



MALI DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Registered Charity Number 1088140

ANNUAL REPORT 2001-2002

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Introduction

Mali Development Group was founded by a group of people in Oxfordshire who wished to support work being undertaken in Mali by the Malian NGO Jeunesse et Developpement, as well as making Mali, its culture and its development issues better known in the UK. Our initial inspiration was Sue Upton, an English worker within the J and D management team, but as this report shows we have during our first year been able to develop wider links with J and D in a relationship which has grown closer from shared tasks and commitments.

Early preparatory and fundraising work early in 2001 led to an inaugural meeting, the election of a Committee, and the formal submission of an application for charitable status, which was granted on 21st August 2001.

Officers and members of the Committee are as follows.

Laurence Lalanne-Devlin, Chair.
John Hedge, Joint Secretary.
Gill Hedge, Joint Secretary.
David Hedge, Treasurer.
Martin Hallam, Membership Secretary.
Sue Sloggett, Committee Member.
Linda King, Committee Member.
Andrea McLintic, Committee Member.
Angie Julian, Committee Member.

The Committee Members are all trustees of the charity. By the date of the AGM in September the Committee will have met on 7 occasions, and an almost full level of attendance has enabled business to be conducted very effectively in our first year.

Membership and Website.

Membership has steadily increased during the year, with a mixture of individual and family memberships. We have been particularly pleased to welcome two group memberships, recently the Birchwood Hall Community in Malvern who have been supporting Jand D projects for a considerable time already, and the Mali Group of Christians Together in Newton Abbott, who have also considerable prior involvement and expertise. Overall we estimate that over 100 people are now involved with the group in one category of membership or another.

We continue to put out a newsletter every two months and plan to continue with this in the coming year. Our website owes much to the work of Ken King, and is regularly updated with news from Mali and our UK based activities. For those who have not yet seen it the address is www.malidg.org.uk

The bulk of membership at present is in Oxfordshire, and so far this has tended to mean a concentration of events there, but we are keen to support activities elsewhere and would be very keen to support activities and groupings of members elsewhere. if you would like to take such work on please let us know.

Contributions to work in Mali and the work of Jeunesse et Developpement.

a) Manankoro

Much of our early activity has been to support J and D's integrated development programme in this area in the south of Mali. The programme has health, education, adult literacy and women's' development components. So far we have contributed as follows:

- Motor Bike for use of village health workers.
- Grain Mill for a local Women's' Organisation
- Our Chair, Laurence Lalanne-Devlin visited to advise on use of local radio.

As well as giving practical support we have taken up with the Department for International Development a cutback in local funding imposed by the British Embassy, and we hope that this may change the decision. Evaluation work on progress to date in Manankoro is continuing and we will distribute the findings to members when available. All the indicators are very encouraging, and Manankoro will remain an important priority for our support in the next 12 months.

The unifying theme between the different components of the Manankoro Programme is the use of Reflect, a technique of adult education which has been used across the world and has been championed particularly by ActionAid, the U.K based international agency who are one of J and D's main funders. Oxfam's recent review of education worldwide, by Kevin Watkins, comments on the importance of Reflect, not only for literacy but also empowerment and democratisation. This is particularly relevant in Mali where Government has been radically decentralised on a democratic basis in recent years but the adult literacy rate in rural areas such as Manankoro has been around 2%. In seeking to raise that figure to 30% the programme will not only enable people to look after themselves more effectively but will help them to take part more fully in the democratic process. Laurence Lalanne-Devlin has produced an excellent radio programme in English, which gets across very clearly the impact which Reflect has on peoples' lives, and details of this are available on request.

In rural areas such as Manankoro access to education for children is also difficult, and the Oxfam Education Report notes that Mali has some of the lowest enrolment rates for primary education in the world. J and D have asked that we fundraise for classrooms in one of the main village groupings. This will be a major challenge for us. We have made funding bids already for this initiative, and are hopeful that we can secure the funding, but your support is also needed in the coming year for the establishment of grain grinding mills in other village groups, building on the successful installation some months ago of the first mill.

b) Street Children and Young people in need.

