

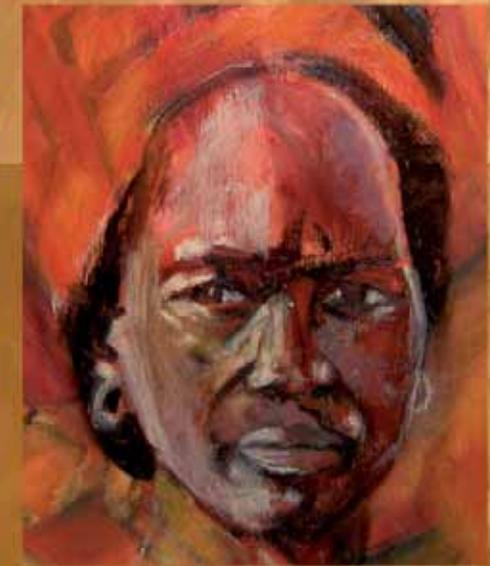


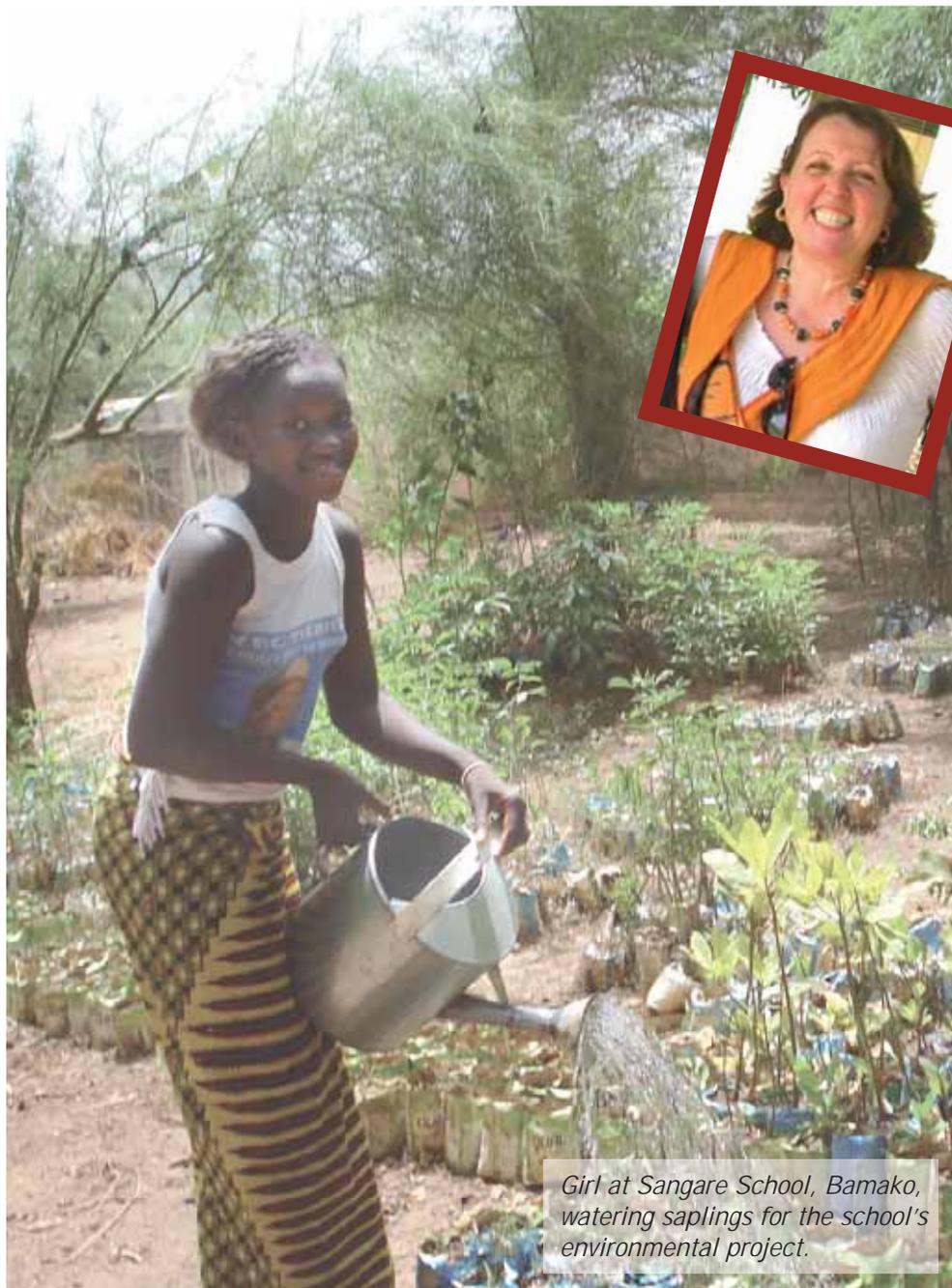
**Mali
Development Group**

Charity number 1088140

Winning Women

MDG Annual Report 2007





Girl at Sangare School, Bamako, watering saplings for the school's environmental project.

“Winning Women”: Chair’s Letter 2007

As you will read in this Annual Report, women are paramount to MDG because, obviously, our work in Mali is targeted very much towards projects benefiting women but women are also important *within* MDG: There is Zoë first, of course, our determined Marathon runner who raised £4,300 this year through injury and pain, appalling weather, the proverbial loneliness of the distance runner and other various tribulations to achieve the gruelling 26 miles of the London Marathon - There is Linda, our indestructible fundraiser, always coming up with new ideas and whose down-to-earth approach, optimism and intelligence is undeterred by setbacks – There is Janice, our membership secretary who juggles family, house and work while keeping her serenity and her beautiful smile - There is Andrea, our Artist in Residence whose talent and sense of colour enhance all MDG paper work – There is Sarah and the great work she has done in the past two years with her school link, always full of enthusiasm and efficiency – Of course modesty dictates that I pass over my own contribution but it is there all the same: mainly 30 years of going several times a year to Africa which has given me a few insights.

I can hear some of you say, “What is this? Blow your own trumpet week?” or, even worse, “crude feminism week”? No, not at all because, as you all know, MDG would not be the organisation it is without John, David, Andy, Ray and Ken, each with their own very special talents. So why do I insist on what we, women, contribute to MDG? Because, in a small way, it mirrors what African women are doing for the development of their own continent: Taking charge,

