

A celebration of the
partnership between
Mali Development
Group & Jeunesse
et Développement

A Journey Shared



2000-2024



Mali Development Group
Charity number: 1088140

Linda King (Chair)
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Ken King (Treasurer)

Other committee members:

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

Introduction

Mali Development Group (MDG) began when Sue Upton, then a Capacity Builder, funded by International Service, responded enthusiastically to the idea of a UK supporters club for the organisation she was working with in Mali. This was Jeunesse et Développement (Youth and Development in English, shortened to J&D), a Malian NGO recently established by committed young Malian graduates working in the development sector who wanted greater input into development projects being implemented in Malian communities.

Gill, my wife, and I knew Sue at that stage only through her sister Chris, and we had no clue either about where Mali was, or the realities about development, beyond donating to Oxfam. Sue felt, though, that we might be able to help, and we met her and Madou Cheick Diarra at a pub in Oxford when Sue next came on a visit to the UK. J&D sounded very impressive – still in its early days but strongly committed to community development and especially the importance of empowering women.

We decided to get some friends together, find out who might want to be involved and then see what might happen. After some initial small-scale fundraising, we established MDG as a charity formally in 2001, with a meeting in the garden of our house in Oxfordshire and not long afterwards were hosting the visit to Oxford of Mamadou Kone, J&D's Director, who came to England to learn English. Kone was kind, and thoughtful with a wonderful sense of humour. He was also an inspiration for our new group, and we all learned a great deal from him.

Very early in MDG's life some guiding principles became clear, and we have tried to stick to them, not only with J&D but with our other partners. We wanted to have a partnership based on friendship; we wanted

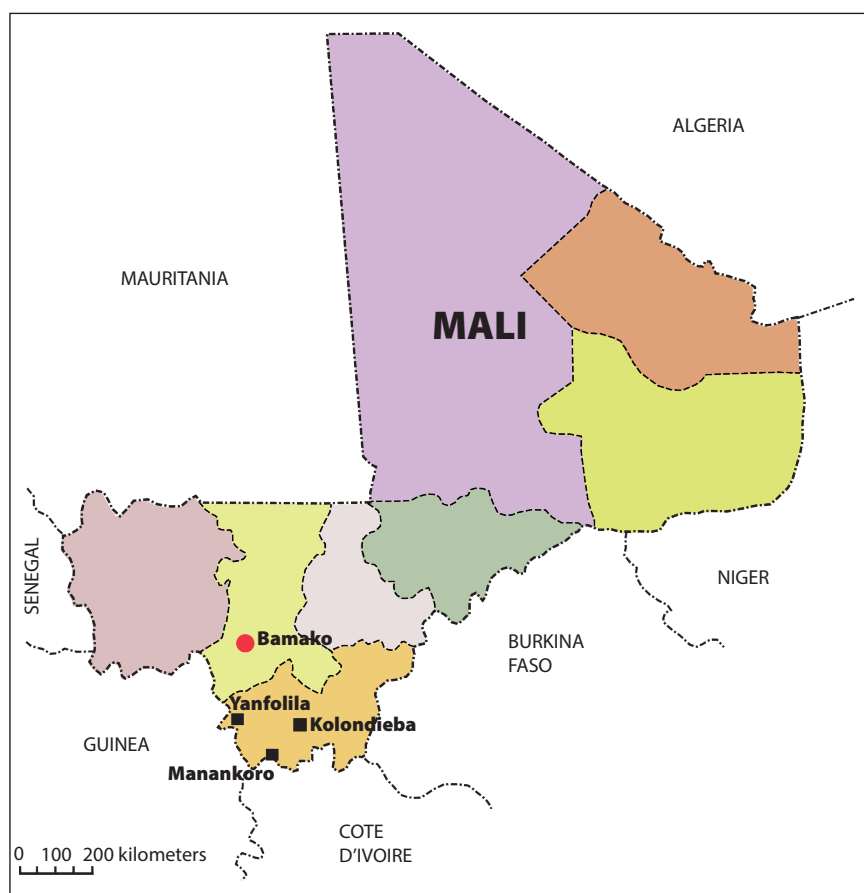
to provide members with an opportunity to have direct contact with development projects and the people involved in them, and we wanted to remain an entirely volunteer group, without paid staff, premises, or any of the overheads which went with most conventional development agencies. The international relationship we wanted to build was made possible by the internet and email, by the willingness of members to give their skills and time, and Sue's ongoing advice and reassurance.