J and D have played an important role in this issue, including collaboration with Oxfam in an On the Line project which set up a Conference for West African street children. As a result of this unique event the Bamako Declaration was produced - a statement of the rights and needs of street children.

One of the important needs raised was the necessity of support and training for young people who wished to establish their own employment. J and D are now implementing this proposal in Bamako.

MDG's work in this area over the last year has been as follows:

- We have made an initial contribution of £1,500 to the employment project, and this will be used in a number of individual cases. Progress will be monitored and information will be given in the regular newsletters.
- In conjunction with J and D we ran an art programme with three Malian agencies caring for children in need, including street children, young handicapped people, and inmates of Bolle, a young peoples' Detention Centre. We had a very good response and have been able to use the contributions both in exhibitions and in our permanent display boards. We chose four of the designs for greetings cards which have now been on sale for some time, and are going well. Profits from these sales go to J and D for distribution to the three agencies concerned. The cards are available in Mali, and have been very well received there.

In the coming year we will continue to support both these activities.

c) Visit of Mahmadou Kone, Director of Jeunesse et Developpement.

Mahmadou Kone, universally known as Kone came to England for 3 months in the Spring of 2002 to undertake an English Course at Regents College, Oxford. J and D had identified this as an important capacity building exercise, and MDG funded Kone's living costs during his stay. The course went very well, and Kone also attended a number of MDG events. He also met with other J and D partners, including ActionAid; with Oxfam, and with the Oxford West M.P. Dr. Evan Harris. Our Chair, Laurence Lalanne-Devlin went with Kone to a meeting with senior officials at the Department for International Development- the first direct contact either for MDG or J and D. Kone's commitment and diplomacy enabled him to make a real impact on all these visits.

The other major result of Kone's visit has been the deepening of our working relationship with Jeunesse et Developpement. It is planned to take this further forward in our planned group visit early in 2003.

d) Work in hand.

Other initiatives which MDG is exploring in collaboration with J and D are as follows:

- Provision of Computers for J and D. We have identified sources of second hand computers, and are currently considering how best to transport them to Bamako.
- We are making application to a UK charity which reconditions Land Rovers and similar vehicles, as J and D need to have another vehicle.
- Planning work is underway to develop an educational linking project between schools in Mali and a group of schools in the U.K.

Development of these initiatives will be reported in the regular Newsletters.

Information sharing, campaign work and links with other organisations.

a) Information sharing.

The main activities to date have been as follows:

- Development of the MDG website
- Production of Information Leaflets
- Development of a Mobile Display which has been used at a variety of fundraising and other venues.
- Participation in the Oxford Africa Week exhibition.
- Information stand at the Mali Music Concert at the Barbican in March 2002.
- Provision of information to schools in South Oxfordshire for education projects.
- A display at the Thames Valley Probation Area Headquarters in association with the launch of their link with MDG

A number of members have participated in these activities but particular credit is due to Andrea McLintic for her graphic design work throughout the year and to Ken King for his work on the website. We are also grateful to Thames Valley Probation Area for their generous loan of portable display boards.

b) Campaign Work.

Our main campaign work has been to link with the Jubilee Debt Campaign, through its South Oxfordshire Branch. As part of this work we have written to Oxfordshire M.Ps about debt relief, and also made them aware of the specific situation in Mali.

As one of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPIC) nations Mali has been one of the countries which emerged from the HIPIC process still spending more on debt servicing than on health care and education combined. This shocking position is not likely to be altered in a major way by the disappointing recent G8 decisions. The British Government spends very little of its development funding in Mali, and argues that much of its budget is expended through the European Union with limited control over destination. J and D have themselves experienced a cut in their limited Manankoro funding for the current year, mainly because of excessive pressure on a very small Mali-wide fund.

We have taken this issue up on their behalf with DOD but sustained work needs to be done in arguing for more funding for Mali from the UK. Similarly we need to continue our support for the Debt Relief Campaign, and our colleagues in the Mali group of Churches Together in Newton Abbott have a good deal to teach us about both the campaign and how these issues impact on Mali.

c) Links with other Organisations.

Over our first year of operation we have been building links with several other organisations. Clearly for a new organisation collaborating with others and learning from more established organisations makes sense. The main links are as follows.