working with men in a spirit of collaboration and progress to overcome obstacles and ... WIN... win a better future for Mali in particular and Africa in general.

Very often African women are portrayed in the North as passive victims bearing the brunt of all the ills bestowed on their continent and second-rate citizens without any political influence or economic weight. This is partly true but it is not, by any means, the whole truth ... Yes, indeed African women are still grossly under-represented politically, an awful lot of them still die in childbirth, the majority of HIV-positive adults on the continent are women, the 15 conflicts which have poisoned Africa in the last decade have affected women more than men (as in Darfur or the D.R.C) and they still can't, officially at least, own the land they work very hard on all day long ("women are owners of crops and not owners of land" as the pithy African saying goes !). *BUT* the literacy rate for women has tripled in 30 years; micro credit schemes have allowed thousands of women to see the future with more hope; Women's power has increased at many levels through all kinds of local cooperatives; grassroots institutions and national NGOs. And if they are still under-represented at the political level, don't fall into the trap of thinking that women have no influence ... Quite commonly in villages, Councils of Elders comprise women and even if it is always

the men who speak publicly, very often they reserve their judgement till the following day ...to consult women in private.

So is it a case of the famous glass: half empty or half full? Personally I would tend to be in between and agree with the Senegalese proverb which says: "When the road is long, it is better to walk fast" (Tant qu'il y a du chemin à faire, il faut marcher vite"): There has been progress, there have been significant changes but the road to emancipation of women is still very long and we/they have to walk faster in order to see real winning women and for Africa to become a real winning continent.

