

**Mali
Development
Group
Annual Report
2023**

**We're
Still
Standing**



**Mali
Development Group**



Mali Development Group
Charity number: 1088140

Linda King (Chair)
Judith Hartley (Secretary)
Ken King (Treasurer)

Other committee members:

John Hedge,
Janice Hedge,
Sue Upton (co-opted)
Wilfred Willey

Introduction from John Hedge

The past 12 months have been massively challenging for Mali. A number of factors are involved - ongoing military government; sanctions from ECOWAS, the West African regional organisation; a distanced and negative relationship with the French government, and economic insecurity resulting from European war and climate change.

Despite all these challenges our two partners have continued to work as well as they can to support Malian people in need. As you will see from this report, PAD has been breaking new ground and goes from strength to strength. J&D, with whom we have been working for almost 25 years has, however, continued to struggle with very limited funding opportunities in a difficult and quite hostile context for international development.

MDG has also come to a crossroads in the past year. Again, several factors are involved. The sad loss of our Treasurer David Hedge, who managed our finances from the very beginning of MDG is one of the biggest. David is remembered elsewhere in this report. He has been ably succeeded by Ken King, but our overall capacity has certainly reduced, and the work to sustain MDG rests on the shoulders of a committee which has now worked together for a very long time, and without much respite. Other factors have certainly been the international reputation of Mali, and reduced funding opportunities generally.

The review process, undertaken this summer, aimed to face these issues frankly and openly, so that all members have been fully involved. All the decisions made by the committee will, we hope, be ratified at the AGM. So far as the implications for our partners are concerned these are described elsewhere in the report, but in summary we have decided to continue on a sustainable basis over the next two years, when a further review will take place. We are being very

clear with both partners about what we will be able to fund during that period, and in the case of J&D this will be dependent on development of a recovery plan for the organisation.

We are clear that we have the funding capacity to honour our commitments to both organisations. That we can say this depends on two main factors. The first is the splendid work being done by the Babs team led by Linda King. Their work is described elsewhere in the report. Secondly, we rely heavily on the commitment of regular monthly donors. If you would like to join that much appreciated group do get in touch with us. In doing so you will be making a very important contribution to our cause. That cause, for all the turmoil of international issues, remains true - to support the work of our partners with the neediest people in what remains one of the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries.

We hope that you enjoy reading the annual report and look forward to keeping in touch with you over the next 12 months.

John Hedge

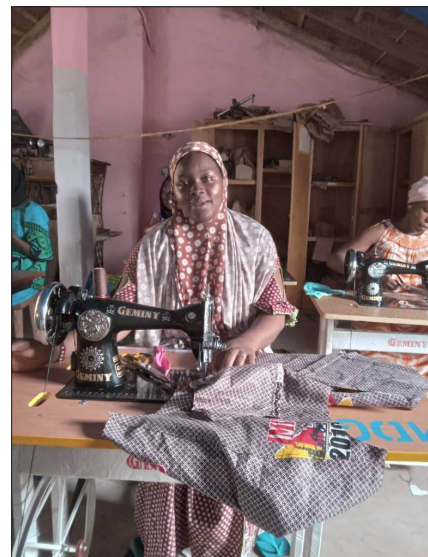


News from PAD Sue Upton

Kader and the team at PAD have continued to respond to the needs and opportunities that have arisen during the past year. They've asked us to convey enormous thanks to all MDG members for the regular core funding that we provide, and to stress that this that enables PAD to continue to operate and to access the support of other partners in France and more locally in Mali. Kader is also very pleased that we accepted his request for funds to buy some sewing machines. These machines will stay with PAD and thus enable ongoing tailoring training for young people, in addition to the ongoing training supported by one of PAD's French partners, where graduates take their machine with them when they finish their course. The new machines can be seen in use alongside this update.

In addition to PAD's regular support to children and young people living or working on the streets, Kader has been running weekly art workshops at Bollé detention centre for girls and young women, which is situated on the outskirts of Bamako. These sessions were initially funded by the UN Peacekeeping force (MINUSMA) and more recently supported by MDG and the Director of Bollé. This enables inmates, and sometimes also their young children, to have an activity to look forward to where they can express themselves and build their self-confidence. They are held in fairly grim conditions, often for relatively minor offences, so we're happy to support some small respite. Some of their work is shown in the accompanying pictures.

Kader has been able to travel to France to visit partners this year, where he ran workshops for children and gave some exhibitions of his personal work. Sadly, he couldn't extend this trip to the UK, as he has done before, due to the current complexity of obtaining travel visas for Malian nationals to come here. He's also spent some time in Guinea supporting a children's centre inspired by PAD through workshops and staff training.



