when you use www.easysearch.org.uk as your search engine. Or if you buy on the internet (holidays, insurance, electronics, flights, furniture, books, clothes etc) please go through www.easyfundraising.org.uk and if you nominate MDG we will receive a percentage of the sale with no additional cost to you.

One of our best fundraising events last year was kind donations from some of you of all or part of your winter fuel allowance. If you are able to donate it to MDG we would be very grateful. Our bank details are 30-19-83, 00215663 or if you would prefer to send a cheque payable to Mali Development Group our treasurer is at 26 Emanuel Ave, Acton, London W3 6JJ

Linda King

Public Affairs

It's been a very enjoyable few months for the Public Affairs team at MDG. In October, we were delighted to accept an invitation to the European Premiere of the superb film 'They Will Have to Kill Us First.' The film charts the lives of different Malian musicians through the carnage of extremist Islamic militant takeover of the northern half of their country – banning music in the process.

The film's launch was, naturally, full of emotion, as people from all over the world came together to listen to the musicians' stories of terror, loss and censorship in a stunning documentary. To represent MDG, along with Chair Andy Benson, was a pleasure and a great opportunity to catch up with friends of the charity and Malian rising superstars Songhoy Blues. Their story was central to the film's message of succeeding in exile, with London an impor-

tant place in the band's heart. The event had an excellent atmosphere and was an important chance to meet with many like-minded professionals working in and around Mali.

Progress on developing the MDG website and the Mali Interest Hub are going very well. Spurred by recent events, the need to have the full range of organisations active in Mali connected and working together is ever important. Andy Benson has been leading discussions and Sam Garbett has been looking into options for a retro-fitted Hub. Meanwhile, the Hub celebrated its 100th edition of the Song of the Week in the summer, with Andy Benson choosing a sublime Habib Koite track ripe for the occasion.

Sam Garbett



Sam shares a beer with Songhoy Blues drummer Nathaniel Dembélé in October

Project Group

The success of the Comic Relief Bid can be seen as a validation of the strong partnership that continues to exist between MDG and Jeunesse and Développement. The task of the project group will include the monitoring the work funded through Comic Relief, to ensure that all reporting requirements are met. For an organisation such as MDG, reliant on volunteer contribution, this is quite a big task, so we would welcome offers of support from within our membership group to translate documents, process reports and analyse data.

Work within Pensons à Demain continues successfully, though there has been some difficulties experienced by the organisation in terms of income generation. The Project Group is aiming to work with Kader Keita much closer in future around this issue. MDG continues to fund the staffing costs for this project, which continues to be well regarded in Mali.

In the Annual Report the Project Group spoke about the legacy of MDG and the success of some of the Second Step Projects. The project group will need to ensure that these projects funded through MDG continue to be monitored to build our evidence base. We know that the approach of MDG in partnership with J&D is effective, particularly as it involves high level of consultation with communities at grass roots level, and stronger evidence of our effectiveness will assist us in the future when seeking further funding for the vital and important work that we do.

Luke Hedge



Our New MDG Managing Committee Member

As a newly co-opted member of the MDG committee I'm taking the opportunity to present my credentials! I first visited Mali as an overland traveller in 1980 and returned as a development agent in 1996. After 3 years working with a consortium of Malian organisations I was among those who decided to relaunch the then dormant Jeunesse et Développement. Alongside Koné, the Director, and the management team I supported the evolution of the organisation, which initially focussed on community development in Manankoro and spread progressively to the surrounding districts of Kolondieba, Garolo and more recently Yanfolila.

Another aspect of my work, in collaboration with Mahamadou Cheick Diarra (the current president of J&D) was the introduction of the Reflect approach to social change and adult literacy into francophone Africa, where we began to grow what became Pamoja West Africa, a network that now extends across 13 countries and advocates for resources to enable broad based participation in local and national decision making. In 2005 my J&D funding ran out so I continued as a committee member and moved on to other work in Mali and across Africa, eventually living in a house two doors up from the J&D offices and spending several years as the coordinator of Pamoja West Africa.

The other significant relationship spanning my life in Mali has been with the extraordinary Kader Keita, as he finished his training at the national art school, embarked on bogolan (mud cloth) and other courses for street children, got married and, with support from MDG, opened a residential centre. While the events that started in 2012 have changed life for everyone in Mali, especially those directly affected by the occupation of the North, they were not responsible for my return to the UK, which had more to do with family and a sense that it was time to come home, at least for a while.

Over 15 years MDG has grown from funding a range of community development activities complementing J&D's wider work, to become a major funder for both J&D and Kader's centre. The current Comic Relief grant will support mutual health insurance in Yanfolila, the district where I

first worked in Mali and where I acquired my Malian name of Awa Diallo. It brings encouragement not only to local people but also to J&D and more widely, since Mali needs good news these days. It is in difficult times that it is even more important to show solidarity and support, so I'll finish by appreciating the work of MDG and thanking all those who support it – please go on doing so!

In the words of the J&D president on being told of the Comic Relief success *"This is the best news I've had all year!"*

Sue Upton

MDG artwork

Having been inspired by my visit to Mali, in 2001, along with members of MDG I have painted portraits and scenes of village life in Mali. The latest painting, *New Horizons*, you may have seen on this year's Annual Report. From these I have made limited edition giclee prints. Here are 3 that are available for purchase, proceeds to go to MDG. If you are interested in buying any of them, please contact Andrea at andrea.hewes@icloud.com.

Andrea Hewes



Quiet dignity

A village woman stands tall, courageous, strong and proud.



Connections

In the harshness of the bush in Mali, a woman shines with celestial beauty and grace. The bush robins, migrants to Europe, see her, and bring her image in their avian minds to us. The moon shines upon us all.



New horizons

Red earth, red dust, red clouds and sky; the dawn of a new day and new horizons.

UPCOMING EVENTS

15th MARCH 2016

Bridge afternoon at Pyrton Village Hall, S Oxon. Come and play rubber bridge with your friends and enjoy a wonderful afternoon tea provided by members of the MDG Catering Corps. 2.00 - 5.00pm £10 per person. Please contact linda.king@malidg.org.uk if you would like to come

19th MARCH 2016

Time to take down the staging again after another concert by Benson Choral Society. Volunteers for this always welcome. The choir pays us for our help. Please contact linda.king@malidg.org.uk

16th APRIL

Quiz evening at the Village Hall at St Johns Stadhampton, Oxon. A fun evening with a 2 course meal and the quiz. Teams of up to 8 contact linda.king@malidg.org.uk

24th APRIL

Luke Hedge runs the London Marathon for MDG. His sponsorship page will be available shortly <http://www.bensonchoralsociety.org.uk/Default.aspx>

18th JUNE

Another concert at Dorchester Abbey where we will take down the staging, put the choir stalls back and be paid by Benson Choral Society. If you would like to help please contact linda.king@malidg.org.uk <http://www.bensonchoralsociety.org.uk/Default.aspx>

31st JULY RIDE LONDON 100

MDG supporters Liz and Al Sim are doing this 100 mile bike ride for MDG. They are not normally cyclists but are training hard in order to make sure they finish within the 9 hour deadline. Their sponsorship pages will be available shortly, but if you would like to support them (by donation or along the route) please contact linda.king@malidg.org.uk