



Dear Members and Friends of Mali Development Group,

July 2025 Newsletter and Notice of AGM to be held on Sunday, 7th September at 2pm

I am pleased to be able to send you our latest Newsletter which includes information about our work over the last 6 months. As you may remember, we said goodbye to one of our partners, Jeunesse et Développement last summer and since then have focussed our energy on our main partner PAD. The newsletter is a brief update about where we are now, with a more detailed account to be found in our Annual Report which will be landing in your inbox very soon.

PAD News Flash!

We had very good news this month when our application for funding to the Ashworth Charitable Trust was accepted. We received a grant of £4,000 to contribute to our quarterly transfers to support the PAD centre's running costs.

Sue Upton

A Farewell and a Welcome

MDG committee members were very sad to learn, in early April, of the recent passing of Violet Diallo, in Mali. Many of us who have visited Mali, had met her and found her to be a remarkable woman. She had served on the Board of our long-term partner, Jeunesse et Développement, and she also supported various other NGOs and projects. She was passionate about Mali and Malians, and had done much to promote Malian music, and foster Mali-UK relations. She was a former Honorary British Consul and was awarded an MBE in 2001 for her services to the Malian community.

Through her friend, Mary Allen, also a long-term supporter of MDG, we learned

that the newly appointed British Ambassador, Angus McKee, had heard about Violet and had gone to present his condolences to the Diallo family. This further encouraged the committee to decide to contact the Ambassador, as we also wanted to see if there were other connections we could make between what we do in the UK and our contacts in Mali.

We were delighted when Mr McKee offered to speak to us through video call, and Wilfred Willey and I were able to share more information about the work and history of MDG and how we might be able to help promote UK-Mali relations. He generously gave us an hour of his time and was genuinely interested in our work. We hope this new connection for Mali-UK relations will continue. You can read more about the Ambassador [here](#).

Judith Hartley
Secretary

Fundraising by supporters

In all the years that we've been going we've supported various events to raise money – sponsored all sorts of sporting activities, held book sales, raffles, boot sales, market stalls, hosted quizzes, stewarded for festivals and steam rallies, played and catered at cricket matches, as well as weddings, birthday parties and nearly anything else we could think of or heard about.

These days we have been concentrating on cooking and eating as a means of raising money. We have a small group of keen cooks and bakers who at short notice produce delicious cakes, sandwiches and more adventurous dishes usually for people who have heard of us or sometimes for local (south Oxfordshire) cake sales. This can be a bit unpredictable in terms of a regular income, but you'll see from the accounts that we are able to make a substantial contribution to MDG funds. We also generally enjoy ourselves and have much chat in the process!

Linda King

Finances

MDG is holding its own financially, and Sue Upton is making regular bids to charitable trusts. As anyone who has ever done this will know, it is a steady and demanding task, which needs to be kept going, even when, as often happens you don't succeed.

We are regularly helped by the work of the Babs catering team, led by Linda

King. As always new recruits are welcome. Over the year the Babs make a very significant contribution to our income, as well as letting other people know about MDG and its work as a charity.

The other vital element of our funding is from members who contribute regularly. Knowing that this block of money is coming in every month gives us important stability, but of course this is a challenging time for all charities. We are no exception, and although we have hardly any overheads and keep a very close eye on all costs, inflation means that everything costs more.

If you are a regular donor, we'd be very grateful if you could consider increasing your contribution, by however much you can afford. It will make a real difference.

If you are not a regular donor, would you please consider making a monthly donation. Even small amounts, given regularly, are crucial to sustaining our work, and all donations unlock Gift Aid which we claim regularly.

Increasing your donation or starting a regular donation are the biggest ways to support what we do, so please do what you can, and thank you in advance.

John Hedge

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News reporting about Mali

The MDG committee recently discussed concerns about the negative image of Mali which has been dominating media coverage and platforms like Mali Interest Group on Facebook. Our Malian community member, Wilfred Willey, has a very clear view of the problems which this causes, and he has written the article below. We believe that if we are to promote awareness of Mali and support for its development it is very important that a fair image of the country is presented whenever possible. In response to the concerns raised, the MDG committee has decided that it will, where possible, promote constructive news items about development and community life and will also support the Malian community in its efforts to achieve a better balance of coverage.

Mali is currently at war and has been for over a decade now. The security of the country and that of its people is threatened by terrorist armed groups of different denominations. While the army fights on the front and prevents terrorist attacks against civilians, there is another war taking place in the background: the information war.

Mali asked both the French and UN troops to leave the country due to their incapacity, after 10 years of presence, to stop the spread of the terrorist attacks to other parts of the territory. The authorities turned to Russia for assistance, especially the much-needed military equipment and training. Russia sent its military instructors and allowed the Malian government to buy military equipment, something they couldn't do while France was there due to sanctions. This bold act was applauded by the vast majority of Malians and many Africans who saw it as a true declaration of sovereignty, but it did not go down so well in France, particularly at the Elysee Palace and within the right-wing political circles.

So, what ensued was a brutal media campaign aimed at denigrating the military authorities, with the hope that the population would rise up and kick them out of power. Media outlets such as France24, Radio France International (RFI) and TV5 Monde, which are part of France Médias Monde, a government owned holding company, have been involved in achieving these objectives, highlighting the army's shortcomings and failures in the fight against terrorism, political dissent, etc. Every time the Malian armed forces recorded a victory in battle, this was downplayed in media reports and the focus diverted to the presence of Russian mercenaries of the Wagner group. When that did not work well, they created a new narrative about the army systematically targeting civilians from the Fulani community, alluding to some ethnic cleansing, a dangerous allegation in a multi-ethnic country such as Mali and it is totally untrue. Several high-ranking officers, including colonel Lala Diallo, the current president's wife, are from this tribe and will never allow a systematic killing of their own people. This led to these media being banned from broadcasting in Mali. Unfortunately, this line was also picked up by other mainstream media.

Once one likes and shares one of these items on social media, one's newsfeed will become a target for more like them. And before you know it, you are

receiving news that is almost always biased, unbalanced with a content that never shows Mali in a positive light. By sharing these articles and news reports without fact-checking, people can unknowingly contribute to maintaining and even strengthening this point of view. This cycle needs to be broken by bringing to the fore other events taking place in Mali with a more constructive content. I recently spent 3 months in Mali and attended several music events both in Bamako and Segou and I try to share these with my contacts on social media to make sure we do not only focus on the conflict, because there is more to this country than that.

MDG is not suggesting that we only share positive articles about Mali, that wouldn't be democratic, but if we are sharing information about a country, we all claim to love, we should perhaps look at the impact some of the content could have on the recipients and the country itself.

Wilfred Willey

Annual General Meeting

Below are the details of our AGM, to be held on **Sunday, 7th September 2025 at 2pm** This will be delivered via Zoom and the link to take you to the meeting will be sent to you a little closer to the date.

Here is a link to the **Notice of Annual General Meeting** which includes the nomination forms for committee officials which needs to reach us by 23rd August.

https://mcusercontent.com/922f149fa7ed55db8c8db01a9/files/27e4ebc4-054b-5372-9277-3665c2c9f14e/AGM_Notice_7.9.25.02.docx

Many thanks for your continued support.

Janice Hedge
Communications.

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