Tailoring training for a young mother



Kader with boys on street



Young mothers - students on PAD's young mothers sewing and tailoring course

MDG is grateful to the Angus Lawson Memorial Trust, which contributed to PAD's running costs in 2022 and supported an experiment to see if more systematic reporting would help the PAD team to monitor and document the outcomes of their work with individual children, with the idea of developing a database to better communicate the overall impact of the centre. In spite of considerable efforts from the PAD team, this hasn't materialised quite as we hoped and we've concluded that the time for this is not now, when efforts are focussed on more pressing day to day needs.

PAD's 2022 annual report described tailoring training for 12 young mothers; Bogolan courses, with literacy and other life skills classes for more than 50 young people resident at the centre for several months each over the course of the year, and 25 non-resident children who also attended these classes. The new work at the Bollé detention involved 70 young women who exhibited examples of their work to relatives and friends in early 2023. Partnerships continued with the international NGO Samu Social that supports street children in Mali, and with the American Embassy in Bamako that provides support for the centre from time to time, as does the local authority in Commune IV where the Centre is situated.

Overall, in its small way, PAD is going from strength to strength, coping with the current cost-of-living pressures, internal movement of displaced people, political insecurity and general poverty, while maintaining and extending links with local and international partners, and responding to new opportunities in the currently very difficult context of life in Mali.



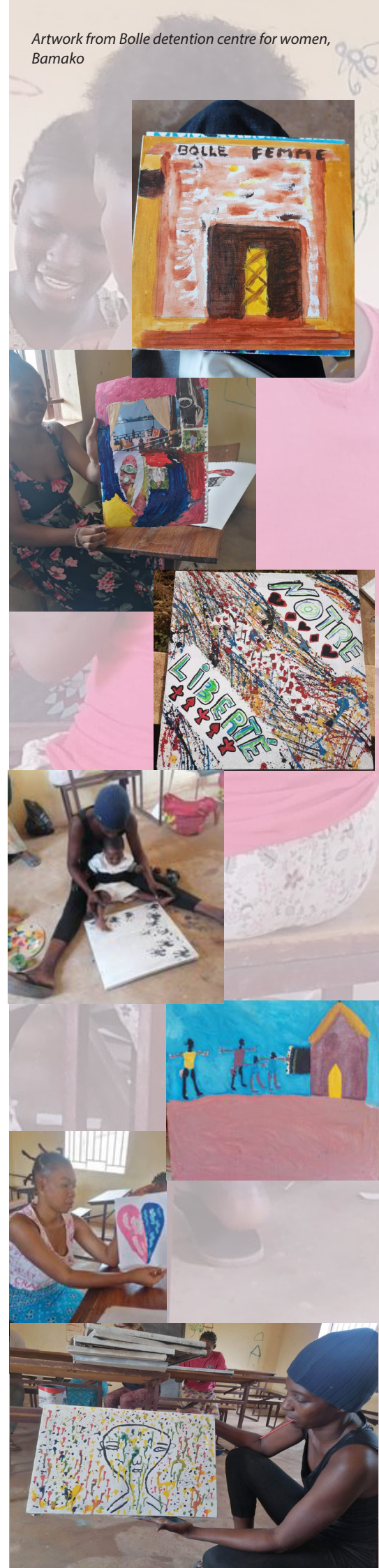
Boys begging on the streets



Young woman doing bogolan course



Proceeds of begging by young street children



Mali Development Group – a future?

Judith Hartley

Over the last couple of years, through the Covid pandemic, the Mali Development Group (MDG) has been going through a tough time financially, as have many other charities.

As reported previously, the pandemic and resulting lockdowns had a devastating effect on our main fundraising activities. The catering volunteers in Oxfordshire, colloquially known as 'the Babs' lost all possible income generating activities, and now in 2023 these opportunities are only just recovering.

One of our partners in Mali, Jeunesse et Développement (J&D) (Youth and Development) has also experienced difficulties due to the deaths and illness of several key people and is struggling with the increasingly difficult funding situation internationally. Some international NGOs have pulled out of Mali and others have decreased budgets. The political instability and security situation do not help.

In the light of both these situations, we, as Trustees of MDG, decided it was time to review our activities and our potential future, as we are obligated to do by the Charity Commission and we decided to hold a 'Review Day'.

We invited views from members and supporters, in advance of this, and are very grateful to all those who responded. We took all views into account and are pursuing all offers of help, which include at least one person volunteering to join the Committee and another offering practical support with rejuvenating our website, which was much needed. We can update everyone at our virtual AGM on Saturday 16 September.