Our first group visit was an amazing and life changing experience for all of us. We began to understand the work going on in villages and why it mattered. Our contribution continued to grow and very soon we had our own Link Worker, Tanty Samake, whose post we funded from an early stage. For years she has kept us informed of the progress on a very wide range of projects, as you will see from this report. She and others from the J&D team also visited us in

England and the bonds between us steadily grew.

Though the partnership is now ending a huge amount has been accomplished by J&D, supported by MDG. They grew until they had other major funders, but our relationship was always a special one, based on a trust and friendship which managed to flourish despite occasional language confusions and, eventually major political upheavals. The purpose of this report is to celebrate all that has been achieved and the contributions here and in Mali of many wonderful and committed people. It begins with an account of the projects undertaken by the partnership, sector by sector, and goes on to look at some of the key issues and challenges, including our approach to fundraising. I hope that you enjoy it, and that it will stand as a record of our long-shared journey.

John Hedge





J&D projects supported by MDG

Over the full life of the partnership MDG was involved in 36 separate initiatives, in the Manankoro, Kolondieba and Yanfolila areas, and in Bamako, the capital city of Mali. They are explained in this report by the area of need they aimed to meet.

1) **Provision of Diesel Mills for grain grinding and development of market gardens – 14 projects (2002-18)**

These projects usually complemented J&D's work within villages on literacy and community development. Their objective was always to support groups of women in developing their own source of income. In the case of mills, they enabled women to end their reliance on hand pounding of millet for food, which always involved many hours of hard labour. Once developed the mills were also used to grind grain for others, earning the group an additional income. The market gardens were also developed with groups of local women, each of whom had an allotted space to grow vegetables. This improved family nutrition, and the surplus was sold on local markets. In some places MDG supported both a mill and a garden. As time went on these initiatives were used to follow up another major J&D project, the establishment of women's savings groups. This was why they were called

Second Step projects - another example of MDG's role as a complementary funder. Tanty Samake followed a similar process with each group of women. They learned together, and were helped to form a managing group in which formal responsibilities were allocated. Rules were established and they learned about the equipment, basic horticulture and how to deal with maintenance and likely problems - in the case of the market gardens this was often the shortage of water, with a need to dig wells. MDG's funding covered Tanty's time, the provision of the mills and the necessary equipment to establish and secure the market garden, always involving perimeter fencing to protect the plot and keep animals out. The development of the project often took considerable time and then once the project was up and running Tanty maintained contact longer term, visiting from time to time to check on progress and offer support when necessary.

In all cases the projects were successful and several managed to generate sufficient income to develop other facilities. There were sometimes problems with management groups or a repair problem which was not attended to, but overall, the long term effect of this series of quite small and very focused projects has been to change the



Woman pounding grain traditionally



Women using grain mill

lives and perspectives of village women quite profoundly.

The projects were funded by general membership activities, individual donations and in one case by a Rotary Club in Suffolk. MDG also had valuable support from Kennington Overseas Aid Fund, in Oxfordshire. Later this work received substantial funding from Guernsey Overseas Aid and the Patsy Wood Trust, and that Trust also helped with a number of other MDG/J&D projects.

Alphabetical list of projects:

Bounoukou, Bougouni, Farabale, Kambali, Kolondieba, Kourou, Lemeroutoumu, Mafele, Manankoro Town, Niakoroko, Solona, Tomboni, Woma, Yanfolila Town.

2) Skills training for women's groups - 5 projects (2003-19)

These projects arose when groups of women sought an alternative option for economic development. Four of them were part of the Second Step initiative. A similar approach was taken by Tanty - planning and preparation, including group management was followed by a training programme, funded by MDG. Tanty would then follow up in the longer term to consolidate the work being done.

