



"Positive action during troubled times"

"Wale nyuman, gèlèya waati la"

(Bambara)

Mali Development Group
Charity number: 1088140

Linda King (Chair)
Judith Hartley (Secretary) Email: secretary@malidg.org.uk
Ken King (Treasurer)

Other committee members:

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



Introduction from John Hedge

Welcome to our annual report, as MDG completes another year of support for vital work in Mali.

You can read here a piece by Sue Upton about the wonderful work being done by our partner Pensons à Demain, or PAD for short. Kader Keita and his team keep us very well informed through photographs and messages, and Sue has been successful over the past year with several bids for funding, which has helped a great deal.

Two regular funding sources are crucial to our being able to keep going. Linda King and her great team of volunteers, known collectively as 'The Babs,' have catered for many events over the last year, as you will see from Linda's report. Our other key funding source is the regular income from monthly donations. A heartfelt thankyou to everyone who helps in this way. Of course we would be keen to see others join them, so we'd ask you to think about whether this is something you could do. We are thinking about other possible ways of funding MDG, and if you have suggestions for activities which might promote awareness of Mali as well as making money, we would be very pleased to hear from you. The committee has been concerned recently about the negative image of Mali which dominates news media and platforms like the Mali Interest Group. We have been alerted to this problem by Wilfred Willey, our Malian committee member and we have agreed that wherever possible we will share positive information about Malian life and our support for work there. We are well placed to do this because of Wilfred Willey and Sue Upton's regular trips to Mali. In addition, our secretary Judith Hartley, supported by Wilfred Willey has developed a very positive relationship with the UK Ambassador in Mali, and you can read about this in Judith's report.

I have wanted for some time to write a book about the first 25 years of MDG. This will be called 'In I Che' ('Hello' or 'Greetings' in Bambara), and it covers how we got going, the various projects, people and places we have been involved in down the years, and many of the adventures we had in Mali. It has been read in draft by Kone, Tanty, Madou and Kader Keita and they have all been very positive about it. The book has also been endorsed by the ecologist Satish Kumar, which is very encouraging. The book is being designed by Andrea Hewes and hopefully will be published early in 2026. We'll keep you posted!

Thanks, as ever, for all your support and I hope that you will enjoy the annual report.

News from PAD

Sue Upton



Kader and I at the presentaion of sewings gathering



One young student with her baby at the meeting



The presentations of sewing machine gatherings



Machine being loaded into a taxi

I had the opportunity to visit the PAD premises in Bamako in person in February and am happy to report that Kader and his team are going strong, taking advantage of opportunities as they arise and using their limited resources to maximum effect. The building was looking bright and cheerful, having been newly decorated courtesy of the US Embassy, with new thatching on the sewing workshop.

Sewing and Tailoring:

The year started with the graduation ceremony for the 2024 cohort of the sewing and tailoring course for young mums. I was able to meet most of this group when they came to collect their sewing machines and start up kit – they were all very excited! Members of the incoming cohort were also invited, giving them an opportunity to meet last year’s group and learn more about the course. The 2025 cohort is benefitting from MDG’s grant from the Kitchen Table Charities Trust, which has covered most of the costs. Kader had planned to add some young men referred by a local partner to the course this year, but there have been some complications, and this hasn’t as yet come to fruition. However, there is no shortage of young mums keen to take up the opportunity. Kader sent me some outline bios of the new cohort, so I’ve shared a couple with you here.



Mariam Sidibé is 17 and her son Aboubacar is 4 months old. She comes from a poor family in the Kanadjiguila quarter of Bamako and has never been to school. She was living on the streets after her father died and she had an argument with her family. She became pregnant and when the baby was born his father, Lassina, a minibus driver, refused to take any responsibility for meeting his son’s needs. Mariam then returned home with the baby with the aim of doing her best to sort out her life and look after her son. She heard about the PAD training through a friend and came to the centre to enrol. She’s very committed, is always the first to arrive and is doing well on the course.



Kader, Mariam and Yacouba of the PAD team



Fatoumata Djibo is also 17 with a son called Aboubacar who is 8 months old. She comes from a marabout’s family in the Lafiabougou quarter of Bamako, where the PAD centre is located. She attended a koranic school. She describes how she started spending time with a group of friends and ended up getting pregnant, which led to a lot of conflict with her family, mainly because of her father’s position as a religious leader. She wants to become independent to escape this and that is her main motivation for enrolling on the course.



Graduate and child with certificate



The current cohort in the sewing workshop



Pattern drawing workshop



Pattern drawing workshop

Samu Social:

PAD’s partnership with Samu Social continues. Samu Social is an international organisation based in the Netherlands. It carries out night runs in Bamako to identify young people at risk. They are then allocated to one of five centres with accommodation – usually the Kanuya centre as this has the most beds available. After a short introductory stay, young people are offered various possible programmes or activities and allocated to the appropriate centre, including PAD. Samu Social also ensures medical checks and health care for all young people enrolled with PAD.

Bollé Detention Centre:

Kader is still teaching regular painting and art classes at Bollé Young Women’s Detention Centre. He told me that since the recent escape of three young women he is currently obliged to have armed guards in the room, but he hopes that this won’t be a permanent requirement. He’s working with a young woman who has a life sentence to train her to be able to assist him and eventually perhaps take over his role.

US Embassy:

Several years ago, an American called Julie volunteered with PAD during her husband’s posting in Bamako and since then PAD has developed an ongoing relationship with the American embassy, running annual bogolan workshops for their staff and receiving small grants to support the centre in various ways.

Arts workshops:

PAD continues to run a series of arts workshops, including the traditional bogolan, for children living and working on the streets and sometimes local children as well, to encourage integration.

