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Welcome to our Spring newsletter, which well illustrates how we are 'keeping on keeping on' despite the difficulties of austerity and uncertainty here and in Mali.

Our partners – Jeunesse et Développement, Pensons à Demain, and Eco-Sahel continue with their valuable work and we are pleased to be able to continue our support to them. We also think it's time for a visit, as our partnership is based firmly on our relationships and we've not been able to renew these face-to-face for several years now. Currently we're grappling with the complications of travel insurance given the continued instability in Mali!

Our new structure is continuing to work well and you will find information about the projects we're supporting, our creative approaches to fundraising (aka Linda King's 'catering corps'!), how we're upping our communications act (new leaflets and some great banners) and managing to make space for Malian music and culture via the Mali Interest Hub, fast becoming the place to make Malian connections here in the UK.

The 7th September is a date for your diary – our AGM and hilarious annual cricket match with the (rather awesome) team from the Bank of Montreal. All members and supporters of MDG are welcome and we would love to see many of you there.

Lastly, you will know that all involved in MDG do so as volunteers. Because this is important to us, we have agreed to support an initiative called Keep Volunteering Voluntary. This is a response to a new government 'workfare' scheme called 'Help to Work, which will force many long term unemployed to do unpaid work for charities, 30 hours a weeks for up to 6 months. This is being called 'volunteering' by the government. We do not think it is right that people should be forced to volunteer in this way and we would urge those of you also involved in voluntary or community groups to consider adding their own support to this campaign. You can find out more at www.kvv.org.uk.

Wishing you a peaceful and sunny springtime,
Andy Benson, Chair

PRESS NOTICE 14 MAY Sudbury's New Mayor Launches Link with Town in Mali

Councillor Rob Spivey, was inaugurated on May 14 as the Town's Mayor, will support 4 charities in the coming year- Homestart, the Stroke Association, the Alzheimer's Society and Mali Development Group.

The involvement with Mali Development Group (MDG) will take the form of a friendship link with the Mayor and Council of Yanfolila a town in southern Mali. As Vice Chair of MDG Rob Spivey came up with the idea of the link, which is designed to help, both communities learn more about each other.

Mali Development Group is a small charity, founded in 2000, in order to support development work in the West African country, one of the poorest in the world. Since then the Group has raised over £600,000 and has funded many projects with its local partner Jeunesse et Développement (J&D). Much of this work has been in the south of the country in the Sikasso Region, which Yanifolila is part of.



*The Mayor of Yanifolila,
Issa Sangare*



*Deputy Mayor Jack Owen and
Mayor Rob Spivey*

The link year will have a number of activities in Sudbury and Mali including a photography project with local schools for children to compare their day-to-day lives.

The first event is a charity concert by the group Musical banquet at the Quay Theatre on May 31st, at 7.30pm.



A Little bit About Yanifolila

The Commune, composed of Yanfolila and the surrounding villages had 3,837 inhabitants in 1976 and the number had grown to 4995 in 1987. Most people speak Bambara and although 92% of the population are Peul few of them actually speak the Peul language.

Overall poverty and unemployment are big problems in Yanfolila with 60% of people living below the international poverty line. One of the difficulties is the lack of diversity in the local economy and its overreliance on Small-scale agriculture. There is a high dependence on cotton growing

There is limited access to credit especially for women.

The struggle against poverty is a major issue and economically there are some key factors:

- Women have insufficient support to generate income in their own right- MDG's partners J&D have done a great deal locally to help savings groups of women develop their own reserves and start small businesses.
- The lack of a big enough market for products because of the rural location.
- The need for more micro-finance.

Three NGOs. Including J&D work on health development in the area.

Further information:

Councillor Rob Spivey 01787 375099
John Hedge, Secretary of Mali Development Group, 01787 311590

Public Affairs Group Update

The team has taken on various projects over the last months. Dan and Sam are on their way to meeting their target of having a presence at 4 or more gigs/concerts per year. We feel that concentrating on the popularity of Mali's music is a great way to attract interest in what we're doing. So we most recently we had a great reception at a Salif Keita concert at the Barbican on April 8th, and a similar response before a brilliant Ballake Sissoko gig on November 21st at the RichMix in Shoreditch. There was a lot of interesting discussions, good interest in the charity's work and plenty of people signed up for the Mali Interest Hub emails. The new leaflets were a great boost at the Barbican event and the banners look slick and are proving a good investment already.

