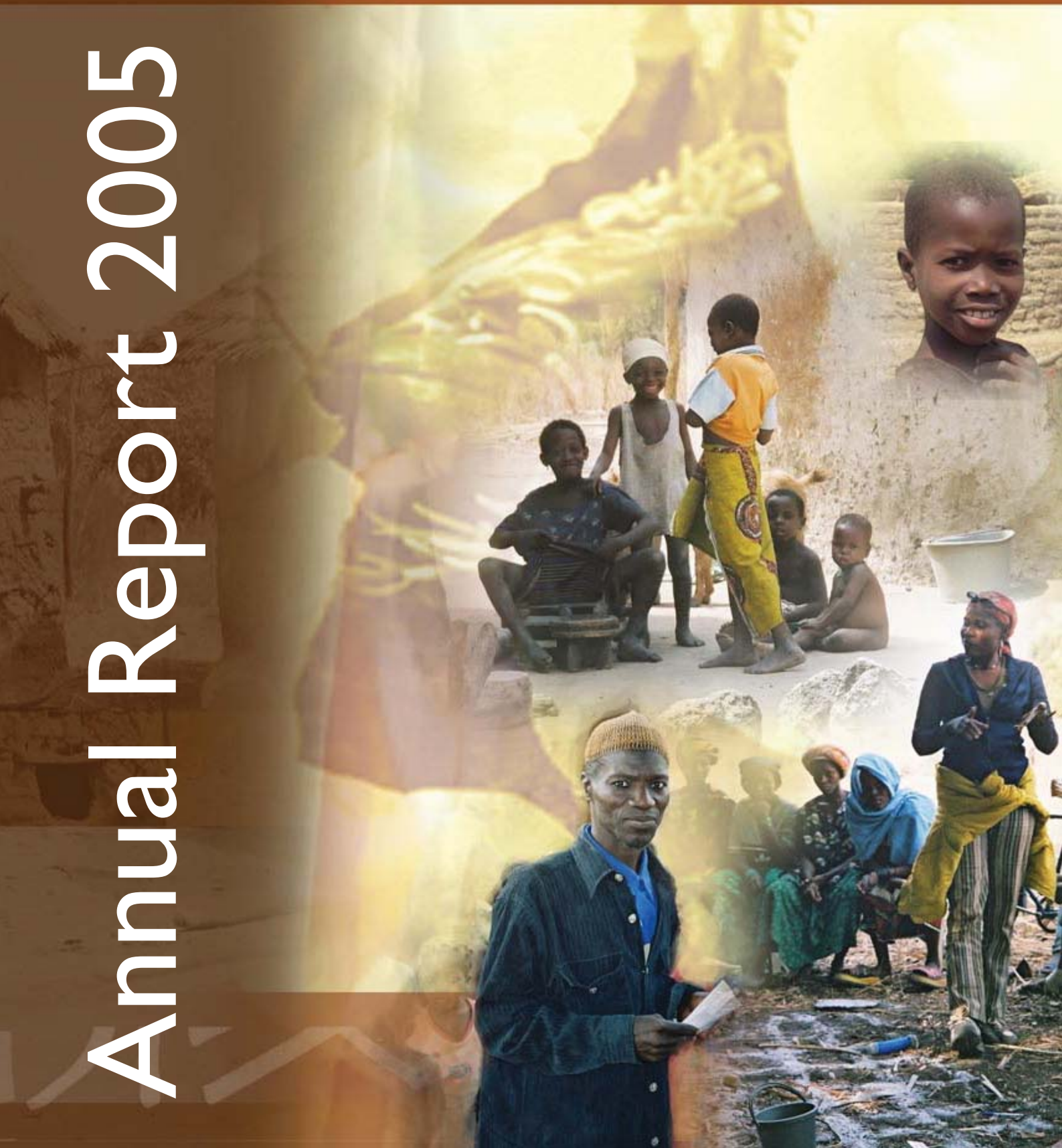




**Mali Development Group**

# Annual Report 2005





## **From the Chair of Mali Development Group**

The need to write this letter comes round every year and every year I dread it, not because I don't know what to say, but because on the contrary, so much happens within MDG from one year to the next that there is so much one could comment upon! This year is no exception but if I were hard pushed to choose, I would say that one of the major highlights was the conference 'Getting involved with Africa', which MDG organised in conjunction with Henry Box School and The Friends of Bonou in Witney in March. Not only were the high calibre speakers inspiring, but also the discussions sparked off among the 72 delegates were really valuable. The conference embodied a major theme for this year: the broadening of our contacts, mission and even, I dare say, vision.