Doussoudiana -

preparation and marketing of shea butter

Yorobougoula -

preparation and marketing of shea butter

Kolondieba -

preparation and marketing of shea butter

Djiguenina -

processing and marketing of mango juice

While those four projects all had a similar basis to the diesel and market garden programmes the fifth was very different. It concerned a group of women who had come to Bamako to seek treatment for

fistula but were effectively exiled because of taboo and prejudice in their home villages about their condition. The wait for treatment was long and sometimes proved to be ineffectual. A colony of women, all in poverty, developed in Bamako, and Tanty worked with them to find ways to a sustainable living.

Always described by Tanty, rather graphically as Les Femmes Fistuleuses they established a cloth dyeing business with training and equipment provided by MDG.

Again, these projects were all funded by general MDG activities with some individual donations and have proved successful. Potentially shea butter manufacture could be a much larger industry in Mali, and in Ghana and several other countries it has proved a significant export industry. Poor infrastructure and lack of investment have prevented this from happening in Mali so far.

3) Education projects - 3 projects

N'tentou School, Manankoro (2004)

This was one of the earliest of MDG's free standing initiatives, responding to a need assessed by J&D.

The community sought a new school because of very poor facilities and a growing population. We committed to funding classrooms, latrines and a school office. The school was built and although there were changes of responsibility for it, and some tensions between the two villages involved, it has continued to function successfully, despite the serious funding problems in Malian education.

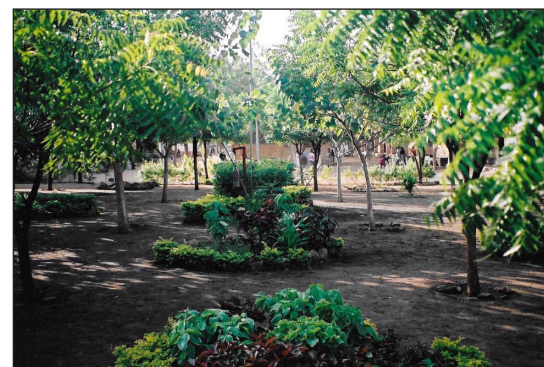
Sangare School Bamako (2001-13)

The Karamoko Sangare Primary School had a special relationship with MDG for almost 10 years. Our members were keen to have regular involvement with a specific school

and several effective links were made within Oxfordshire Primary Schools. Small packets of funding enabled the Malian school to develop its ecology programme - pupils planted trees and had a small garden. MDG also provided the installation of a telephone and electricity.



Sangare School



Sangare Eco garden

Passerelles or Speed Schools (2012-14)

J&D had a substantial programme funded by another organisation to create and support speed schools. These were intended to provide a supportive and quick route back to regular schooling for children in rural areas who had fallen out of, or never enrolled in, education. This is a common problem affecting both boys and girls and arises because of economic pressures and children being kept at home to help with the harvest or family responsibilities. J&D ensured that boys and girls were equally represented, and the re-access rate was very high. MDG's role as in many other projects was a complementary one - helping with equipment costs especially.



4) Health initiatives - 6 projects

MDG worked on the basis of a three-year agreed plan with J&D, although this was always on the basis that a start for each project depended on our finding funding. The programmes usually had a health component, and in this area the partnership had some of its largest and long-lasting initiatives.

Reproductive Health Programme (2005-11)

This was a freestanding project funded entirely by MDG, which ran for 7 years. The main donors to help us were an organisation of retired academics from Surrey University, called Guildford Academic Associates, whose special interest was in the availability of contraception and the limitation of population growth.

J&D recruited cohorts of young people, usually equal numbers of young men and women within Commune IV of Bamako. They received a training in Reproductive Health and contraception. They went into schools and informal groups in their own communities and as peer educators worked with young people on the risks of early pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease and relationship responsibilities. Part of the project was to enable young people to access contraceptives and learn how to use them. Over time the Commune acquired large numbers of peer educators, and the project had a very considerable impact on public health. The project also enabled young people to take part in wider campaigns about AIDS and young people's health. For several years a Football

Competition was arranged near the J&D office, with many teams participating. These events were used as a vehicle for further public education and J&D was helped by donations of kit and equipment from the English Football Association.