Night runs and meet ups:

Kader and the team provide regular meetings when kids on the streets know they will be at a certain spot at a certain time. This enables the team to keep their ears to the ground, identify new youngsters on the streets and offer support.

An Influential and Remarkable Woman Violet Diallo

Anyone from Britain who visited Mali over the last forty odd years almost certainly came across Violet Diallo. Born Violet Gumbleton, she trained as a social worker and was a probation officer in London before she met her husband, Seydou Diallo, in Tunisia, where he was a Malian Diplomat. After they were married, she returned to Mali with him at the end of his period of service. I remember Seydou at diplomatic events in Bamako. He was older than Violet and passed away in 2000 aged 75.

During her many years in Mali, Violet was well known and respected and fulfilled many roles. She was passionate about protecting and supporting children and their development and along the way adopted her daughter Anna, now grown up and working at Bamako airport. Violet worked as a teacher at the American school and later took on the job of honorary British Consul, in the times before Mali had its own Ambassador. In 2001 she was awarded an MBE, in recognition of her services to the local community in Mali. More recently she started her own development consultancy, GAP (Groupe d'Appui au Progrès), from where she managed her activities. These included coordinating international tours for West African musicians, various research projects and the tasks of "fixer" for visiting journalists, musicians, students and academics. She was the Mali representative for Aflaton, an international initiative to promote financial education in schools, and as such was responsible for training hundreds of young people to use the approach. She also kept a watching brief on NGOs with a link to the UK, such as Christian Aid, SPANA (working with donkey's) and MDG's partners, Jeunesse et Développement and PAD.

Violet seemed to know everyone in Mali. When I arrived in Bamako in 1996, I was impressed and amazed by her extensive card index, from which she would pull, as if by magic, precisely the contact that was needed, for, it seemed, absolutely anything required! She also had a seemingly inexhaustible supply of funny stories from her travels and experiences. I remember her recounting the time she was travelling across Northern Nigeria in a car with four nuns. They had no access to clean drinking water so were obliged to drink beer to avoid dehydration, as this was the only liquid available. The nuns were apparently unphased, and all ended well.

Violet was equally at home presiding over a diplomatic function and in the poorest village. Her sense of humour always stood her in good stead and she remained unflappable when things got tough. She was unendingly kind and always ready to take the time to help people explore, understand and enjoy the delights of being in Mali. When my teenage nephew visited, she arranged for him to spend the afternoon with a visiting musician and film director, something that he has never forgotten.

Violet will be greatly missed, not least by MDG, which she was always ready to help and support. Her last months were spent in Bamako, in the home of Mary Allen, another long-term Brit in Mali, and her husband Ballo. They cared for her when she became ill and looked after her to the end, for which we are very grateful. Violet died on 31st of March this year and was buried in Seydou's native village of Dio-Garé, not far from Kati, in a beautiful spot in the shade of a group of huge old trees, right next to her husband. Rest in peace Violet, and thank you.



Some of this year's cohort



Mum and her baby



Some of the new intake

Fundraising:

This becomes ever more challenging, but we continue to seek out new sources and make grant applications. We are grateful to the Ashworth Charitable Trust for a grant of £4,000 to support PAD's running costs this year. Kader has asked us to look for funds to replace 22 mattresses (£40.00 each) at the centre as the ones they have are really worn out. He has also optimistically asked for 26 more sewing machines (£115.00 each) so that this year's sewing and tailoring cohort will be able to take their machines with them when they graduate. For the larger sum of £3,200 a basic solar power system could be installed to enable them to run lights, fans and a computer, which would be a great addition, since power cuts are frequent and long lasting. When I was in Bamako in February people only had 6 hours of power in every 24, with no prior information about which 6 hours these would be. We'd be grateful for any information about possible funders and, as ever, any contributions are welcome.

Kader and his team asked me to pass on their thanks to MDG and all supporters since the centre wouldn't be able to operate without the running costs that we provide. The team is well established and provides a reference point for many past students and young people on the streets, who frequently call in, sometimes for advice, or just to say hello. I never cease to be impressed by the work that is taking place and the commitment shown by the team, which is well respected and supported by the local community.



Fundraising
Linda King



The Babs group does whatever it can to raise funds for MDG. The photo shows a couple of us selling home-made cakes in North Oxford. We've been doing this once a year for the last few years. By the time we remembered to take a photo this time, we had already sold much of our stock! In the end we sold out, raising almost £400 for MDG.



Financial Report
Ken King

Financial Report for year ended 31st March 2025

During the year we have made our final payments to J&D following our decision to end our partnership with them. We have continued to provide funding for the regular activities of PAD as well as passing on a donation from Kitchen Table (£4500) for a specific project.

The cash funds at the end of the year appear lower than normal because we have already made the first two quarterly payments to PAD for the following year.

The accounts for the Financial Year (FY) 2023-24 have been approved by the committee and are under review by an Independent Examiner. The figures are below.

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31st March 2025			
	Unrestricted	Restricted	TOTAL
	£	£	£
Receipts			
Donations, legacies and grants	13,548	0	13,548
Fundraising	4,660	0	4,660
Interest	3	0	3
Refunds	88	0	88
Transfer between accounts	4	0	4
Total Receipts	18,303	0	18,303
Payments			
Donations paid (transferred)	29,100	0	29100
Insurance	260	0	260
Bank Charges	133	0	133
Other expenses	192	0	192
Refunds	60	0	60
Transfer between accounts	4	0	4
Total Receipts	29,749	0	29749
Net Receipts	-11446	0	-11446
Cash funds last year end B/F	14,260	0	14,260
Cash funds this year end C/F	2,814	0	2,814



**Mali
Development Group**

