

FROM STRAW TO BRICKS – THREE NEW CLASSROOMS FOR KOUTOUGOU STUDENTS

Niger is one of the least developed countries in the world. However, school enrolments have risen in the small village of Koutougou, in the South-West of Niger, following the construction of a new school, latrine facility and a water pump.

The existing sticks and straw school classrooms in Koutougou did not provide a conducive learning environment for the 60 students.

“Before sometimes I would bump my head on the roof and teach all hunched up and now, look at this great classroom. I can walk all around the desks, I can really get around to see what the children are doing,” Mr Sidikou Harouna, School Principal and teacher, said.

The village had only one borehole for drinking water and a well that

was used for animals and household chores. The incidence of illnesses including diarrhoea was high due to the consumption of unclean water and because households did not have access to toilets and used the bush instead.

At the request of the community and the local authorities, this project involved the construction of three new classrooms, a water pump and a latrine block. Health and hygiene awareness raising activities targeted students and the broader community to prevent illness.

The Parents’ Association, School Management Committee and Mothers for Education Association were given training and support to manage the new school infrastructure and assist the project’s long-term sustainability.

MDI worked in partnership with the NGO Eau Vive to provide a sound local development approach and appropriately manage any challenges. The NGO’s expertise was crucial in mobilising local support, coordinating all stakeholders, organising and monitoring construction, leading training and awareness-raising.

Other key stakeholders included the Education and Public Works Ministry, district, regional and local government authorities, traditional leaders and the local community. Community participation and financial contribution reinforced the local ownership of the project.

This project was a recipient of Direct Aid Program funding through the Australian High Commission in Abuja.



Koutougou Students in their new classroom - Photo taken by Cindy Wockner



Teachers and Students stand before their old class room



School Principal Sidikou Harouna (left)
MDI Country Manager, Amadou Kimba (right)

Proud member of:



Middle Island RESOURCES LIMITED

STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM CONTINUED EDUCATION

Following approval from the Education Ministry and a request from the local community of Zai Town, Middle Island Resources (MDI) supported the addition of an annexe to the local school to enable students to complete up to Grade 12.

Located in Grand Gedeh County in Liberia, Zai Town has around 8,000 inhabitants. Situated on the main road that traverses the county, the primary activities of the population are farming, trade and businesses (including tailoring, carpentry and masonry), as well as artisanal gold mining.

Zai Town’s small government school previously catered to children in Grades 1 to 10 from Zai Town and surrounding towns and villages, all part of the Gborho Chiefdom. Very few students continued their education to Grade 12 as they could not afford to travel and board in the provincial capital of Zwedru.

Despite Ministry of Education support to expand secondary education in the county, the Zai Town School was too small to offer grades 11 and 12. Through MDI’s support, classroom capacity of the school in Zai Town was increased by 150 students, enabling it to teach grade 11 and 12.

This project began with social mobilisation activities facilitated by the Evangelical Children Rehabilitation Program (ECREP) in October 2012. The ECREP is a local non-government organisation, providing humanitarian services across Liberia including rehabilitation, reconstruction and development services benefiting more than 100,000 men, women and children.

Middle Island Resources Limited (MDI) is a West African focused gold exploration company which listed in December 2010. The company’s projects include the Reo Project in Burkina Faso, the Nuon River Project in Liberia, and the Sirba Project in the Republic of Niger, collectively covering an area of approximately 4900 sq km of highly prospective Birimian greenstone terrain.

MDI’s stated policy is to contribute up to 5% of its exploration budget each year to social development initiatives within local communities. Social development programmes are implemented from the very start of exploration to establish the company’s credentials and build a sound working relationship with local communities.

For further information regarding Middle Island Resources’ social development activities contact:
Sarah Mackenzie, MDI Community Relations Manager, at sarah@middleisland.com.au



The new annexe faces the elementary and junior high buildings, creating a quadrangle in the middle



The new annexe

ECREP managed and coordinated activities on the ground at Zai Town, engaged the community, arbitrated local disputes and made sure the project was completed. A well-planned social mobilisation strategy was integral to the success of this project as it presented many challenges.

“The context in Liberia was difficult, and the effort required to involve the community and to encourage local ownership was daunting. They just wanted us to build the annexe and present a finished product,” said Sarah Mackenzie, MDI Community Relations Manager.