We had known for quite a while that there were a lot of local 'small organisations' working directly in partnerships with NGOs, with villages or with schools in Africa, but the challenge was first to establish contact, and then develop a working relationship with them. The importance of making these links is that working in isolation means small organisations can try to 'reinvent the wheel'. Collaboration and networking means putting aside fears that we may somehow be competing with each other for resources or members, and accepting that co-operation has major benefits in building skills, sharing ideas, and sustaining what we can do.

If we are clear about what our ultimate goal is, ie helping Africans to help themselves and promoting a more positive and accurate image of the continent and its values, then we should collaborate, network and share our experience of difficulties and successes and learn from each other. And this process is well underway as we saw at Witney. To borrow what one delegate said to me at the end of the conference, "It is very sobering to see that in spite of being quite different organisations, we all speak with the same voice; we all work locally and directly; and we all have the same experience of wonderment about Africa".

Our relationship with The Friends of Mali is already well established and will come to fruition, in a spectacular fashion with the hosting of the Malian artist Kader Keita in our annual Tipi weekend and several other related events this autumn. The links with several schools in Oxfordshire and elsewhere are deepening. Sustaining such links is not always easy over time, and the success of our scheme is a credit to the commitment and work of all concerned

With other organisations, the links are just beginning but they are very promising. SOS Sahel is based in Oxford and works in Mali, but we also share with them a concern about the environmental issues, which are an important part of the work, which Jeunesse et Developpement does. With Friends of Bonou, though their work is focused on another country in West Africa, Benin, the relationship is facilitated by personal contacts, friendship, similar ways of working and similar values, ethics and goals.

Joining umbrella-organisations like UKOWLA (UK One World Linking Association) and Make Poverty History through BOND, has also helped MDG develop a wider perspective and context for our work. In this way, without losing the local, personal, grass-root level involvement of work with our partners, we are also part of a bigger and exciting movement. It is important for our partners in Africa that the work we are doing should not remain 'small islands of success'. Poverty is not history yet ... in spite of Bob Geldof's efforts and the alleviation of poverty 'industry' perpetuated by international aid agencies.

In Mali, our partners, Jeunesse et Developpement have also broadened their activities, and the range of projects undertaken, but as you will read later in this report, the relationship with us is special and uniquely valuable to them and we can feel genuinely proud of this. So at the beginning of all these new openings in our work, and at the beginning of our new 2005/8 work plan I would like to remind all of us that what we do might sometimes seem quite modest, a drop in the ocean, but I can assure you that *we are making a difference*. As an African villager told me, “We much prefer the little millions that you are providing for us to the big millions that the government is giving us because they come from the heart and are the results of your own work”. And if ever you doubt what small-scale initiatives mean, just remember what the anthropologist Margaret Mead wrote, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world, indeed it is the only thing that does”

Thanks to all our supporters for all they have achieved in the last year, and looking forward to your support in facing the challenges of the next year.

Laurence Lalanne-Devlin  
Chair of Mali Development Group

## **Mali Development Group - Our Work in 2004/2005**

John Hedge, Secretary

The year saw the completion of our 2002/2005 work plan, and these were some of the main achievements in the final year of the plan: -

- Commencement of the Peer Educator programme on reproductive health for young people in Bamako
- Completion of the In I Che project
- Provision of medical and support equipment for the Manankoro team
- Completion of the Ntentou School
- Support for football in Bamako
- Support for the ongoing development scheme in Manankoro
- Funding of a link worker within J and D to support the partnership

Some of our projects and other activities are reported elsewhere in this report, but during the year, thanks to the terrific work of Andy Benson we have managed also to review our structure and organisation. As well as encouraging the links outlined in the Chair's report we have consulted members about their views on MDG, and organised our activities into themed work groups to increase participation. As well as his work in these areas Andy Benson also made a substantial contribution to the development of the new 2005/2008 work plan, which was agreed in May between ourselves and Jeunesse et Developpement.

