

SDGI Mission Progress Report

Dakar and St. Louis, Senegal

Co-operation Strategies and Outcomes

July 2008



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Background

In March of 2008 Sustainable Development Group International (SDGI) was approached by Richard Rawlings, a student at Oxford University. It was brought to the attention of SDGI that he had been in contact with a local group in St. Louis, Senegal which had for some time been providing basic *ad hoc* aid to children living in the street and were currently seeking to consolidate their activities within the framework of a sustainable project.

During April and May of 2008 several plenary meetings and consultations were held between SDGI and Oxford Friends of Senegal (OFS), a newly founded charity based in the UK, in order to draft a viable action plan for a first field mission to Senegal and the region in question. A joint Project Summary was produced which took into consideration to OFS reported needs and concerns.

SDGI/OFS Joint Project (Summary)

The preliminary project plan can be summarised as follows:

1. Purpose:

- To map current needs and gain better understanding of central issues related to the question of talibé children.
- To facilitate drafting of strategies for local as well as international partnerships and projects.
- To create a viable platform for wider communication with international organizations and similar initiatives in other parts of the world.

2. Parties:

- **Sustainable Development Group International (SDGI):** International Knowledge Management Network for Development and Project Brokering.
- **Oxford Friends of Senegal (OFS):** Charity which aims at providing financial support to local organizations such as MDG.
- **La Maison de la Gare (MDG):** Grass roots NGO which aims to improve conditions for street children in the city and region of Saint-Louis, Senegal, West Africa.

3. Field Mission Plan:

- Establish contact with recognised international and local organizations working with issues related to talibé and street children.
- Conduct consultative sessions with international organizations.
- Conduct preliminary research related to the question of talibé children.
- Identify national and local immediate and medium-term needs as well as gain a holistic view of social, economic and political aspects.
- Access direct in-field knowledge in relation to current and potential future activities of MDG



- Facilitate identification of potential local and international strategic partners in support of established MDG activities.
- Promote the creation of a network of local organisations for substantial burden sharing and exchange of best practices.
- Aid in establishing a database of trusted local organisations.
- Facilitate contact with international and local organizations as well as promote comprehensive dialogues.
- Creation of an MDG Electronic Platform with the aim of attracting international co-operation and support.

Mission Progress Report

Preparation

In the months previous to the planned mission, SDGI contacted several recognized organizations with well documented experience in issues pertaining to the question of talibé children. Consultative meetings were set up with the following aims:

- identify key issues pertaining to the question of talibé children and establish a broader understanding of the national context,
- place the activities of MDG in a broader national context,
- identify the main actors and institution in order to make tangible contributions to a plausible and viable long term solution,
- establish a favourable contact base with international organizations active on the subject,
- create a roster and present established actors with knowledge of the local initiatives commenced by MDG,

Field Mission Summary

In July SDGI undertook its field mission to Senegal. Consequently SDGI, OFS as well as MDG attended consultative meetings with representatives from the following organizations in Dakar:

- Save the Children,
- SamuSocial,
- ENDA Jeunesse Action,
- ENDA Diapol,
- UNICEF
- The International Committee of the Red Cross

The joint meetings proved to be highly constructive as MDG was given the possibility to present their ideas and expectations as well as gain direct feedback and insight from other successful regional projects. References were also made to projects and 'best practices' conducted in other countries.

Most importantly, a contact base for MDG was established which is yet to be evaluated in terms of long term gains for the organization and the development of its activities.



As an immediate result of the meetings, SDGI, OFS, and MDG were formally invited by the Mayor of St. Louis to actively participate in a UNICEF and Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Directorate General for Development Co-operation, sponsored regional workshop on children rights relative to the issue of talibé children in the city of Saint Louis.

The three day workshop, convened by the Mayor and held at 'Espace Jeunes' in Saint-Louis, addressed a plethora of issues related to the question of Talibé children. The workshop followed the 'Logical Framework Approach for Project Design' and offered potential local actors the opportunity to engage in a constructive dialogue for finding a viable solution to the issues at hand.