• ActionAid

As an established supporter of J and D and a major international agency ActionAid, through David Archer and the International Education Department, has been extremely supportive during our first year, giving advice on funding applications, and making a great deal of information available. ActionAid has now, with J and D's support, also begun to channel its funding for J and D through MDG. There have been many contacts during the last year, including our chair's participation in a Reflect training workshop. Our hope is that this three way collaborative approach between two small partners, J and D and MDG, and a large international agency can be to everybody's advantage. Consolidating this working relationship over the next year will be an important priority for us.

• Ecoliers du Monde

ActionAid has a sister organisation in France, originally known as Aide Action, and now named Ecoliers du Monde. This is an international organisation campaigning on educational issues and is based in Paris. At the suggestion of David Archer our Chair, Laurence Lalanne-Devlin has established contact with Ecoliers du Monde and in the coming months we look forward to exploring the possibilities for productive links.

• Oxfam

contact has been established with some Oxfam Headquarters staff as a result of Kone's visit, and we will ensure that this link is maintained and strengthened in the coming year. Oxfam has already provided us with some valuable source material on education issues.

• **Mali Welfare Association**

At the Mali Music Concert we made contact with this group which brings together Malian people in the UK, mainly based around activities in London. We have been exchanging information with the group, and hope to combine on some activities in the future.

• **UNAIS**

Through Sue Upton we have made contact with this organisation and have begun to exchange information.

• **Friends of Mali**

This is a new group being set up on the initiative of Sarah Castle of the Institute for Tropical Medicine in London, and will aim to bring together professionals regularly working in Mali. Again we plan to have close working links as this group develops and there should be much scope for collaboration.

• **Thames Valley Probation Area link**

The Probation Board has agreed to give MDG a special recognition over the next three years, enabling fundraising work to be done and support to be sought from a staff group of around 600 people. This recognition owes much to the initiative of Linda King, and its launch attended by the Chief Probation Officer and Board Chair was reported in the press and in the House Magazine. The relationship is likely to get into its stride in the coming year, and so far as we know is unique within the Criminal Justice system. We hope that some other organisations may be attracted by a link of this kind, and would be glad to hear of any suggestions.

Finance, Fundraising and group activities 2001/2

A financial statement will be available at the AGM.

The overall position is that since funds were first collected early in 2001 a total of £9,000 had been raised by August 2002. In addition to membership subscriptions and regular monthly donations we have made money from card sales, individual donations and a series of fund raising events. These have included social evenings, a bike ride, and a very successful Devon weekend when group members stayed in Tipis and tents on the site operated by the Taylor family who donated all the money raised to MDG. Chris Taylor is also running a fair trade business in Malian crafts which she is importing and members were able to see and buy a whole range of beautiful goods.

We have, in partnership with J and D and with support from ActionAid, made two unsuccessful bids to Comic Relief in our first year, both in respect of development of a francophone West African Network for Reflect Co-ordinators. Though we failed to obtain funding we had some positive feedback from Comic Relief and will make further applications for other projects. We are currently consulting with ActionAid on other funding sources for the Reflect Network.

As reported earlier we are currently working on our proposal for Kennington Overseas Aid.

MDG has so far developed by networking among contacts, and everyone has a part to play in taking this process further by way of local events and seeking out new members. We look forward to continuing growth in the coming year. Several new events will be taking place shortly and details of them are given in the AGM Notice. We hope you will be able to support them or that you can come up with fundraising ideas of your own. The regular newsletters will keep you up to date with progress.

A Developing Partnership

When Kone arrived he brought with him a banner as a gift from J and D to MDG, and it speaks of both friendship and partnership. There are many geographical linking schemes between places in this country and communities in the developing world but link schemes between organisations are less common, and as our working relationship deepens we may be able to show that this really is a practical model for the future. We have certainly been fortunate in our partners and their commitment certainly motivates us all. We clearly have a great deal to learn from each other as Kone's visit so clearly demonstrated. Early in 2003 a group of MDG members will visit J and D, and part of the trip will be to the programme in Manankoro. This should be the next step in the development of our working partnership.

Thank you for your help so far. If you require further information please contact us at the address on the front of this report.