

1) Introduction

M.D.G was established in 2001, and this report covers the 12 months since September 2002. During the year the Committee has met on 7 occasions, with high levels of attendance by all 9 members. At its meeting in May 2003 the decision was taken to co-opt Janice Hedge in order to have a direct school representative for our school link project.

Committee membership in full has been as follows:

Laurence Lalanne-Devlin, Chair.
John Hedge, Secretary.
David Hedge, Treasurer.
Ray Fishbourne.
Martin Hallam, Membership Secretary.
Gill Hedge.
Janice Hedge (co-opted member)
Linda King.
Andrea McLintic.
Sue Sloggett.

Membership has increased steadily through the year, with over 60 individuals, families and groups now involved in our work. When all forms of membership and individual contribution are taken into account we can claim to have involved over 300 people in the last year. While we have continued to have most members in the Oxfordshire area, which has also been the focus for many activities, there are now members in many different parts of the country, and during the coming year we hope to make some progress in linking members together, enabling activities and our work to become more broadly based. The Committee has taken advice from several longer established charities about future organisation and fundraising activity, so that we can operate as effectively as possible, while maintaining the two distinctive priorities in our work. These are first, the close working link with our partner agency in Mali, Jeunesse et Developpement, and secondly a good levels of detailed feedback to members, which we have been able to sustain in the past year with detailed quarterly newsletters, a full programme of activities, and our website, www.malidg.org.uk

There has been a great deal of direct contact with J and D in the last 12 months. In January seven members made a self-funded trip to Mali and visited J and D's work in Manankoro, and Bamako. From this visit and subsequent discussions our work plan for fundraising activity emerged, and progress on this is outlined later in this report. Sue Upton and Mahmadou Kone visited the UK in July 2003 to attend the 50th Anniversary of International Service, and were able to meet with many MDG members during their stay. During the summer our Chair, Laurence Lalanne-Devlin visited J and D, and was able to meet new staff there. These contacts have deepened awareness and confidence between the two organisations.

2) Jeunesse et Developpement and M.D.G's contribution 2002/03

The last year has been an important one for J and D. We congratulate Danseni Kone on his election as President, and Sue Upton who is now General Secretary.

The team in Manankoro has grown and the project extended to most of the 40 villages. The rural programme has also extended to the Kouroulamini commune, which was also visited by MDG members in January. The evaluative work carried out by the Stromme foundation, a core funder of the Manankoro integrated project, indicates that real progress is being made. At a more personal level visiting MDG members were struck by the overall impact of the work and the high esteem in which J and D is held by villagers.

- MDG has continued to support the rural work, and will be funding the next village mill project.
- MDG is funding the rebuilding and re-equipping of the Ntentou school in Kouroulamini, the main community resource for people in the commune.
- MDG is currently fundraising for a replacement land cruiser for J and D. This project is being developed with the support of Toyota U.K. and the Toyota workshop for young prisoners at Aylesbury.
- The MDG work plan includes a commitment to fund raise for replacement of the worker mopeds in Manankoro, and we are bidding currently for funds for this programme.

In Bamako J and D has been continuing with its micro-projets for street children. This work is now funded by Comic Relief, and this initiative is the direct result of the street children's conference organised by J and D in November 2000. Projects also operate in Togo and Burkina Faso.

- MDG provided some initial funding for the micro-projets.
- Funding from our art project for street children has enabled money to be given to three of J and D's local partners, Caritas, Amaldeme,

and the Bolle Detention Centre for young offenders. At Bolle the money was used to support a garden project. Links made with Bolle are being maintained and we hope that this will develop into a wider link with agencies here.

J and D are the leading agency in francophone West Africa on Reflect literacy and citizenship work. This approach is used in Manankoro.

- MDG has continued as the UK link between J and D and ActionAid, the funders of J and D's co-ordination work. Funding is now provided through MDG.
- MDG has worked in the UK to make reflect better known through a range of promotional activities.

In Bamako, J and D undertake a range of youth work, including peer education programmes on reproductive health and recreational activities.

- MDG is applying for funds to support the peer education programme in the longer term.
- We have provided computer equipment through Computers for Charity, both to improve facilities at the J and D offices and for training and communication purposes.
- MDG is seeking funding for research into young people's needs in the Bamako 4 Commune.
- MDG sponsored a football tournament for boys and girls, which took place in July 2003, and was highly successful. Our Chair was able to present the prizes, and young people's football has also benefited from the generous donation of football kit by the Football Association, which we were able to obtain.
- Links have now been established through MDG and J and D between 3 primary schools in England (in West London, Didcot and Bristol) and the Sangare Primary School in Bamako, where there is a special interest in ecology.