This desire to empower African women is at the centre of our new Work Plan which will start in 2008. It has also been, in a way, the underlying principle that has from the start governed the collaboration between MDG and our partners Jeunesse & Développement. Let me give you a few examples: the link worker between the 2 organisations happened to be a woman and Tanty's increased self-confidence and professionalism is a great boost: she has "made" the job and we have just decided to be more proactive in our response to her reports and her work. So as always, it is (as it should be) a two-way street. The whole Manankoro Women's project is going very well and has allowed hundreds of women to earn more money, gain independence

and facilitate the education of their children through the vegetable gardens that we have financed. A new project will start very shortly, specifically designed to help treat hundreds of women suffering from fistulas, ease their pain and restore their dignity. This will be possible because we *won* a bid we placed with a small grant-giving trust!

There are many more examples as you will no doubt read in this report but women cannot win alone and neither can men. It is therefore salutary that development practitioners do not talk any more about "women's-role-in development" but rather about gender issues, e.g about the relationship between men and women, about how to facilitate a better understanding between the two genders and their respective roles and how to improve the way they can work together as indeed "the total is more than the sum of the parts".

So it is not only a case of winning women but also of losing prejudices...

Laurence Lalanne-Devlin



Finding the Funds

Some members subscribe by standing order. This is great because it gives us a predictable income. Some people donate to us whenever they can.

Chrissie Tasnier for instance, has just done her A levels. She's been a keen supporter for many years. She's also worked in an old people's home and a cafe for several years and whenever she comes to MDG events she always makes a donation to us from the money she's earned.

Then lots of people run events for us, or contribute to fund raising efforts in various ways. We try to have fun and use people's skills and interests. Sue Raikes and Adrian Moyes opened up their studio and sold pottery that they and their friends had made; Marc Borja has run some pub quizzes (that included some questions on Mali!); Sue White and lots of helpers made teas for us at her farm for the recent charity cricket match between MDG and Stadhampton; Ross Speirs designed the flyer for Zoë's marathon run and Ron Barnet took on the publicity campaign for it; Zoë's mum and loads of other people supported Zoë and collected money on her behalf; Andrea Hewes is called upon to do lots of MDG art work; Chick White has provided storage for our books for the sales; Christine Dodds ran the voucher scheme via the internet;

Averil and Martin Freeths and others donated fantastic prizes for our Christmas raffle; lots of you bought or sold tickets; many people turn up and help at things on the day, steward at Truckfest, make a pudding or shake a collecting tin. One of our kindest and most positive supporters, Carole Ainsworth, before she died earlier this year, asked that donations come to MDG instead of flowers at her funeral.

We are always keen to share with our partners in Mali where the money comes from so that communities there understand that we have to work for it. My thanks to all of you who have helped us, whether you are in the list or not. Sorry if I haven't mentioned you specifically. I hope you will continue to be able to support us.

Linda King

Zoë's Marathon for MDG

The first time I crossed the London Marathon finish line in 2006 I said NO WAY, NEVER AGAIN! However once I heard about MDG and the Silver Bond place they had been awarded for the London Marathon in 2007 and I learnt about how the communities of Mali were going to benefit from this excellent fundraising opportunity I knew I wanted to be part of it.

The serious training started in January. I was following a well structured but demanding training programme and was doing very well. Then 6 weeks before marathon day I picked up a painful and worrying injury. It took several weeks before I could get back to running and even then I was restricted to short distances to avoid picking up another injury. I had to adjust my training programme and re-think my strategy if I was going to be able to take part. Thankfully with all the physio and acupuncture I went through and the hoping and praying from my supporters I managed to get to the start line and complete the 26.2 miles with a smile on my face.

For every mile I ran we raised £170. There is nothing quite like that feeling of knowing you have made a difference. Taking part in the FLM is a life changing experience and you cross the finish line a different person to who you were at the start. It is an amazing day covering the entire spectrum of emotions. Aches and pains will pass but memories of that day will last forever.