Sam and his friend Tom will be riding the Prudential 100 Ride London cycle sportive to raise money for Mali Development Group.

In other news, the 'Mali Song of the Week' blog feature is proving popular which is helping the charity gain contacts in new areas. It led to Sam helping chaperone a Malian music group called Songhoy Blues around

London during December, as part of their involvement with Africa Express. We know that one of the band members is coming back to London in the summer so it will be interesting to catch up and find out how the music industry in Mali is recovering from the conflict.

Another new feature of the Mali Interest Hub is a Mali Events Calendar. The aim is to keep this up to date with events information and all the goings-ons of the country. The calendar is gaining a good reputation as

the Hub has been contacted a couple of times to help promote Malian cultural occasions in the UK. There is plenty of potential in the Hub and we're always happy to have new contributions to help spread the word about Mali!

Sam Garbett

Fundraising and Finance Group Update

In the last newsletter we mentioned our winter fuel campaign where we were inviting anyone in receipt of the winter fuel allowance who could spare some of it, to donate it to MDG. This raised £1500, so thanks very much to all those who sent money to us. It was a great result

Since the last newsletter we have identified our cyclists for this year's Ride London 100. It takes place on Sunday 10th August and involves cycling 100 miles on more or less the route of the 2012 Olympic road race. It starts at the Olympic Park goes into Surrey and ends in the Mall. Our riders this year are Bob Purcell, Tom Sewell and Sam Garbett. They each have sponsorship pages and would be

glad to hear from you. www.maligiving.com/bob, www.maligiving.com/thomas and www.maligiving.com/sam. If you'd like to support them by cheering along the route, please get in touch, linda.king@malidg.org.uk. Incidentally Sam is getting married in September and is having a European style suit made in Malian fabric. This must be worth a photo for a newsletter later in the year!!!

Fundraising has gone well recently with various events held around Christmas and a successful quiz in S Oxon in March. Three times a year a group puts away staging and replaces the choir stalls at Dorchester Abbey (in S Oxon) for which we are paid for MDG funds. We'd be glad of any extra bodies who are able to help with this. The next events are Sat 7th June and a date to be fixed in Nov. Please contact linda.king@malidg.org.uk if you'd like to help. We are also going to be stewarding at Shabbington Steam Rally (in Bucks) on 2nd and 3rd August for which again MDG will receive a donation and additional helpers are also welcome.

Adrian Boorman and his Musical Banquet are doing another concert of early English music for us. This time it's in Sudbury on 31st May at the Quay Theatre. Tickets available from the Quay <http://www.quaytheatre.org.uk/howToBook.htm>

The photo below is some of the members of our recently formed MDG catering corps! This is one of our latest ways of raising money. We've done an afternoon tea for a 70th birthday, a wedding reception and a sandwich lunch for trainee vicars so far. It's great fun and has raised significant amounts of money. Some people like the idea of supporting a charity whilst getting someone else to do the cooking for an event



Sunday 7th September will provide another opportunity for the Bank of Montreal cricket team to beat an MDG IX. Great fun so come along and support the losing team. It's at Merton College cricket ground in Oxford

If you sell on Ebay did you know that you can nominate a charity (MDG????) to receive a proportion of what you make? Every time you sell an item for charity, you'll get a fee credit on your basic insertion and final value fees equal to the percentage you donate. So if you donate 50% of your selling price to a charity, eBay will waive 50% of your fees.

And if you use the internet to buy things if you go to websites via Easyfundraising first, <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/> then whoever you are buying from makes a donation to the charity you have nominated. Hopefully this will be MDG. Whilst the individual donations may be relatively small, they build up over time and as more people nominate MDG. They also don't cost you any more, just a bit of effort to nominate MDG and then remember to use it.

Linda King

Musical Banquet

*Gala Concert in aid of
The Mali Development Group*



**The Quay Theatre, Sudbury, Suffolk
Saturday 31st May 2014 at 7.30pm**



The acclaimed Oxfordshire trio Musical Banquet will be performing a themed entertainment of Early Music from Britain and Europe performed on period Instruments with Countertenor voice.

A Feast for your Ears!

**Tickets £12 (£10 for Quay Friends) from the Quay Box Office, or on the door
Telephone 01787 374745 e mail: admin@quaytheatre.co.uk**