The new work plan includes some substantial projects, including: -

- A barrage project to help agriculture in Yinindougou commune in Manankoro
- A further school project in Mafele, Manankoro
- A malaria prevention project in Manankoro
- Maintaining the Peer Educator programme following its evaluation early next year.

We will need all the help and support you can give us in tackling the new work plan, and hope that still more can be achieved in the coming year.

# **Financial Report for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005**

David Hedge, Treasurer

An Income & Expenditure Summary for the financial year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005 has been prepared together with explanatory notes and comparative figures for the previous financial year. As required, this information will be forwarded in the required format to the Charities Commission together with MDG's Annual Report, Annual Return, Register Check and Independent Examiner's Report.

The Independent Examiner (John Goolden) has been regularly provided with relevant information and the latest accounts. As required, transactions have been recorded and balanced with month-end bank statement balances. A full listing of entries is retained by the Charity for record purposes and inspection by the Independent Examiner, Charity Commission or Inland Revenue.

Total income rose substantially to £63,589.66, the largest elements of income during the 2004/2005 financial-year being as follows:

- Donations and membership subscriptions – representing 63% of income, the majority being on a Gift Aid basis
- Fund raising events – accounting for 21% of revenue
- Gift Aid tax refunds – amounting to 13% of income

The significant increase in funding mainly reflects a much higher level of individual member donations and, in particular, the vital contribution from the Kennington Overseas Aid Group (KOA). This group provided nearly £18,000 in the financial year, excluding the additional benefit of allowances from Gift Aid Declarations. KOA funding emanated from many individual donations and will allow very significant work to be undertaken on the Women's Development programme in Manankoro.

The largest contributors to fund-raising activities were: -

- (i) A more than doubling in the amount received from the Truckfest Festival at Steventon to £6,650
- (ii) The sum of £5,747.94 provided by Toyota (GB) through part payment of a vehicle plus spare parts

Additionally other events included a variety of sales events, social functions, the annual Tipi weekend and similar activities.

Gift Aid tax reclaims rose significantly to over £8,000 from £1,721 in 2003/04.

The increase largely reflects Gift Aid benefit from KOA contributions. A further claim is in the process of being submitted. The Gift Aid scheme permits charities to claim UK basic rate tax on donations made. Declarations have been by donors to confirm the applicability of Gift Aid donations and that tax has been paid via income and/or capital gains tax contributions.

**This year, as we come up to our 5th AGM, we wanted to include some thoughts from staff members at J and D about the partnership, and what it meant to them. The comments were collected up by Tanty Samake, our Link Worker, and give the thoughts of our partners about the work you are making happen through your involvement with MDG.**

*"The Partnership is really valuable for J and D, and the communities we work with. The partnership is based on good dialogue, openness, and flexibility. The way MDG gets its money involves lots of activities, and this involves many of its members, which seems a good way of getting people involved."*

**Mme N'DIAYE Fanta TRAORE, Co-ordinator of the Micro Project programme, Bamako**

*"MDG maintains a unique kind of partnership with J and D. Year by year their financial support helps put in place projects which improve life for people in Mali, both in the city and in rural areas, but its the personal links that matter more than anything. May God grant a long life to the friendship between MDG and J and D!"*

**Moussa GADIO, Programme Assistant on the Micro Project programme, Bamako**

*"MDG gives hope to women and children in poor communities in Manankoro - an area in southern Mali without reliable roads, telephones or an electricity supply. People here have much to offer in human resources, and MDG is working to do something about realising their potential, especially by improving the economic position of women, and the chances of children going to school. The power of MDG lies in the enthusiasm of its members, and the way they joyfully give their knowledge and money to help vulnerable and disadvantaged people! The partnership between MDG and J and D is a true example of North /South co-operation."*