The dictionary describes the word Marathon as 'a long distance foot race, long lasting, especially difficult undertaking'. I would agree with all those words. But running a Marathon for a charity gives it a whole new dimension. You get to meet new people, you make new friends, you feel tremendous support and they are depending

on you. Without MDG I wouldn't have had the chance to realise my dream and my heart was full of pride in all that we achieved and conquered together throughout it all. It was a complete success and a great victory and I was so pleased to be a part of it all.

Zoë Sinclair



Financial Report for the Year Ended 31st March 2007

Background

As in prior years, an Income & Expenditure Summary for the financial year will be sent to the Charities Commission along with an Annual Report and other necessary returns. MDG remains in compliance with relevant charity financial regulations. Key treasury related functions continue to be the receipt of funds, transfer to Jeunesse et Developpement (J & D) in Mali, financial management, interaction with J & D and settlement of expenses.

Income

Increased by about £16,000 compared with 2005/06 to over £37,000 in the latest financial year, including significant credit items such as:

- The sum of £7,361 relating to the successful bid by MDG to the Funding Network for our Reproductive Health Project.
- A £7,000 contribution from the Truckfest festival which, together with the Funding Network contribution, ensured that our commitment to the Reproductive Health was met for the year.
- Gift Aid refunds in the amount of £5,446.

- Voucher sales of about £960 and Raffle income of £1,477.
- £1,442 of the sponsorship funds from Zoë Sinclair's participation in this year's London Marathon that eventually amounted to £4,300, including an estimate of related Gift Aid to be claimed.
- Other Fund Raising events, including book sales and regular member related activities, generated a valuable financial contribution.
- Increased membership and markedly higher donation receipts.

Since the financial year 2001/02, MDG has now raised in excess of £205,000. This is considered to be a very significant achievement for a volunteer based charity such as MDG.

Disbursements and Related

Distributions by MDG must conform to the needs of a 3-year Work Plan, produced by the charity which is based upon the detailed project needs identified by J & D. Work Plan content is assessed and then agreed by the Management Committee, taking account of relevant priorities and input from other stakeholders. Regularly held meetings cover payment approvals, coverage of pertinent financial developments and updates on outstanding issues. Project feedback is received from J & D which enables an appropriate level of monitoring and necessary feedback to be carried out.

Designated officers appointed by the committee provide bank instructions for all payments. MDG has agreed with J & D that funds will be remitted on a quarterly basis, with amounts dependent on need and availability of funds.

For prudential reasons, a minimum reserve of £3,000 is always maintained within the bank accounts of the charity to meet unforeseen circumstances.

Outgoings amounted to £31,851 for the fiscal year ended 31st March 2007. Of this, transfers to J & D were authorised in the amount of £38,000 compared to £36,800 in 2005/06. The sum of £28,000 was actually disbursed over that period with other outgoings being modest, mainly to support fund raising and payment of overheads. Overheads include such items as secretarial expenses, public liability insurance and printing costs.

The Current Financial Year

Since the financial year-end, income has so far approximated to that needed to equate to the total achieved in 2007/08. Apart from regular receipts from members and significant sums emanating from Marathon sponsorship, this revenue also includes £5,000 from Gifford, a UK based engineering company who are providing both financial and staff volunteer involvement in

our Mafele Barrage Project. Additionally, £1,000 was received from Bernwode News to assist in the development of the Women's' Hope Project.

Outgoings have featured quarterly transfers to J & D amounting, so far this financial year to £20,000. Whilst it is anticipated that core income will reach that received that for the latest financial year, there have been applications made by MDG to funding organisations and trusts, which if obtained, will allow other projects to be started.

Following transactions since March 31st 2007, the charity's bank account balances amounted to £5,924 at the end of August, 2007.

David Hedge

About MDG and its work

Who are we?

Mali Development Group was first established in 2000, and became a registered Charity in 2001. Its main function has been to work in partnership with Jeunesse et Développement. The main basis for the partnership is an agreed Work Plan, which identifies commitments and priorities. We are currently negotiating our third Work Plan for 2008/11, and the process will be completed during a planned visit to J&D in January 2008. We have about 300 people involved, through individual or family membership, and sometimes through organisations which decide to support us.