Peer educators

These proved to be attractive prizes. In a society where conversation about sex was a taboo subject, the project was welcomed by young people and the local health authorities. The project was managed by Soumy Moro, whose regular reporting enabled us to share results regularly with Guildford Academic Associates and other funders. MDG provided most of the funds for the project, including all training costs and large amounts of contraceptives, purchased locally.



Linda King on ambulance

N'tian Ambulance (2009)

The large village of N'tian in Manankoro

was a very long way from the nearest hospital provision, with very difficult terrain and no public transport. There was great concern that those in need, especially women with difficult pregnancies suffered because they never got to hospital or arrived too late to be helped effectively. Through J&D they sought help with a small motorbike ambulance, and MDG undertook to find the funding.

One of the advantages of small projects is that individual donors can make a big impact. In this case the late Trevor Cowlett, of Kennington, stepped in and raised the money himself.

Once in service the ambulance saved many people. Though for a time it was out of action, Tanty Samake worked with village leaders to help them learn how to organise repairs and keep the vehicle running. Over time we were able regularly to let Trevor Cowlett know how things were going and what had been achieved.

Bougouni Health Centre - equipment and vehicle (2004)

MDG was approached by a group of doctors about to finish their training at St. George's Hospital Tooting. Their idea was to drive a 4 x 4 vehicle from London, across North Africa and the Sahara to Mali. They saw this as an adventure with a purpose and wanted our help to find a use for the vehicle in Mali after they returned. They also planned to take as much equipment as possible for donation when they got there.



Kolondieba Hospital with Director (in white) and Tanty Samake

MDG worked with J&D to identify the Bougouni health centre and the trip ended with their delivering both vehicle and equipment. On the way back through Bamako the doctors also managed to spend time volunteering in one of Bamako's hospitals.

Over the years of our partnership there have been a number of occasions when we have been able to help individuals or groups find a practical way of contributing to development work, and this was a very successful example.

Kolondieba District Hospital project (2010)

This was one of the largest projects which MDG funded. The hospital covered a wide area with many towns and villages. The population had grown and there was so much pressure on space that mothers and malnourished children as well as women with difficult pregnancies were 'camping' in outbuildings and even the hospital mortuary. More facilities were desperately needed, and the Director wanted to build two new wards and an administration building. It took MDG some time to raise the money, but this was achieved through a series of small grants, fundraising events and individual donors. On successive MDG visits to Mali we were soon able to see the impact this work had and see the work of the hospital in action.

Wogona Health Centre (2007-8)

This project concerned another village health centre in Manankoro. Mali's health provision does rely on small scale facilities which can dispense medicine and undertake basic health care and checks. J&D's reputation and work in





the area led the Wogona Health Centre to seek support for equipment and the provision of a stock of medications. Some of these, such as blood pressure monitors were greatly needed. J&D were able to source the equipment effectively and put it in place. During later visits, MDG members were able to see the clinic in action.

The Yanfolila Mutuelle - support for the development of a community-based health insurance scheme (2014-21)

This was the largest and most complex of the projects MDG funded. Its genesis was the success of separately funded women's savings schemes in 28 of the Yanfolila area villages. Tiori Diarra, then leader of the local J&D team suggested that a logical next step, was to follow up the savings scheme by empowering women to establish and run a mutual health insurance scheme.

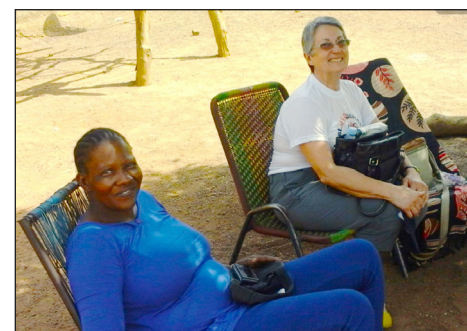
A number of these organisations operate in Mali, where those receiving health care are required to make a payment for their treatment and medication. This can be very challenging in subsistence rural economies, and many are tempted to do without, or resort to traditional cures, which can lead to serious problems. An insurance scheme enables families to pay a small regular amount which covers most health charges.



