



Mali
Development Group

www.malidg.org.uk

Second Step projects 2019

MDG has been funding local women's projects for a number of years- usually 3 or 4 each year. They are called 'Second Step' because in most cases the groups concerned formed initially as savings clubs, and then wanted to progress to other shared economic activity- a 'second step'. In 2019, funded by Guernsey Overseas Aid we were able to support 4 projects. Our liaison worker Tanty Samake has reported regularly on progress, and has provided back up support to all the groups.

1 Learning to process and market mango and cashew apples in Yorobougoula

30 women, all of them members of both their women's association and the Yanfolila Mutuelle, received the training in 2019. They learned about all aspects of processing and the timing of the training by local experts was to coincide with the mango and cashew apple harvests.

Everyone has heard of mango as a delicious fruit and refreshing drink. Cashew apples are less well known in the U.K. They are the fruits from which cashew nuts grow and can produce a refreshing citrus tasting drink, popular in Mali.

Their President Sata Sidibe says that since the training they have begun to develop their business at local markets and sales are going well. This has a big impact on family income and also gives the women an economic stake in the local economy, which they did not have before.

2 Learning how to process and market shea butter in Djègèna

14 members of the Jigisèmè women's group received a 13-day training. It covered not only the manufacture of shea butter soap, hair ointment and skin cream, but also the necessary regulations, packaging, labelling and conservation of products.

Shea butter is well known now in the U.K. and in southern Mali shea nuts are readily available and have always been used in villages to make soap. These new skills enable the women to make much more use of their local crop, and the first year of their trade has been very successful. They are also beginning to develop links with other processing groups in another local village.

Awa Doumbia, the group's secretary makes the point that the group meets together every week to talk about how things are going and deal with any concerns. Their main trade is on Yanfolila market, the biggest in the area and things are going well.



Shea pomade produced by the group

3 The Solona women's market garden project

MDG has helped a number of women's market garden projects over the years. In the case of Solona 72 women have paid to become members of the group and this enables them to have a 10 x 10 metre plot. Gradually the plots are being developed with cabbage, potatoes, onions, and lettuce.

As ever the main problem is with access to water and weather conditions in the rainy season limited the depth of wells and more work is needed to ensure an improved water supply, but the group is working well together.

Sata Diakité is a member. She is 57 years old and has 6 children. She says she is very happy with her space and as most



Some pictures of the group processing mangos

members do, she uses the vegetables both to feed the family and to make money by selling them at market.

4 The Niakarako women's market garden project

In this market garden project a one hectare garden has been developed and 49 women are involved. Plots, as at Solona, are 10 x 10 metres and the Niakarako group is also tackling the problem of the initial 5 wells needing to be deepened because they were dug in the rainy season.

The market garden is progressing well, and, like the other groups the project is managed by a committee, so that members can see where and how decisions are taken. The group helps to give the women a group solidarity which they did not have before.



The Niakarako garden

A feature of all the groups has been the high level of membership of the Mutuelle health insurance scheme, which is reported on elsewhere in this newsletter. Many of the women have commented on the way in which their earnings help them to maintain their subscriptions to the Mutuelle, thus enabling their families to have far easier access to health care. This synergy is really important in ensuring that better health and sustainable extra income can both be achieved by their working together.

Plans for 2020

We have received plans for a further 4 projects in the coming year. All the projects are in the Yanfolila area so there will again be real potential for synergy with the Mutuelle.

At Faloko the women's group wish to develop a one-hectare market garden.

At Djilefing the group wants to develop its skills in processing and marketing shea butter.

Both these projects have been agreed for funding in principle, once budgets have been finalised.

At Badogo Lèkoro and Goualafara the groups want to develop their soap making skills by way of training programmes. Both these projects are being evaluated at the moment.

How you can help us

It was great that last year's projects were funded by Guernsey Overseas Aid and we are very grateful to them indeed. This year we will need to find further funds to ensure that these vital projects can go ahead as soon as possible. A typical Second Step project costs between £1500 and £2000. If you would like to support one of the projects we would like to hear from you. If you do you will be making a very direct contribution to the lives of a group of women who can do wonderful things with some training and a relatively small amount of money.