What work do we support?

This report concentrates on the importance of women in both our work and our activities, but since we started MDG has managed to support a wide range of projects with J&D. So far these have included

- Provision of a 4x4 Landcruiser for J&D in collaboration with Toyota and the workshop at Aylesbury Young Offender Institution.
- Building of a new school in Ntentou.
- The development of school links between Mali and the U.K, including a programme of work with the Sangaré Primary School in Bamako.

- Support for J&D through IT equipment and training
- Help, in collaboration with J&D, for Kader Keita, a leading Malian artist, in his project with disadvantaged young people.

You can read about all these projects and our activities on the MDG web site:

www.malidg.org.uk

How do we work?

Though we sometimes bid to Trusts and larger funding bodies for specific projects most of our money comes from fundraising activities by members and individual or group contributions. We have an Alternative Gifts Scheme - details of the vouchers are available on the web site and we do hope you will consider these in thinking about presents at Christmas and other times. We employ no staff, and our overheads are very low. We are all volunteers. While we work hard we also try to have fun- if you would like to join, or find out more have a look at the web site or contact the Secretary, whose details are given below.

The coming year

2008 promises to be an even busier year. Early in the year work will begin on the Barrage Scheme at Mafelé. This project is being done in partnership with Gifford Engineering, who are contributing both financially and with the

skills, on site, of two members of staff. We are delighted with this collaboration and we will keep everybody up to date via Newsletters and the web site. The Women's Hope project, tackling the problems of fistula in Bamako will also develop in 2008- this will help a disadvantaged group of women who come to Bamako seeking treatment for their condition, and live in grindingly poor circumstances, away from their village and often accompanied by their children. We are very grateful to the Bernwode Trust and to several MDG members for the funds to start this project. Tanty Samake is already in touch with them, and as with all J&D projects the first step is to listen to the women and gain their confidence.

The 2008/11 Work Plan is to be debated at our AGM, and responses to it will also be welcome after that from members, partners and other organisations interested in Mali.

Mali Interest Group (MIG)

Thanks to the hard work of Andy Benson an Interest Group of agencies involved in Mali has been set up and is coordinated by MDG. This has enabled us to make good links with Malians in Britain, through the Haut Conseil du Mali, but also groups and organisations who support work in Mali. Some 25 organisations receive a regular update and news exchange, and we are planning a Conference, with the support of the Haut Conseil

and the Methodist Relief Development Fund 13th March 2008. International Service, another of J&D's U.K partners, also provide, through Comic Relief, a sum each year for promotion of work in Mali, and that money will also support the event. It really is important for Mali that we work to raise its profile in the UK, and if you would like to know more about MIG please get in touch via the web site or through the Secretary – whose details are given at the end of this section.

Our Committee and Officers in 2006/7

Honorary Presidents

Eric Ward and Violet Diallo

Honorary Life Members

Zoë Sinclair and Sue Upton

Chair

Laurence Lalanne-Devlin

Secretary

John Hedge

50, Friars Street, Sudbury, CO10 2AG, 01787 311590, john.hedge1@virgin.net

Treasurer

David Hedge

Committee Members

Andy Benson, Ray Fishbourne, Janice Hedge, Linda King, and co-opted members Andrea Hewes and Ken King.

Independent Financial Examiner

John Goolden



A Peer Educator presenting to a secondary school class in Bamako, and Sue Raikes addressing the Funding Network.

The Bamako Peer Educators Project 2006/7

For the past 4 years Mali Development Group has funded the Peer Educators Reproductive Health programme in Bamako, Mali's capital. We have been particularly grateful to Truckfest, the independent music festival for their generous support throughout that period, and also the Funding Network, whose members gave a substantial contribution following a presentation by MDG member Sue Raikes, who had visited the project and been impressed by the commitment of the young people involved

The Peer Educator project

The project recruits and trains young people who teach other boys and girls about reproductive health risks including HIV/AIDS. The volunteers also supply contraceptives, and can refer to Health Centres when a serious problem has been identified. This was the first project of its kind in Bamako, and since it started huge numbers of young people have been advised and helped. The project is based in the Lafiabougou district of the city- one of its poorest areas, with a high proportion of young people.