**Monsieur Mamadou Tiori Diarra, Team Leader, Manankoro**

*"MDG is a very reliable and efficient partner. The negotiation process with MDG is quick and flexible. MDG respects the needs of partners, and involves them in discussion and decision- making. The vehicle project is a really good example of the spirit between the two organisations. What MDG is doing is already good, and J&D hopes that this work can grow year by year. Long live the partnership of MDG and J&D."*

**Ibrahim MAIGA, Co-ordinator of the Pre-school programme at J&D**

*"MDG is one of J and D's good partners. MDG works in a very open and responsive way. The confidence between the two organisations has a lot to do with transparency and mutual confidence."*

**Mme SAGARA Ramata COULIBALY, Supervisor of the Reproductive Health programme at J&D**

*"Me, I am absolutely astonished by the engagement of a group of persons living so far from Mali, and so concerned with the well being of others! Through the talks I have had with MDG members I have realised the chance we've got to meet these wonderful people and to have such partnership and friendship links with them. I want to say that this is not flattery, but simply what I'm really feeling."*

**Mme KONE Sokona KOUYATE, Translator at J&D**

*“J and D is very lucky to have MDG as a partner. I’m speaking of luck, as it’s hard to trust an organisation without having worked with it at first. But from the very beginning, this atmosphere of trust prevailed. MDG has chosen to support us in all our actions, looking for funds and even sometimes making members subscribe for that! The members’ visits in Mali witness that they are willing to establish a sustainable partnership based on transparency and communication at two levels (in the desk and in the field).”*

**Mme SISSAKO Namissa DIALLO**, Programme Assistant at J&D

*“A group of people concerned with the well being of Malians have created an NGO named Mali Development Group in England. I would say that MDG has really responded to the struggle against poverty. With MDG, hope remains. MDG is far from J&D eyes, but near its heart.”*

**Mme DIAKITE Ida Ténin SAMAKE**, MDG funded activities monitoring agent at J&D

*“MDG, an NGO composed of competent and responsible people, is one of the most reliable partners of J&D. I’m saying that because I frequently travel with MDG members for missions in Manankoro and Kouroulamini. Personally, I found this NGO full of energy, courage and sympathy. The partnership of MDG with J&D is a very good thing. They collect and provide funds in order to support the different activities initiated by J&D and its different partners. With MDG, I’m optimistic with everything it’s undertaking as work with J&D.”*

**Bakélé SIDIBE**, Driver at J&D

*“Our links began in 2002 with an art project. The sale of cards from that project gave us money to help with health care in our infirmary, and equipment for our gardening project. We hope that the relationship can go on developing into the future.”*

**M Moussa Sarawi Maiga**, Director of the Bolle Detention Centre

*“Sangare School has had good links with MDG for some time now, and has had lots of support. Staff and pupils here would like to see the project develop further, and that we can have more direct exchanges between ourselves and England.”*

**The Director of Karamoko Sangare School, Bamako**

*“Money for grain mills, work with women, purchase of the vehicle, the building of classrooms, and now the Peer Educator project have all come from the partnership with MDG. I am convinced that J and D with MDG can do a lot in the struggle against poverty, and for the development of Mali.”*

**M Soumalia MORO**, (Soumy)



## **I NI CHE - Made it in the End!**

Linda King, Project Leader

In January 2003 several of us experienced at first hand how old and worn out the J&D vehicle was and the impact this had on staff going down to Manankoro. The journey is mostly on dirt tracks and takes a minimum of eight hours. We didn't need much convincing that a replacement was necessary, and this became one of our projects that we achieved in the last year.