3) Fundraising activities and promotional events.

As the accounts will indicate the last 12 months have seen a significant increase in money raised. Given the commitments in the work plan it is important that we continue this progress. The number of events has been steadily increasing, and it is very pleasing that more members are now running events and activities for us. Large or small the great advantage of a range of events is that they bring new people in, and enable us to promote our work, and an awareness of Mali.

Some indication of events and activities is given in the following list:

- **A second tipi weekend including a Bogolan Workshop**
- **Country walks and lunches**
- **Art Exhibition at the Oxford Playhouse, including public presentation for Africa Week.**
- **Support from the Truckfest music festival, and help given to stewarding.**
- **Donation of profits from the Sista Slap Drum troupe's CDs. More copies are available!**
- **A Barbecue and farm trail**
- **Boot fairs and market stalls.**
- **A 'house concert'**

We are always keen to have more activities and a fuller programme, so if you have ideas please let us know. Exciting events in prospect include a mass sponsored parachute jump! A list of forthcoming events will be provided to accompany this report.

Regular donors on Standing Orders have provided our bedrock income, and we have also had a number of individual donations, including a major individual donation towards the Toyota project. It has been very pleasing, too, to have contributions from groups and schools. The Didcot Combined 6th Form and the Ladygrove Park Primary School donations were especially appreciated and gave us the opportunity to tell young people about MDG and Mali.

Our promotional activity has been helped by the redesign of our literature and the maintenance of our website. Andrea McLintic's design work makes a particularly important contribution to the work of J and D.

On the basis of some additional funding from International Service, through its recent successful Comic Relief bid to support J and D micro projects we will aim to develop further our promotional work in the coming year.

4) Networking and links with other organisations.

Since one of our functions within the J and D/MDG partnership is to provide links with UK organisations we have again worked to develop

our contacts in the last 12 months. For a small organisation this is of great importance, providing access to expertise and advice, as well as enabling us to extend the range of our activity.

The main priorities in the last year have included the following links:

- Collaboration with ActionAid on liaison and as a funding channel.
- Development of links with International Service, an important funder of J and D and other work in Mali.
- Maintenance of links with Oxfam.
- Links with the newly founded Friends of Mali, and this has led to collaborative work on a planned Craft project in the U.K.
- Links with MAWA, the organisation representing Malians living in Britain.
- Collaboration with the Jubilee Debt campaign in Oxfordshire, and their support has contributed to promotion of awareness of debt and economic issues relating to Mali.

The year has seen considerable development in our link with the Thames Valley Probation Area. The 50/50 club, which raises monthly income, has been established, and a number of offices have received briefing information about MDG. The planned parachute jump is being organised by Probation staff, and the in house magazine has featured a number of articles about MDG. This interest is likely to be further strengthened as we develop our link with Bolle.

5) Looking to the future

Our work plan will clearly focus activity during the coming year, and we will continue to keep members and supporters informed about progress through events, the newsletter and the website. The Newsletter will also give information about other activities including the work of Friends of Mali, with whom we hope to work closely.

If, having read this report you have ideas, comments or suggestions then we would be very pleased to hear from you- contact details are given below.

Telling people about Mali, and the development work of our partners, J and D, is a priority for a number of reasons. There are too many glum stereotypes about Africa. J and D is making a difference in many ways- raising literacy and confidence among rural people; working to help women in the villages enjoy better health and economic self reliance; integrating street children into society, and preventing HIV and AIDS from making the impact on Mali which affects so many African countries.

With coverage of African affairs dominated in this country by disasters and discord it is important to ensure that good integrated development work is also understood. Mali remains the 7th poorest country on the planet, but it is strengthening its democracy, and making progress, because of agencies like J and D. By supporting us you can help them to continue their work.

These are not easy times for Mali. There is serious trouble in neighbouring Cote d'Ivoire, causing economic uncertainty and loss of trade; American trade policies on cotton do threaten the livelihoods of Malian farmers, and the continuing debt burden limits progress on education and welfare. Help us to make these issues better understood as well.

Thank you for your support during the year. For further information contact:

The Secretary, Mali Development Group, 174, Abingdon Road, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 9BP, or telephone 01235 817076.