Andy Benson at a village meeting

When existing funding from a different source came to an end it was important to keep the momentum going. MDG raised funds through a special appeal and small amounts from a number of trusts to enable the scheme to begin, while a search for more substantial longer-term funding was undertaken. After a lengthy process, and much shared planning with J&D we were awarded a grant of over £230,000 by Comic Relief to implement the scheme in full, through a development team based in Yanfolila.

Work across the villages was demanding, and the team also had the task of training the women who formed the overall management group. Education in the villages also included work on health promotion, and prevention of illness. The challenges were great and there was much resistance, but slowly progress was made over the three years of the project



Tanty and Michelle

Eventually a full evaluation was undertaken independently, as required by Comic Relief. This certainly revealed several weaknesses, not least problems in working with local health centres and reaching a break-even point for the scheme to be sustainable in terms of membership. The failure of the Malian government to provide promised funding was also a major challenge. To support sustainability MDG additionally funded a headquarters building for the project and a diesel mill specifically to provide an additional revenue source.

MDG was one of the smallest organisations Comic Relief had funded with a major grant

and the demands on our volunteer officers were very considerable. Much was learnt both by MDG and J&D.

Importantly, the Mutuelle, as a free-standing organisation has come through these crises and, although still vulnerable, has held its own so far. In the process it has also developed links with other schemes.

5) Water Management - capital projects - 2 projects

The Mafele Dam (2006)

The town of Mafele approached J&D seeking help to develop a community project to build a dam to retain water for drinking, avoid drought and possibly develop fish stocks as a food source. This would address a long-term problem with water supply particularly during lengthy dry seasons. J&D and MDG agreed to seek the funding.

As well as finding support from a range of donors J&D also developed a link with the Southampton based engineering group, Gifford, later part of the international Ramboll Group. As

well as providing some funding, Gifford also sent two volunteers to support the scheme locally. Mafele also ensured that its young people contributed volunteer labour, and the eventual result was an impressive structure which has continued to serve the community ever since.

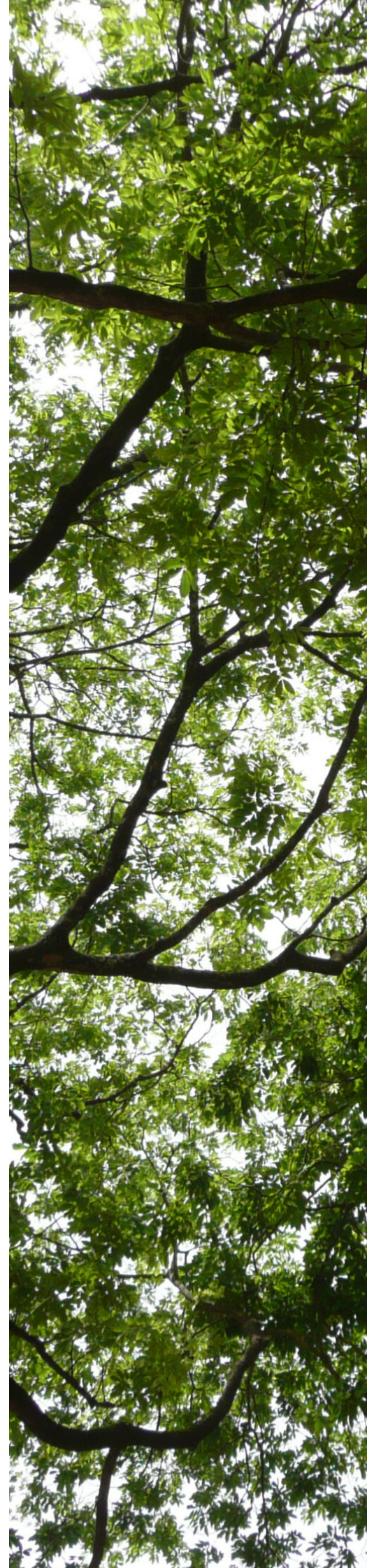
The Soromba bridge and dam (2008)

After the completion of the Mafele dam another village, Soromba, approached J&D for help. Soromba had major problems with keeping a reliable and clean water supply, as well as an annual flooding crisis during the rainy season when the village, because of its location, was effectively cut off for a substantial period. It was decided that the answer was a bridge which would also serve as a barrier for water conservation.