We knew that we wanted a Landcruiser since Toyota parts are available everywhere in Mali. It needed to be diesel and preferably left hand drive. Early on we decided a new one was too expensive. We approached Aylesbury Young Offenders Institution to see if their Toyota workshop could help with any work that needed doing on a second hand one and to get it ready for tropical conditions. They were very helpful and encouraging. We also contacted Toyota directly and received tremendous support from them. They located the vehicle we needed in Germany, brought it over to the prison, paid for half of it and then donated more equipment and spare parts. After it was worked on by some of the prisoners (and filmed by Central TV) it was loaded into a container to go by sea to Togo.

The plan was for five of us to meet it in Togo, where Kone (Director of J&D) was waiting for us, and then drive up through Burkina Faso and into Mali. Several people doubted that this would all go to plan expecting that there would be problems with customs etc. Well they were wrong! We had all sorts of other problems! The vehicle didn't arrive whilst we were there, but this disappointment was quickly forgotten as a military coup took place in Togo and the borders closed with us inside! We did manage to get out and get to Mali, but Kone had to return later to collect the vehicle. It is now in use by J& D and lovingly cared for by Bakele the J&D driver. Our thanks to the success of this project go to: -

- The staff of the Toyota workshop at the prison, the inmates who worked on the vehicle, the governor for his support and Sean Price who came to Mali and helped Bakele prepare for the new vehicle and keep the old one going
- Toyota GB, particularly Scott Brownlee and Alun Parry
- An anonymous donor who contributed the MDG share of the vehicle cost
- Chartram Export Services who helped load and ship the container
- Kone who waited patiently for us to arrive (three days late) and then had thousands of problems to sort out following the coup

## **Our Link Projects**

### **Ray Fishbourne, Links Project Leader**

#### **Just Sentences!**

We are proud of the way in which MDG seeks to engage those serving sentences in the UK criminal justice system in its work. We do this by exploring practical ways in which such people can contribute to developmental projects in Mali, through our partners Jeunesse et Developpement. Their level of concern and 'wanting to help' is often far removed from the stereotypical images that some people may hold of those serving sentences. There have been some truly remarkable achievements, which serve to demonstrate the mutual sense of hope that such opportunities offer young people, both here and in Mali.

You will have read elsewhere about the IN I CHE Project. 2004055 saw young offenders in the Toyota workshop in Aylesbury Young Offender Institution (YOI) adapting the IN I CHE Toyota Landcruiser for sub-Saharan conditions. Our thanks go to the governor and staff at Aylesbury YOI for enabling our partnership to happen but most of all thanks go to all those young people that worked on the vehicle. Not only did they do a first class technical job but they also took a very lively interest in discussing the developmental aid issues raised by the IN I CHE Project. Subsequently, they have proposed to the governor that they undertake a sponsored event in aid of MDG and we look forward to further news of this possibility in the coming months.

Meantime, out in the community, selected young people under the auspices of the Oxfordshire Youth Offending Team (YOT) have been busy raising money through the making and sale of cakes in aid of MDG. The young people benefit by learning life skills (self-catering), engaging in constructive activity and also becoming more aware of Third World development issues. The money raised is going towards the purchase of footballs and kit for use by young people in Manankoro. Again our thanks go not only to the young people concerned but also to the vision and willingness of the YOT staff and partner organisations in enabling this all to happen, especially the Broom Tree Café at the Ark-T Centre in Oxford.

Back in Mali a number of us again visited Bolle young offender's detention centre that caters for between 50-60 prisoners (mostly street children) between the ages of 13-18yrs for periods ranging from 3-12 months. This was the third visit by trustees to Bolle in three years.

Although MDG has funded a horticultural training project at the centre, overall Bolle remains an impoverished environment. However our visit was lit up by one activity involving six or so detainees practising a drum and dance routine – the one glimmer of real engagement and constructive energy. This is a particularly challenging partnership and one where improvements will take considerable time.

In summary the year has seen us consolidate our criminal justice links. Through this type of activity the lives of some people in Mali have been enriched and at the same time the minds of some of our young people have been challenged too. We hope the above demonstrates that, potentially, there is so much more to criminal justice than just sentences!