SDGI's role in the workshop was to advise MDG and local organizations during the sessions on practical matters as well as broker for a broader dialogue between relevant parties and organizations. MDG was thus given the opportunity to establish new and consolidate previous contacts with other organizations.

It is important to note that MDG, as a direct result of the interaction with other local actors, was included in the 'comité technique de suivi' (CTS) and recognized as an important initiative in the region of St. Louis. The workshop provided the organization with the opportunity to exchange practices and experiences with La Liane, (an association with well documented experience in relation to preventive measures, shelter, housing and education of street children), Claire Enfance, C.D.E.P.S among other participants of the workshop.

The Activities of MDG

MDG is an entirely local initiative (*Grass-Root NGO*) which seeks to provide basic services to talibé children in the region of St. Louis. The organization has implemented a series of programmes which can be assessed in terms of *immediate assistance, integration and prevention*.

MDG's primary responsibility lies in the development of the ongoing activities vis a vis the children which have come to count on their presence in the community. SDGI has noted that many of the children anticipate the few hours during which the centre is currently open in the evenings.

Current MDG activities can be summarized as follows.

- ***Immediate Relief and Assistance:***
 - Distribution of daily **rudimentary alimentation** in the form of sandwiches and juice to the children visiting the centre
 - Basic **sanitary and medical services** in response to minor infections and hygienic needs.
- ***Integration and Education***
 - **Rudimentary language proficiency in French.** MDG has recognized that it will in a near future have to comply with national regulations and standards on education and potential permits for more qualitative care.



- Basic **vocational training** in order to increase the possibilities for employment
- Other **developmental activities** such as physical education (sports) and the creative arts
- **Prevention**
 - Constructive **dialogue with public as well as private actors in the region** for facilitating access to necessary local goods and services as well as immediate response to emergencies and access to medical facilities.
 - MDG has in the past, and continues to engage in **bilateral dialogues with local Daaras** and prominent Marabouts. Through their work with the children they have been able to identify groups of children often originating from the same Daaras which exhibit similar needs. MDG is currently drafting a joint programme with seven local Daaras in order to develop a local **educational solutions** and **amelioration of living conditions in the Daaras**.
 - By talking directly to the Daaras, MDG has been able to identify and map Qur'anic schools with particular needs and thereby also bridged the institutional gap between Daaras and NGOs.
 - MDG has through their increased dialogue with local Qur'anic institutions **fostered a greater understanding** of what MDG (and other centres alike) are trying to achieve.
 - As of July 2008 MDG is a recognized member of the '**comité technique de suivi**' (**CTS**) in the region of St. Louis and will continue to contribute with their efforts to local knowledge of pertinent issues.
 - **Local inter-institutional assistance and co-operation** with the Office of the Mayor of St. Louis.

MDG has also acknowledged that the use of the current location must be secured and approved by the Office of the mayor of St. Louis. The organization has conducted consecutive talks with the Office of the Mayor regarding all practicalities involving their activities as well as issues related to the ownership of the building.

It is important to highlight that the organization is operating on a voluntary basis. The staff is currently not being reimbursed nor are they receiving any other form of benefits or recognition for their communal activities in the region of St. Luis.

Role of SDGI

SDGI established, in consecutive meetings with MDG, an accord of constructive assistance to the activities of the organization. SDGI assistance can be subjected to change relative to reported and arising needs of the MDG.

It was established during the mission that SDGI will, for an undetermined duration of time broker, for a constructive regional solution to the issue of talibé children and aid MDG in developing a sustainable strategy which could potentially serve as a regional model.

SDGI will in such context continue to facilitate access to international organizations and mediate for local and international partnerships. It was, by the parties mentioned in this report, agreed that SDGI



will further undertake to advocate on behalf of the organization for greater international exposure and interest in the subject of talibé children and seek international financial assistance on behalf of MDG.