The past year

- The project has worked across the whole of Lafiabougou, including the 11 schools and 22 of the *grins* - a Malian word to describe the informal clubs where young people meet, talk, and drink tea!
- By the end of 2006 120 young people had become trained Peer Educators.
- In 2006 almost 7000 young people had attended information sessions with almost equal proportions of boys and girls - an important achievement in Mali.
- 112 young people had received counselling - in this activity more girls than boys received help and advice.
- Music and film events and a football tournament were also used to spread the project's message.

Here are some comments from young people who have been involved.

'Because of the training provided by J&D I learnt some very important and interesting things about sexually transmitted diseases and the battle against HIV/AIDS. It's helped me change my own behaviour- that is I've learned to make sure I carry condoms and always use them.'

Adama Sangaré, nicknamed Nostra - a member of the Sébenicoro 'grin'

'I've learnt lots of things from Peer Education, above all about sexual behaviour, unwanted pregnancies, and drug addiction- I make sure I apply that learning to my own life!'

Fatoumata Sangaré, one of the girls working as a Peer Educator.

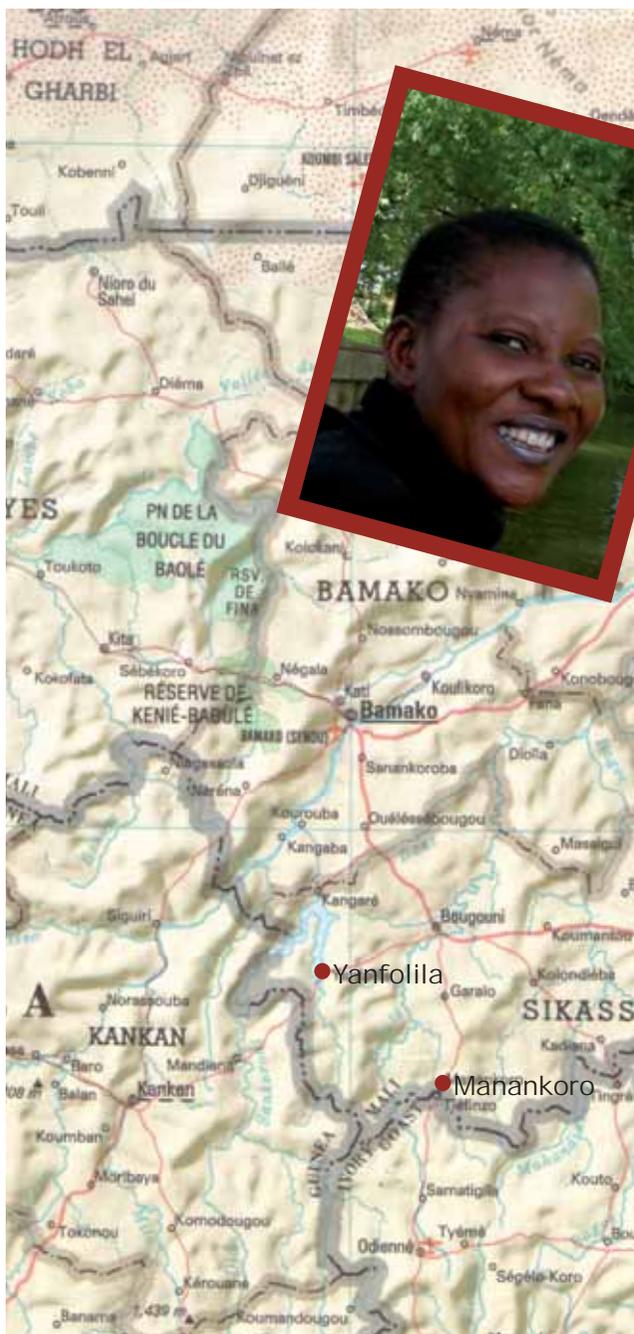


'This education programme has been a real route out of problems for me, because I had a sexual infection, and I was referred to a Health Centre by a Peer Educator from the J&D Reproductive Health project. And today, thank God, I've been treated and am well.'