## **End of Year School Report!**

During this year, thanks to the efforts of our school-based members, we have consolidated the links established between the Sangare primary school in Bamako and three primary schools in Bristol, Didcot and West London. We have continued to help the children compare and contrast life in Bristol, Didcot and West London with life in Bamako through the exchange of children's drawings and photographs.

The highlight of the year was in February when some of us again visited Sangare School - the third visit by trustees in three years. On this occasion Tanty Samake, our J and D Link Worker accompanied us and we sense that our joint visit has served to further strengthen her role.

We received a very warm welcome from the Head Teacher and were introduced to all the teaching staff and children class by class. Many of the children remembered us from previous visits and how could we forget their infectious smiles and impressive diligence. Their school reports must be a joy to write! Sangare School gives the impression of being well organised, orderly and happy. The staff have a good relationship with the children and despite the obvious lack of visual teaching aids there is strong sense of teaching and learning taking place. The children appear well motivated and it was clear from a question and answer session that many held high aspirations in terms of future careers.

We discussed with the staff how best the MDG school link could meet their perceived needs over the coming three years. The staff group identified the following initiatives (together with their reasons) as their priorities: -

- **Connection to the electricity Supply**

This would allow the premises to be used in the evening, which would enable more children to receive education. Similarly those studying for exams in the local neighbourhood could use the school for learning in the evening if they didn't have electricity at home.

- **Installation of a land line telephone**

A phone would enable the school to have ready contact with the Ministry of Education and with some local parents too.

- **Construction of a large water container in the school garden**

The school has a water supply to the garden area but it is on the margins of the supply system and pressure is often very low or subject to cuts. Environmental cultivation and management is an important part of the curriculum. The current tap/hose pipe arrangement means that watering is restricted to one or two children whereas a water container would enable the whole class to participate in the gardening activity at the same time. It is seen as a means of improving pupils' involvement

- **Pen friend scheme for the children**

This is an idea that has come from the children themselves.

- **Teacher exchange**

The teachers were keen to try and establish an exchange programme.

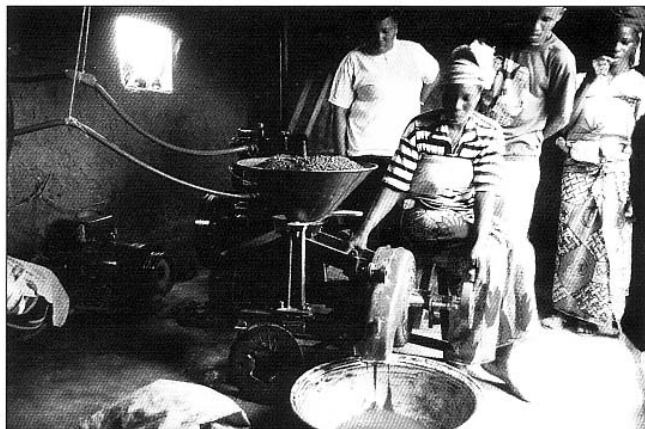
At the end of our visit we were presented with a pair of wooden carvings as a mark of the value that Sangare places on the school link. This gift is being exhibited in each of our UK schools, in turn.

Sangare is a school that really values the link that MDG has developed over the past two years. To date, the link has not represented any real material gain but rather a building of cross cultural awareness and understanding.

The staff group are thoughtful and keen to explore ways in which our links can be extended in 'value added' ways for the children and for the benefit of their own professional development. The Head Teacher and staff are a group that we feel we can trust and we have confidence in their ability to plan, implement and deliver as valued partners. Their sense of commitment and vocation to the pupils shines through. It is as a result of this kind of uplifting reality visit that we look forward to the coming MDG work plan with a renewed sense of hope and energy.

## Getting the message across!

We use all kinds of ways of getting across what we do, and the work with our partners in Mali. Here are two examples from the past year. First, an article written by member Fran Hedges, which was printed in *ASPIRE*, the magazine for Friends of the David St John Thomas Charitable Trust. Fran's article earned a really useful award for us from the Trust.