We held the 'Review Day' in Oxfordshire on 22 July. The aim of the review was to make a fundamental assessment of MDG and its future, so that a shared view could be agreed together with follow up actions.

We looked at MDG's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, which led into a discussion about our capacity to operate effectively as a charity, the model of partnership with our two main partners in Mali and our financial viability.

In summary, we decided that:

- We could continue in some form for a limited period (subject to financial limitations)
- We can no longer commit to funding J&D projects except for core costs
- Our continued funding of J&D would depend on them obtaining funding from other partners and producing a work plan within 6 months (deadline end March 2024), otherwise we will give them notice to end the partnership, with 6 month's notice to enable a just farewell
- We can continue to support Kader Keita's work at Pensons à Demain for the next couple of years
- We will review the whole situation again in two year's time (with interim reviews in the meantime)

Fundraising

Linda King

News from the Babs group

We've continued to provide tea and cakes (and sometimes canapes) at a local garden that opens for organised groups. By this means we've raised almost £1000 this year. Our bacon rolls, hot drinks and cake at a local auction house have brought in about £650 so far this year, and we've had around £1300 from food we've been providing prior to the Stadhampton Film Club screenings. Other things have been one-offs including food for our first baby shower! There are 14 Babs altogether and we usually have good fun and chats as well as testing some of our offerings (to ensure they're up to scratch!). Sadly for us, Maggie is returning to the States shortly. She has volunteered to help on many occasions, she does it with good humour and makes lovely stuff.

Incidentally we're called Babs because when we helped at a wedding some years ago the brides wanted to know what to call us if they wanted us to come over. So instead of name badges we said we would all have the same name and decided on Babs, though none of us are actually called Babs!

David Hedge

This is an extract from John Hedge's tribute to his brother at David's funeral in West London on 1st March:

After a successful career in banking I'm not sure that David expected to have almost a second career supporting development work in Mali, but he served as Treasurer of Mali Development Group from its earliest days in 2000 and was still, in recent weeks, making complex payments to our partners. The money had to take an intricate route across various banking systems, but thanks to David it always got there in the end, despite periodic lapses by Lloyds. His hard work, attention to detail, and extreme patience meant that we were always able to account for everything at both ends of the transaction. It was a huge contribution and has enabled thousands of women and children in rural Mali and the capital Bamako to receive help in making a surer life for themselves.

Sadly, David's physical vulnerability prevented him from visiting to see for himself, but he was known and respected for all that he did by our Malian friends and we have received many messages showing how deeply they feel about losing Ton Ton David - Uncle David. At this end David was - in Linda King's words - a Treasured Treasurer, much loved for his dry but determined humour and kind recognition of other people's work. I have never known any other committee where the item most people actually looked forward to was the Treasurer's report, but it always was.



David as a Truckfest Steward 2009





Financial Report

Ken King

Financial Report for year ended 31st March 2023

MDG has continued to provide funding for the regular activities of both of our charity partners in Mali well as a limited number of special projects.

The accounts for the Financial Year (FY) 2022-23 have been reviewed by an Independent Examiner and have been found satisfactory. They will be submitted for approval at the AGM.

Income:

Gross income for FY 2022-23 was £17,803, which is substantially lower than in the last FY (£35,936). This was due to the lack of large donations from trusts and other organisations (£3,600 this year against £22,000 last year). Income from standing orders remained the same at approximately £500 per month and the remaining income came from smaller donations and the fundraising efforts of Linda King and her team. No claim for Gift Aid was made in this financial year but one will be made in the current year.

We would like to thank all individual donors and members of the fundraising team for their continued commitment and support.

Expenditure:

In the latest year, annual outgoings (£24,548) were almost wholly comprised of quarterly

transfers to our partners in Mali (totalling £24,080). This is very similar to the payments made in the previous year (£27,420)

Other costs included the charges for international transfers and other modest overheads (Insurance etc)

The Current Financial Year (2023/24)

Income:

The income raised during the initial four months of the current fiscal year has continued in the same way as the last year: total income is £4,999, with approximately £2,000 coming from standing orders, £600 from donations following David Hedges funeral, and the rest coming from fundraising.

Outgoings:

These continued to be primarily for regular quarterly transfers to J&D (£7,500) and PAD (£6,000) including an additional amount for equipment (sewing machines) for their work in Bolle.

Total bank balances

Current and Savings account balances, as at 31 July 2023, amounted to £14,459.



Mali
Development Group