This was a substantial engineering project and much of the work was done by local people with professional support. Again, Gifford sent two volunteers. Tragically, one of them, Joseph Milthorp contracted Lassa fever, and although taken to hospital in Bamako, and flown back to England his condition deteriorated and



Mafele Dam





he died. The village was heartbroken, and although the work continued, there was great sadness, not only in Soromba, but also within J&D, MDG and Gifford.

When the bridge was finally opened, by John Hedge and Linda King during an MDG visit it was an extremely poignant moment when the name of the new bridge was revealed as Le Pont Joseph Mlthorp.

Joseph's legacy lives on and the bridge has done its work throughout the years since.

well as being an integrated member of J&D's management team. She facilitated our visits, investigated new ideas, and travelled many times across southern Mali, often by motor bike, to make sure that work was going on, and chase things up if they were not.

Tanty came to England with her colleague Moussa Gadio and met many of us, sharing her infectious sense of humour and attending many events. In recent times, as J&D has reduced in size Tanty became a key figure in maintaining the agency and did so with great-



John Hedge and Linda King at the opening of the Soromba Bridge with Kone

6) Work to support J&D – 6 projects

The MDG Link Worker (2002-24)

It became clear relatively quickly after the partnership was established that the regular communication, feedback and involvement which we sought for our members needed a dedicated worker within the J&D team. Tanty Samake had been a trainee with J&D and she was appointed to the post. She served in that role for 22 years, providing regular reports on all projects, both current and previous, as

loyalty despite many challenges. Now that the partnership is ending, she will seek other work and we will miss her greatly though we hope that she will maintain the friendships she has made with many of us.

The I Ni Che (Bambara for Hello!) Toyota 4 x 4 project (2006)

A long-standing problem for J&D as an indigenous organisation, rather than part of an international agency, was the lack of a suitable vehicle, capable of coping with rough terrain and with sufficient capacity to carry small groups of workers and equipment. Though J&D

was receiving substantial funding from a variety of international development organisations this did not enable them to meet core costs, such as the acquisition of vehicles.

MDG was asked to help and after some initial fundraising approached Toyota UK, to see if they would support us. Toyota turned out to be extremely generous. They bore the costs of a quality Landcruiser, transported it from Europe and arranged for it to be adapted for African use and serviced in Toyota's workshop for

tinued to provide funding for vehicle maintenance and similar costs.

Training for J&D staff (2002 and 2008)

As well as supporting short courses for staff in Mali and attendance at local conferences, MDG supported longer and more substantial training activities for two key members of J&D staff. Mamadou Kone, J&D's Director attended an English language course in Oxford and was supported during his stay by MDG. This time was invaluable in our making a very warm and

early years this included computer equipment made available by another charity which recycled equipment. This had some value, but we learned a valuable lesson from it about reliability and the need wherever possible to enable your partner to source things locally. Thereafter that was the approach we took, with the notable exception, of course of the 4 x 4 vehicle mentioned earlier.

The film - Road to Mafele (2009)

In 2009 MDG funded Martin Freeth, a well-known documentary filmmaker, and friend of MDG to go to Mali and make a film about the partnership and J&D's work. He involved local technical staff and edited the film himself. With the help of Wilfred Willey, then head of the UK Malian Council and now an MDG committee member, a Bambara version was developed for work in Mali. The film was made available to members, shown at meetings and presentations and gave a very clear picture of projects and the needs they were trying to meet. Copies are still available. Some time ago Martin Freeth died, leaving behind a very impressive range of work, including this film and we honour his contribution and memory.

