

# JITON

Newsletter No 5 August 2006

## ◆◆ GREETINGS FROM MALI ◆◆

As usual in our summer newsletter from Mali we bring you news of the wells which have been dug in Bankass this year.

The villages of *Dena*, *Tiama*, *Tissagou* and *Ogossogou* - all now have a modern concrete lined large diameter well, which will provide local people and livestock with a reliable source of clean water for many years to come. The total number of new wells dug since we started *JITON* is now 8.

All of these wells have been dug by the villagers themselves, and by the skilled local well diggers which they themselves hired. Villagers organised the supply of materials and labour and managed all the funds required to pay for them. Whilst doing this they have acquired new skills and experiences - valuable assets in their own right in these isolated rural communities.

*Many thanks to all of you who have helped them to achieve this*



Mary & Mamadou

## ◆◆ FACTS AND FIGURES ◆◆

*Well committee members: 33 men and 15 women*

*Work started on wells: 29<sup>th</sup> April to 1 May*

*Well diameter: 1.80 metres*

Village	Date finished 2006	Depth of well (m)	Depth of Water (m),
<i>Dena</i>	18 June	40	5
<i>Ogossogou</i>	21 June	55	12
<i>Tiama</i>	26 June	45	5
<i>Tissagou</i>	15 August	71	12

## ◆◆ LETTER FROM LAKSHMI ◆◆

Lakshmi Baratha Raj, a young Australian woman, spent 6 months of 2006 (her gap year between school and university) working as a volunteer for *Sahel ECO* in the Mopti office. Lakshmi made two visits to the village of Tissagou: once in April as work on the well started, and once again in July just before she left. She had planned to write a "before and after" account of the differences that having a new well had made to people's lives but the well needed to be dug much deeper than expected and she had to leave Mali before it was completed. Overleaf, Lakshmi writes about her visits to Tissagou, about collecting water 5km away in the village of Da and about progress on the new well.

## ◆◆ MORE WELLS IN 2007 ◆◆

Community leaders in Bankass will meet later this year to choose four villages which will dig new wells in 2007. Training will take place in February and March 2007 and work to dig the wells will start in April or May at the height of the dry season.

## ◆◆◆ Thinking of visiting Mali? ◆◆◆

We don't run a tour service, but if you are planning a holiday in Mali and would like to visit one of the wells which have been dug with help from *JITON*, then please do get in touch and we'll point you in the right direction.

## ◆◆◆ Fundraising News ◆◆◆

Donations to *JITON* from individual supporters have now reached **£6,512**. Many thanks also to the Big Lottery Fund and to Rotary International and clubs in Doncaster and Bamako for their support this year. *SOS Sahel UK* supports *JITON* by collecting UK donations for us. Please contact *Lucy* or *Branwen* for more information (address below).

Donations, clearly marked for *JITON*, can be sent to *SOS Sahel UK*, 10C Littlegate Street, St. Ebbes, OXFORD, OX 1 1QT

Cheques should be made payable to *SOS Sahel International UK*. Details of how to set up a standing order are available on request  
Tel: 01865 723200 [mail@sahel.org.uk](mailto:mail@sahel.org.uk).

If you have questions about *JITON* or about any other aspect of *Sahel ECO's* work in Mali, please write to us at the following address:  
BP 3066, Bamako, Mali or by email to:  
[saheleco@afribonemali.net](mailto:saheleco@afribonemali.net)



## LETTER FROM LAKSHMI - July 2006

*'Water is our most serious problem,'* explains Tandou Arama, one of the elder women of Tissagou. This village is next to the Dogon plateau near Bankass, Mali. I spent eight days here in an attempt to understand the hardships of the villagers, notably poverty and lack of drinking water. I spent much of my time following the women and trying to do what they do: collecting wood from the cliffs for cooking, crushing millet with a mortar and pestle and drawing water from the wells.

*I rode on the first cart with Eryéré and her son Sow, as the donkey plodded the along the sandy track to the village of Da. As we passed by the village, Sow and I saw many women carrying jars of water on their heads. They were returning from Da. This is the only village in the area with a reliable water supply. The 3 wells there provide this valuable resource to 4 villages.*



*When we arrived at the well we were lucky to find that there was water in it. Sometimes the women have to wait hours for water to seep back into the wells. Aissata, Eryéré, Bintou and I started unloading the twenty-four, 20 and 30 litre plastic containers and lining them up around the well. This well has a large diameter so the three women could all easily reach the rope, pulling in turn and drawing up the leather bucket with amazing speed.*

*I had a try but my soft hands could only handle 3 buckets before I had blisters. I showed my hands to Aissata and Eryéré who just laughed, showing me theirs with their lumpy calluses. Their hands are harder than my feet from drawing about 30 buckets full of water everyday. We had to walk the 5 km back to Tissagou because the carts were already weighed down with water. Sometimes we would have to push the cart to help the donkey get the water up the sandy hills. This trip to collect most of the daily water supply took us about 3 hours.*



The men in Tissagou are digging a new well in the village with the support and guidance of Sahel Eco. All the work is done by hand. The men dig using picks and the earth is hauled up in skin buckets by a team of men. As the well deepens they progressively line it with concrete. I descended into the well when it was 20 metres deep and even at this depth it was already very hot. The well is now (July) 62 metres deep, conditions are humid and the work is slow. They have found water but it is only one barrel per day. Below 65 metres digging becomes even more dangerous, due to the lack of oxygen. If the water is not sufficient at this depth to provide a reliable supply, the well may still fill up during the rainy season and provide water for part of the year. When I talked to the women about the well, they told me they hoped it would increase their time and energy for other activities. They hoped their hygiene and health would improve as they would have more water for washing themselves, their children and their clothes.