John Hedge

Developing a local Health Insurance Scheme – the 'Mutuelle' in Yanfolila, in the rural south of Mali

In our Annual Report 2019, we described the many difficulties that face these 'Mutuelles', which are spread across Mali, like the one we supported in Yanfolila which has approximately 1500 members. This Mutuelle was made possible through our Comic Relief grant 2015 -2018, with the extension to June 2019.

At the end of the 6-month extension, some concrete things took place:

- 1 the building for the office of the Mutuelle was completed**
- 2 the women of the Mutuelle committee received further training**
- 3 some income-generating activities were identified, such as a grain-grinding mill, or the hire out of chairs for social occasions in the community.**

In addition to that, the Government of Mali has recently announced that they wish to extend this type of 'Mutuelle' based insurance scheme across the population, apart from those (civil servants etc) who are already part of a health insurance scheme.

This gives us hope that rural, poor people, and others, will somehow, be offered access to health care, at a reasonable cost. This, if it happens, will be a great step forward for Mali.

In addition, there has been ongoing dialogue between MDG, Jeunesse et Développement (J&D), and the Yanfolila Mutuelle, about how to support them, given that their finances are so precarious. This is in part due to the lack of Malian Government support, and also due to the system, which gives an incentive to the Health Centres, to charge more than they need, to the patients, in order to cover their own costs and to earn more money for themselves. This is a phenomenon known as 'over-prescribing' ie prescribing more medication than is strictly necessary (and at greater cost), but this is contested by the health centres who say they are prescribing more, because patients are coming to them late, and in more need of medication. It is a dilemma which is not easily solved.

We are still in dialogue with the Mutuelle and Jeunesse et Développement about the way forward, but the signs are promising. Work and communications are continuing through MDG and J&D to try to address these issues, though we have no further funding from any outside bodies, at the moment.

The Yanfolila Mutuelle recently asked MDG for a one-off grant to cover the cost of one health centre's invoices, which they were unable to pay at the end of December 2019 (CFA 500,000 which is roughly £640). After some negotiations, J&D in Mali agreed to pay this, and there are also some potential new joint projects between J&D, Plan International, and the Mutuelle, which will support the sustainability of the Mutuelle in the future. So, watch this space! We hope it will survive and thrive!

Judith Hartley, MDG Secretary

News from Kader Keita and PAD (Pensons à Demain or Let's think about tomorrow)

I recently returned from a short trip to Bamako when I had the opportunity to spend some time at the PAD centre for children and young people living and working on the streets of Bamako, and to catch up with the latest exploits of Kader and his team.

As ever, PAD was buzzing with activity. It is looking good, having been recently painted in a vibrant pink, with some new furniture and equipment acquired from a grant accessed by Julie, a volunteer from the USA, sewing machines, a fridge, clothes, material and other goodies from Angers in France, which is twinned with Bamako, and support from Mali's first lady to equip young mums when they complete their course in sewing and tailoring.



Among the main activities at the centre are regular courses teaching bogolan creation and basic literacy to resident and non-resident young people referred by drop-in centres from across the city. Bogolan is traditional mud-cloth: locally dyed cotton with ancient and modern designs created using mud from the river Niger. There is also year-long sewing and tailoring training for young mothers, to enable them to support themselves and their children. This aspect is supported by aBama, an association in Angers, which complements MDG's support for the basic running costs of the centre. Janick of aBama was in Bamako at the same time as I was.

She and I were excited to meet the seven young actors and actresses who have recently come together to form the PAD the-



atre troupe. They are graduates of ENA, the national school of the arts. They are in the process of creating a series of plays and sketches to perform in schools, colleges and community spaces across the city to promote discussion and awareness of issues related to child protection. Kader approached MDG with this idea in 2019 and MDG agreed to support the modest costs of the initiative. Janick and I watched a rehearsal and the players kindly mixed in some French with their Bambara to help us follow the storyline, although much was clear from graphic acting. Janick was pleased to find that one of the stories directly related to the young mothers that the aBama project is designed to help. It is about a young girl about to be thrown out of her rural home by her father, when he discovers that she is pregnant. "He who knows all" turns up in the nick of time and it transpires that the girl has been raped in her own home by two passers-by, and had been afraid to tell her father what had happened. Her father is horrified and is helped to see that he needs to support his daughter rather than disowning her. The next story is about a young orphaned boy set to live with his uncle. His uncle's wife plots to get him out of the house by complaining about his work and saying that he is trying to poison the family. He is also on the point of being thrown out onto the streets when "He who knows all" turns up and all is revealed, and it ends happily. "The fool" flits in and out of the action making wise, funny and noisy contributions, just in case anyone has missed the point.