Support for a new office and community space (2016-20)

For many years J&D was based in premises in Lafiabougou, at the heart of Bamako's Commune IV. Eventually an ambition was achieved to create a new office, not far away, and as part of the complex small shop units were incorporated for rent to support J&D. To this was added a community facility, intended for use by other organisations and as a youth centre. MDG, again with support from the Patsy Wood Trust, provided the funding for solar panels and other equipment.



Toyota vehicle with Tanty and villagers

trainees at Aylesbury Youth Offenders Institution. The project was led by Linda King and Ray Fishbourne. When the time came for the vehicle to be exported to Mali via Togo, Toyota funded those costs as well, and supported the prison's instructor to go with the MDG team to present the vehicle to J&D and brief staff about it.

The final stages of the project provided many adventures including flight from a coup in Togo, but the vehicle got to Mali, and served for many years until recently. As part of MDG's commitment to J&D core costs we have con-

strong relationship with Kone, and although he left J&D some years later to take up a senior development post in another agency those friendships have continued and will, hopefully, be maintained in the years ahead.

MDG also supported Moussa Gadio in a development course he undertook in the USA, and this has enabled him to make a very successful career in international development.

Equipment (2002)

At various stages over the years MDG has supported the cost of equipment and materials both for projects and the J&D office. In the

Key members of the J&D Team

While we have met many talented and committed members of J&D and its committee over the years, four people stand out as key supporters of the partnership, and our work would not have been possible without them

Sue Upton

The inspiration behind MDG and the partnership, Sue took up development work initially in Tanzania and then under the auspices of International Service worked as the capacity builder for the fledgling J&D. Once she left, she continued to serve as a member of J&D's Council and in recent years has also served on the MDG committee. For many years Sue worked across Africa as a consultant, and her advice, support and reassurance have been key to our being able to sustain the work for such a long period.

Mamadou Kone

Kone was one of J&D's founders and its highly successful first Director, building the organisation and its reputation over a number of years before taking on another senior role with an international agency. Kone trained as an agronomist in the USSR, and as well as speaking Russian and other languages quickly learnt English at a college in Oxford in order to help develop the partnership and his work with other funders. Kone's visits to England were greatly appreciated by MDG members who appreciated his warmth, sense of humour and, not least, his love of English football, especially Manchester United!

Madou Cheick Diarra

Madou was also a founding member of J&D and a fellow student in the USSR, where they both played for the Malian student's football team - Madou as striker and Kone as a determined defender! Madou has worked as a highly respected international development consultant over the years, travelling widely, though when in Bamako his home was always there to welcome visitors from MDG. Madou led the committee of J&D at various key points in its history, and his imagination and diplomacy

have been of great importance to the organisation, which he still serves.

Tanty Samake



Tanty has been the continuous link since her first appointment in 2002 and her contributions to projects run through this report. Over time those of us who visited and saw her in action with village meetings and women's groups know very well how skilled a community worker she became, and how she always embodied J&D's principles of empowerment and respect. She often had to deal with difficult situations but always managed to keep a sense of fun and humour, so that for MDG members she was the smiling face of our partnership, demonstrating what we had always hoped for - a partnership based on friendship as well as funding.



Madou and Kone

Mali Development Group People

Many people have helped MDG over the years, using a wide range of skills, from computing to baking, singing to skydiving and countless other ways. We have sold cards, played cricket, organised conferences, camped out, run marathons and written countless emails and letters. Much of our activity-based fundraising has been led by Linda King who continues to coordinate our 'Babs' catering group.

We have always stuck to our principle of using membership skills wherever possible. Ken King and more recently Sue Upton have developed and maintained our web site, and of course Andrea Hewes has designed our reports and documents with great flair and creativity from the beginning.

A key feature of our approach has been to ensure that language differences did not obstruct our communications and sharing. Judith Hartley, Luke Hedge, Sue Upton and in earlier years Laurence Lallane Devlin all helped us with their language skills. We have always valued having support from Malians in the UK, and Wilfred Willey is a current member of our committee.

Many committee members accompanied members to Mali on visits and some helped host J&D visits when visits were still possible. Thanks to everyone but especially those who have served on the committee. They are listed below with their various offices.