### Changing lives in Mali

**Fran Hedges, member of The Mali Development Group writes about the MDG:** A hundred men, women and children, the total population of Lemouroutoumou, a village in Mali, sing and dance an exuberant welcome at a feast for the British visitors from the MDG.

People live at subsistence level in mud huts in Mali, a country in West Africa. Life expectancy is 47 and infant mortality twenty times higher than in Britain. Yet the people have a zestful capacity for good humour. One boy asked 'Are children in your country as lucky as we are?'



The Malian people were showing their appreciation for the small, diesel-powered mill taken out by my favourite charity. It has liberated the women from five hours a day of pounding millet, their staple food, by hand. It has literally changed the lives of the whole village. Now the women have time to run a successful market garden where they grow a wide range of vegetables. Constant watering is hard work in such an arid climate, but their nutrition has vastly improved and the money they earn by selling vegetables buys other necessities.

When the loan for the mill, which cost £1,500, is eventually repaid MDG will help another village buy a mill, or whatever the elders and chiefs request for their community. So far MDG has bought a motorbike for a rural health worker, built additional classrooms in a school, funded literacy schemes and helped Street Kids by giving £50 to help a young man set up a shop to make and repair footballs.

MDG was started in 2001 and has over a hundred members. Close links with Jeunesse et Development, an accredited NGO in Mali set up in 1991 by two Malian graduates, mean that MDG has no direct overheads. All funds raised go directly to the people of Mali. **The Secretary, MDG, 174 Abingdon Road, Didcot, Oxon OX11 9BP.**

Secondly, a request at the Cardiff Conference of the National Community Safety Network for some disposable cameras led to the following project and article.

Mali Development Group



## A Throw-away Line or Two from Mali Development Group

At last year's NCSN Conference in Cardiff a plea was made about the disposable cameras which were included in each delegate's conference pack. John Hedge from Thames Valley Partnership is also Secretary of a small charity, Mali Development Group (MDG), which works in partnership with a Malian N.G.O (Non Governmental Organisation), Jeunesse et Developpement (J and D). The idea was that unwanted cameras could be used in one of MDG's development education projects, putting children from an Oxfordshire village in touch with children from villages in the isolated Manankoro region in the far south of Mali.

The first step was for children at St. Swithun's Primary School, Kennington to take pictures of their school, their activities in the village and their home lives. The results were taken to Mali by Sue Upton a J and D worker visiting England, and then went to Manankoro, 8 hours away from the capital Bamako down a bumpy single-track road.

The Malian children were fascinated by the pictures. With the help of J and D workers

the children took their own pictures of life, work and play in the villages of southern Mali. The pictures are a terrific child's view of everyday life. As well as being used in development education work back in Kennington, the pictures have been made into a poster show on the right promoting Mali Development Group's work; copies of which are available at a nominal charge.

Mali Development Group is particularly interested in broadening participation in development work and education. Its recent initiatives have included raising funds with the help of Toyota to provide J and D with a reconditioned Landcruiser, which was renovated by young prisoners at Aylesbury Young Offenders

Institution. The vehicle was delivered to J and D by an MDG team who got caught up in the coup in Togo on the way! Prisoners from Latchmere House and young offenders from Oxfordshire Youth Offending Team have also contributed to MDG's work.

If you would like to know more about MDG and its activities, or to order a promotional poster, please contact:

John Hedge  
Tel: 01235 817076  
Web: [www.malidg.org.uk](http://www.malidg.org.uk)

Thanks to those who donated the cameras - you can do a lot with a few disposable goodies. The Malians, with an African thrift and a willingness to recycle almost everything, thought the idea of a camera which you threw away was very bizarre indeed!



Are there any links, which you have, which could be useful for MDG? Let us know if you have, and if you would like to know more about the work of the MDG or any specific project please contact us at: -

**Mali Development Group**  
174 Abingdon Road  
Didcot  
Oxfordshire  
OX11 9BP

Or visit our website [www.malidg.org.uk](http://www.malidg.org.uk)