The theatre troupe with Sue, Janick and Kader

This type of activity is inspiring for so many reasons. It promotes the tradition of community players drawing attention to topical issues; It gives the players an opportunity to practice their craft; it raises the issues with young people and adults in their communities and promotes discussion and awareness of everyday happenings, while also bringing people together for live entertainment, offering an alternative and a contrast to watching on-line videos alone.

Performances will start in coming weeks and a further play focussing on Peace and Reconciliation is also underway – another particularly relevant theme in Mali today. Kader is planning to experiment with the actors leading some audience discussion of the topics raised, at the end of the performances, to explore ideas about the issues among those watching.

A sadder event while I was there was when PAD's third abandoned baby was left in the courtyard one evening. Such children are declared to the police, who then take them to be looked after at the orphanage.

And to end, on a happier note, some personal news on the Kader front – he has a new baby son called Mohamed who is keeping both him and his wife Hawa, awake at night!

Sue Upton



Kader, Hawa and Mohamed



Typical beggar boy with his tomato paste tin, outside PAD



Crux Craft Fair

Crux Craft Fair is a well-established, top quality craft show high-lighting maker designers from the South West of England. It takes place annually over three days in Rattery Village Hall, near Totnes in South Devon. A cross section of crafts including pottery, jewellery, textiles, wooden products, iron and leath-erwork, baskets and beyond are all on display and there is a rigorous selection process as stalls are in high demand.

Crux supports a different charity each year and in 2019 they chose the Association Culturelle Pensons à Demain, commonly known as PAD, one of MDG's partners in Mali. Based in Bamako PAD supports some of the the most vulnerable children living and working on the streets, teaching them bogolan art (a form of mud printing) as well as helping them to learn basic literacy and develop dance, theatre and a range of arts and craft skills. The core team that run PAD are often joined by artists and other visitors, which creates an enriching learning experience for all. One of Crux's organising team, Marian Ash, took a trip to visit PAD earlier this year. Spending time with founder Kader Keita, she learned how PAD helps children build self-esteem and self-confidence through learning crafts and working alongside PAD's experienced team of local people.

Sue Upton of MDG, with her sister Chris and friend Julia who volunteered their services and Mali knowlege, sold raffle tickets and talked about PAD throughout the three days of the fair. Each maker donated a beautiful prize and visitors were gener-ous in their raffle ticket purchases. A total of £1,501 was raised for PAD. A big thank you to the Crux organisers for this opportu-nity and thanks to all who contributed.





Chris on the PAD stall at the Crux Craft Fair

Fundraising

Over the years our group has done all sorts of things to raise money. We've held book sales, run raffles and 50/50 clubs, found people who will do sponsored activities for MDG, helped with car parking or stage dismantling and lots of other things

In more recent times we've concentrated on cooking and helping out at weddings. This started out in the village hall in Stadhampton, South Oxfordshire but our fame has spread and so we've been asked to help or cater at a variety of events in the neighbouring area. People like the idea of supporting a good cause whilst they have their celebrations. During 2019 the 15 members of our group have provided tea and cakes for several garden tours, food for 1 christening, 3 funerals, a WI celebration and U3A meeting, Christmas lunch for 51 members of the local Ramblers group, assisted with 2 weddings, sold cakes at a stall in Oxford and teas at the Dorchester Abbey tearooms. We are also running a tiny café once a month at an auction house.

We had a lovely card from the brides at a wedding we helped with a while ago. We decided to all be called Babs so that they could give us a name, but wouldn't have lots of names to try and remember. So the card was addressed to Babs, Babs, Babs, Babs, Babs, Babs, and Babs!

Our most recent venture was a Burns Night Supper for a U3A group in Thame. The photograph below shows some of us with the piper.

Our many volunteers always help in good spirits. We enjoy it a great deal, and also hope ourselves to get involved with some of the eating. Very many thanks to them all for their generosity, hard work and friendliness.

Linda King