Moussa Diallo member of the Djicoroni 'grin'

In Malian society discussion of sexual issues at home can be a taboo subject, and the project is addressing a really important need for accurate information, and access to contraception. Throughout the life of the project though, J&D has ensured that teachers, health workers and parents in Lafiabougou have been kept informed about the work. The project has been extremely popular. The Peer Educators themselves are a bright, committed, and at times quite challenging group. They are, perhaps, the next leaders of their communities, and so the project plays another role by giving them experience of leadership. In the context of this Annual Report on 'Winning Women' one of the real achievements has been to ensure the full role of Lafiabougou girls in this programme.

The project is currently being evaluated and the findings will be available in November 2007, during our discussions of the 2008/11 work plan. We expect this work to continue, but the future shape and priorities will be guided by the evaluation findings



Tanty Samake: MDG Link worker

Tanty Samake, the MDG Link worker plays a key role in the working relationship between J&D and MDG, providing reports responding to requests for information, and monitoring the progress of projects. Tanty works with all the MDG funded projects, including our school links, and she came to England on a professional visit in 2006. Here she describes the work of J&D with women in Manankoro, and now also in Yanfolila, another area some 60 kilometres to the west of Manankoro. The Norwegian agency Strømme are the core funders in Manankoro, and the new project is funded by Methodist Relief Development Fund. MDG has supported a range of projects within Manankoro, since we started in 2000, and this will continue to be a priority area for us, though in time there may be also be requests for projects in Yanfolila.

We work very closely with people in the villages to understand their needs. This takes time, but it's really important to understand what their priorities really are. With women we help them organise themselves into groups and associations, so that they are directly involved in helping with development and can develop confidence and experience in running things for themselves.

This can involve a range of activities, but they are all integrated, so, for example, literacy work in the Reflect Circles not only gives them a chance to read and write, but also helps them with their income generation and the running of their groups. Some examples of activities are as follows:

- The Micro-credit scheme which enables them to take out a small loan and pay it back at low interest- women never had access to credit before.*



- *Income generating activities- small businesses and market gardening- MDG has made a big contribution to this work, particularly through the market gardens, and the provision of diesel mills. The mill programme works on the basis of a loan to the women, which when repaid enables another mill to be provided elsewhere- a new one at Farabalé opened recently as a result of this*
- *Participating in health awareness programmes, especially to do with child health.*
- *Becoming involved in community projects- for example contributing both physically and financially with the construction over the last year of a health centre. MDG was then able to help by funding the equipment for the centre.*

I will be continuing to send regular reports to England, and I know that they go into Newsletters and onto the MDG web site. I also hope to meet some of you on the next MDG visit to Mali early in 2008.

Tanty

Some messages from women involved in J&D projects supported by MDG in Manankoro:

The Manankoro market gardens

'Through the market gardening I've learned about the different kinds of vegetables, and about making the vegetable beds and the paths between them.'

Makoura Sidibé from Lemeroutoumou

'Because of the market garden project my income has gone up and I have been able to improve my family's diet.'

Māhbilé from Manankoro town

'With the money I get from the market garden plot I can look after the needs of my children better, but we also have a better diet with the different sorts of vegetables.'

Salimata Diarra of Manankoro town

The diesel mills in the Manankoro area

'Having the mill in Lemeroutoumou has allowed me to use my time better. It means I have time for work and time for all the other things at home.'

Sitan Sidibé from Lemeroutoumou

'I've got more time since the Lemeroutoumou mill was installed.'

Aminata Konaté from the neighbouring village of Woma

'The arrival of the mill through J&D has changed my life already - I can get things done more easily including getting meals ready on time.'

Fatoumata Sidibé of Farabalé where a mill has been installed in the past year, and where MDG hopes to equip the clinic which the villagers have been building.