SDGI has also undertaken to create the foundation for a functioning electronic platform (website) which would in the future facilitate international as well as national and local information sharing between MDG and other organizations. The platform is subject to written material provided by MDG in a timely manner.

SDGI/ OFS partnership

SDGI and OFS function as separate organizations which have agreed to co-operate and consult in relation to their support to MDG.

OFS is a recently established British Charity at Oxford University. For more information about OFS please visit their website at www.talibe.info. SDGI is not responsible for content, views or separate policies expressed on the OFS website.

SDGI assessment of MDG activities

The main objectives of the July SDGI mission to Senegal can be summarized as *information gathering* and *strategic project planning*.

Whereas the consultations with national and international agencies active on issues related to Talibé children in Western Africa and most specifically Senegal, proved very informative in relation to information gathering, SDGI project planning was conducted together with MDG after a general assessment of identified organizational needs.

MDG activities have during the past months grown, from providing immediate relief to the large quantity of street children in the region of St. Louis on a rather *ad hoc* basis, to the development of several organized programmes. In contrast to many other programmes, MDG is a purely local initiative and started as a group of individuals which began providing basic needs to street children. All activities were from the onset based on voluntary efforts without any significant financial or structural assistance from other organizations or local authorities.

MDG was established as an organization in response to local needs. The name of the organization stems from the dilapidated railway station in the city of St. Louis which came to be used as a meeting place for the children. MDG has since come to consolidate its activities in response to community needs in dealing with the issue of the Talibé and street children.

The development of its programme has provided MDG with greater responsibilities, administrative needs and costs.

MDG administrative needs

The increase in activities for the children as well as co-operation with local and international organizations has greatly increased the necessity of a permanent office with basic administrative utilities such as a computer, printer with integrated fax, internet connection, desk, chairs etc. MDG



has also taken a more administrative approach in order to comply with its objectives and activities.

This may also involve potential acquisition of currently utilized land as well as finding a fixed location for administrative purposes. New administrative needs will be assessed further during the following months.

Recommendations

SDGI has drafted a set of recommendations for the future progress of current MDG activities. The following recommendations are prepared as guidelines for current and future partners who wish to draft, develop, and evaluate potential support plans for MDG.

- **Consolidate funding for immediate costs without compromising the ability of the organization to in a near future sustain its activities.** This is most important as MDG already conducts activists which need immediate attention and funding.
- **Increased burden sharing and maximization of resources** through strategic partnerships with other local organizations with the aim of:
 - o minimizing organisational costs
 - o increasing effectiveness of services and responses to emergencies (see also below)
 - o further engaging the community of St. Louis in working with MDG
 - o increased national and international recognition of the subject and all related issues
- **Evaluate current MDG programmes and activates** in order to take a more qualitative rather than quantitative approach within the framework of stated MDG objectives.
- **Consolidate MDG programmes and activities** within the framework of the stated MDG objectives.
- **Consolidate partnerships and access to medical personnel** as well as emergency facilities.
- Ensure a **rudimentary medical supply kit** for the children.
- Initiate a **short-term 'pilot project'** of integrating a number of older talibé into the local economy by providing **internships with possibility for work placements with local entrepreneurs** (in accordance with international and national labour laws).
- **Increase information sharing** with other regions and institutions (see below).
- **Consolidate the presence of MDG in the local 'comité technique de suivi' (CTS).** SDGI has noted that although the workshop made evident a strong political and communal will to face challenges and issues involved in the question of talibé children, it failed to establish regional inter institutional working groups which could conduct, develop and engage in specific activities. MDG could initiate such approach by
- **maintaining strong and viable connections, consultations and co-operation** with local international organizations.
- Provide partners as well as local international organizations **monthly updates** through an electronic **MDG News Bulletin**.