Andy Benson *Chair*
Michelle Chadwick
Ray Fishbourne
Linda Francis
Sam Garbett
Pat Goodwin
Judith Hartley *Secretary*
Martin Hallam
David Hedge *Treasurer*
Janice Hedge *Communications Secretary*
Gill Hedge
John Hedge *Secretary*
Luke Hedge
Andrea Hewes
Tim Hewes
Angie Julian
Ken King *Treasurer*
Linda King *Chair*
Laurence Lallane-Devlin *Chair*
Nick Linney *Secretary*
Dan Price
Sue Sloggett
Rob Spivey *Secretary*
Sue Upton
Wilfred Willey

As we celebrate the MDG/J&D partnership we remember too those who served on our committee and have died in recent years.

Ray Fishbourne who visited Mali several times, and worked on the I Ni Che project, Pat Goodwin who also visited Mali and helped with much fundraising, and David Hedge who was Treasurer of MDG from its beginning until he died in 2023 and made an enormous contribution including his securing support from Bank of Montreal for our well-loved annual cricket match at Merton College cricket ground in Oxford.

Funders

MDG's funding to J&D over the life of the partnership has been well over £1 million. A substantial proportion of that has been from events, activities, individual donations and grants from small trusts and charities. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed. We are grateful too for those larger donors and sponsors who either supported a specific project or helped us over time, with particular thanks to Just Trust and the Patsy Wood Trust in this regard.

Bank of Montreal
Comic Relief
The Funding Network
Gifford
Guernsey Overseas Aid
Just Trust
Kennington Overseas Aid
Patsy Wood Trust
Toyota UK
TruckFest
Universal Music/Island Records (royalty donation from Disclosure, with Fatoumata Diawara)



Reflection

As MDG's founder and first Secretary it has been a great pleasure to look back over the years on the work we have done together with J&D. There have been great joys. All of us have gained hugely from learning about Mali and its communities, and beginning to understand how development work is done effectively. There have been difficult times too, notably the tragic death of Joe Milthorp who volunteered at Soromba.

Not everything has gone well, either. The Mutuelle project revealed significant operational problems and some serious differences of opinion. At other times we have sometimes failed to find the funding for things as quickly as we had hoped, but our partners have been understanding and patient about this.

Communication, always a key to good working relationships, has sometimes been slow, but overall, we have been able, with J&D's openness and willing accountability, both to show that money has been spent well, and to give high levels of feedback both to funders and members.

J&D has had to contend with major changes in Mali - insecurity from the north, military coups and an isolated economy with limited access to international development funding. And things changed in the UK as well, with Government's approach to funding development changing to reflect British trade and diplomatic interests rather than prioritising the poorest of countries. At the same time a steadily increasing preoccupation with immigration made it almost impossible for Malians to obtain visas even for professional exchanges. MDG had always wanted to have regular Malian visits and the lack of those has saddened us all.

It has been important to support J&D through the difficulties of recent times and we have tried to do our best. We hope very much that, although now operating on a very limited basis, J&D will grow again and do more of the great work which we saw in so many projects.

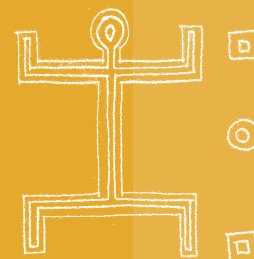
Whether or not that happens we will all want to maintain the friendships we have made, and I hope that this will be the case.

If development work is done well the results last and are taken forward by those who have been empowered. We all learnt that while the funding and equipment are important, how people are empowered to manage those resources and take control is even more crucial. J&D has been very good at that.

If you would like to know more about our work over the years, take a look at the annual reports on our website. They are all there, and I have been looking through them to produce this document. I am so impressed by their colour, energy and variety.

Ours has been a very long partnership, and although we may be sad about its end, everyone who has worked for MDG and J&D should take pride in what has been accomplished. It is a great deal. MDG will continue now to do its best to support our other long standing partner Pensons à Demain (PAD) and we hope that you, too, will remain with us on the journey, as PAD's work is more vital than ever.

John Hedge





**Mali
Development Group**