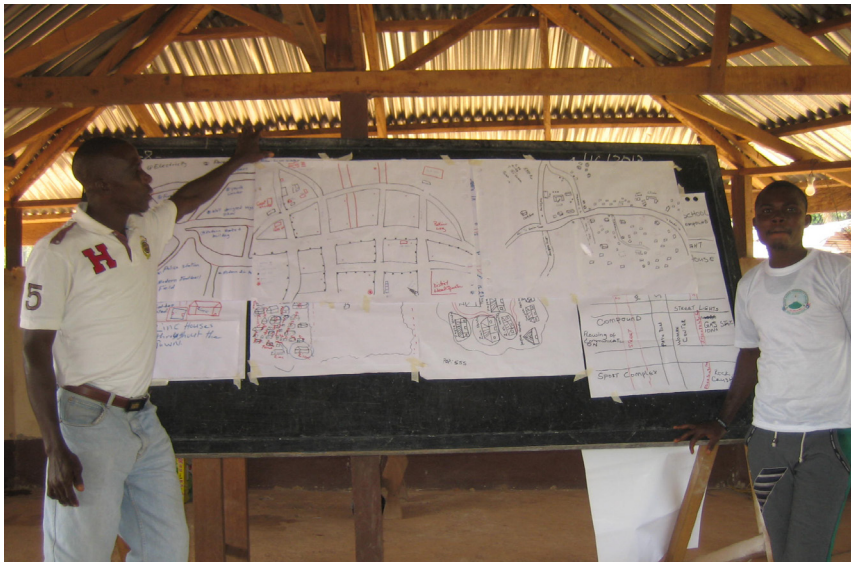
The people of the Gborho Chiefdom formed the Gborho Land and Mineral Development Committee (GLMDC) to represent the community in their interaction with MDI. Along with the PTA, which was at the forefront of project design and planning, the GLMDC ensured district and county education and development authorities were involved.

The school annexe construction began in December 2012 and included three additional classrooms, library, storeroom, teachers office and lounge. A local construction company, BADRA, completed the work.

The people of the Gborho Chiefdom are extremely grateful to MDI and the Australian Government for the contribution they made through the addition of the annexe to the school.

“We thank MDI for what they have done and pray that they find something, and let us pray for ECREP also, and the work they have done with us, because understanding is development,” the Paramount Chief, Gborho Chiefdom, Tchien District said.

This project was a recipient of Direct Aid Program funding through the Australian High Commission Accra.



A workshop on local development brought together people from the five main towns of the Chiefdom. Each group presented their vision of their towns ten years ahead



A football tournament (on the football field made by MDI) was held in the lead-up to the inauguration ceremony as a means of bringing members of the community together for a fun, cooperative and unity-building event.



FARMERS PROSPER FROM IMPROVED MARKET GARDENS

The Commune of Dassa is now benefiting from improved market garden production as well as developing new trade opportunities thanks to a project initiated by Middle Island Resources (MDI).

The Commune of Dassa, in the Sanguié Province of Burkina Faso, is one of the poorest areas in the world. With a total population of 14,000, who are mostly farmers, Dassa is renowned for its vegetables, in particular its onions, tomatoes and local aubergines.

However, conditions are difficult for producers due to the sector’s dysfunctional structure, ineffective marketing approaches, and limited access to water, seeds and other inputs.



The traditional wells are very precarious and dry up after a few months

From March 2012, this project aimed to boost the economic development of the Commune of Dassa by supporting market gardening, in line with the community’s five-year local development plan.



Community meeting led by Eau Vive

Four producer cooperatives consisting of 141 farmers, mostly women, were selected as pilot sites. The project provided sustainable access to water and the installation of drip-fed irrigation. One of the pilot sites was chosen as a “school site” where farmers from the 50 cooperatives of the Commune were trained in production techniques, composting and input use. There were further training sessions on cooperative organisation and marketing. Throughout the project two local agricultural agents provided on-the-ground technical support.



The new deep, lined well will be able to fill the reservoir through the season

The umbrella organisation, the Dassa Market Gardeners’ Association, received training and support for the project, and also for the establishment and management of a revolving fund for seeds and inputs. Activities also built relations between the producers and local suppliers of drip irrigation equipment and potential clients, in particular the catering company All Terrain Services, which supplies the nearby zinc mine and MDI’s camp.

MDI’s presence in the area is on-going and the company will continue to support the market gardeners of Dassa next season.

The Commune of Dassa is extremely grateful to MDI for initiating this project as the benefits become clear.

“This has been a great project with all the training and close, on the ground support of producers and the organisations, we need to take advantage of the new ideas and opportunities we have seen. I would like to reiterate the words of the late Joseph Ki-Zerbo who said ‘development is not something others do for you, it is something that you do for yourselves’,” said Issa Badolo, Deputy Mayor of Dassa.

“Thank you for this great job, it has really helped us. The benefits are clear,

it is less work for us. The onions we grew were big and well formed – and someone came from Koudougou to buy the lot!” Marie Badolo, President of a women’s cooperative, said.



The second crop from the Yi So Cene site. The onions were harvested in January then aubergines and cabbages were planted

Building long-term partnerships with stakeholders has been a focus from the early stages of the project’s planning. Eau Vive, a French development NGO with local offices in Burkina Faso, mobilised local support, managed and engaged all stakeholders, and coordinated and monitored project activities.

This project was a recipient of Direct Aid Program funding through the Australian High Commission Accra.