



# 2023 Annual Report

## *Friends of the Dogon*

Doundiourou - an island of hope in a violent region



**Dear FOD supporter,**

*For a country already submerged in violence and inequality, the events during 2023 were disheartening. As explained in the reports by [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#), the human rights situation in the country deteriorated significantly due to attacks by Islamist groups, as well as the counterterrorism operations by the Malian army. These reports make a saddening read. Despite this, the villagers of Doundiourou kept their faith in a better future and continued not only to strive for better education but also to improve their environment through a spring tree-planting campaign that FOD financed, along with an expansion of their vegetable production. Their resilience is a remarkable example for the world that faces many crises. If you are reading this report, please join us in supporting them by donating on our website!*

**The FOD Team** (Audie, Craig, Henkka, Mamadou, Saakje, Serge)



<http://friendsofdogon.org/donate-now>

Facebook: [FriendsofDogon](#)



Villagers harvesting peanuts.

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Doundiourou with Dogon huts.



## OUR PURPOSE, VISION, MISSION, AND OBJECTIVES

Our purpose is to create a prosperous and inclusive Doundiourou, where girls and boys growing up have an equal opportunity to prosper and live happy and fulfilling lives. Our vision is that in the future, children in Doundiourou can pursue education beyond the minimum and the villagers run projects that act as income generators and provide environmental protection. To enable this vision, our mission is to support Mere-odjou, our partner cooperative in the village of Doundiourou, to combat poverty, malnutrition and desertification. The funds we raise for Mere-odjou aim to achieve three main objectives:

1. Generate income-earning projects for the locals to reduce poverty and malnutrition and to stop rural exodus in search of work.
2. Improve the opportunities of local children to receive education, particularly girls.
3. Combat desertification by planting multi-purpose trees.



Upgraded chicken coop.



A second classroom built by the villagers in 2023.

## ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

### School meals: The Backbone of Mere-odjou

As in earlier years, the school was the heart of FOD support to Doundiourou. Around 250 pupils enjoyed not only the free meals supported by FOD but also learning critical life skills by the teachers who come to the village, improving the future of the village and its children.

Mere-odjou and the villagers extended the school with another building during 2023 to allow better learning for the pupils. The work was done entirely locally with local materials for the bricks (cover page); no extra funding from FOD was needed. The extension underscores how the school with its canteen has become the centerpiece of progress and hope in Doundiourou.



Applying biological insecticide produced in the village.



## Start of the tree planting campaign

As noted in our 2022 report, we announced a fundraising campaign for planting the first green belt to protect the village in Christmas 2022. During winter 2023 we collected the funds, and in May we were able to transfer the funds to start the planting campaign. At the moment, 320 trees are growing to help protect the village from desertification, and our intention is to continue this campaign to grow the plantation into a full shelter belt. Tree by tree we can help to protect people against the effects of climate change and to improve the soil.

## Chicken coop in production

The chicken coop and an outdoor chicken run, financed by FOD in 2019, continued to provide a constant source of protein to the villagers. As earlier, the roughly 100 chicken pecking away in the coop are producing around 35 eggs per day. Considering the heat in the area, this can be considered very successful egg production. In 2023, some chickens were also raised for meat production, and this will continue from now on as another protein and small-scale income source.

## No hope in sight for resuming sheep rearing

As in the previous years, the sheep-rearing activity that started FOD has been on hold due to the unrest, as it is too dangerous for most regional markets to operate anymore. The presence of livestock can also be dangerous for villagers with the prevalence of banditry throughout the conflict in the region, as animal stock are a prime target for bandits. Mere-odjou has the funds from the sold sheep waiting for the trade to restart, but we can only hope for a brighter future and the return of this income-generating trade.

Moringa in the plantation to protect the village from the desert.



## FOD banking

As also noted in last year's report, FOD continued to suffer the effects of the significantly costlier money transfers, with transaction costs reaching 11.5% of donations received in 2023. The bulk of these costs arise from the difference between the exchange rate used by the money transfer company and the real exchange rate, and they are not thus incurred costs. However, we feel that it is necessary to be transparent about the amount of money that does not reach Doundiourou due to reasons we have no influence over. We reiterate the fact that FOD does not charge administrative fees.

## FOD regular sponsorship

We are excited to inform that we now have three monthly sponsors who regularly donate money to help the villagers in Doundiourou. Every bit counts, and we wish to thank wholeheartedly these generous individuals for their help.

The garden produces cucumbers, watermelons, peanuts, and okra, among others. It is amazing to see what the landscape of dry sand can produce.



# ACTION PLAN FOR 2024

## Ongoing school meals

School meals are planned to continue during the first half of 2024 as usual, although increasingly the villagers are able to provide their own supplies for the canteen and FOD support could, at some point, be directed toward projects that provide other new prospects to Doundiourou. Since the beginning, this has been our long-term goal, and we eagerly wait to see how this plays out. The goal of our work is not to make the villagers dependent on long-term help but support them in improving their livelihoods and open new projects wherever possible.

## Social media use

In 2023, we have posted regular updates on Facebook with an average frequency of one post per week. This gives an excellent opportunity for followers to catch glimpses of day-to-day life in a Malian village, and we hope this opportunity will gradually bring more donors to FOD. With a constant flow of pictures and short stories, we hope to build a credible social media presence that can attract more donors in the future.

## A new well to transform the village

Our vision of a green Doundiourou, both in terms of vegetable raising as well as the green belt started in 2023, will require more regular water, Ha ha ha .This means that another well is needed. We are hoping that in 2024 we can move forward with this important goal of FOD that has so far been left in the shadow of more pressing needs in the village.



Top: Watering saplings at night to conserve water.

Bottom: Among other plants, the villagers have planted aloe vera for its medicinal properties.





# FOD IN FIGURES

**We do not charge any administrative expenses, and all the work done is on a volunteer basis.**

**Total donations received in 2023: 9,596 CHF\* (2022: 11,932 CHF)**  
**Percentage of donations reaching Mere-odjou: 88,5% (2022: 89,3%)**  
**Donations and grants budgeted for 2024: 11,400 CHF**

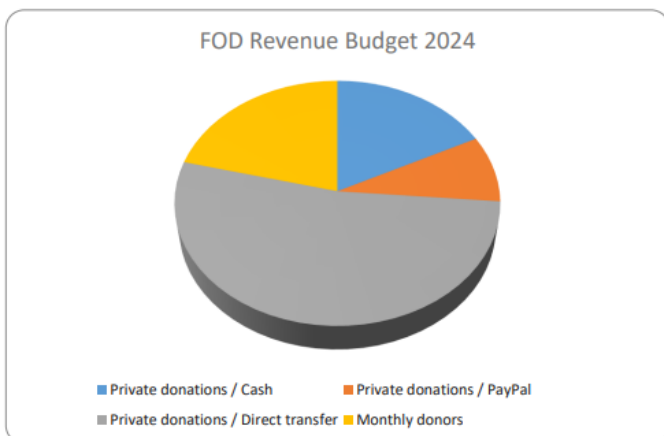
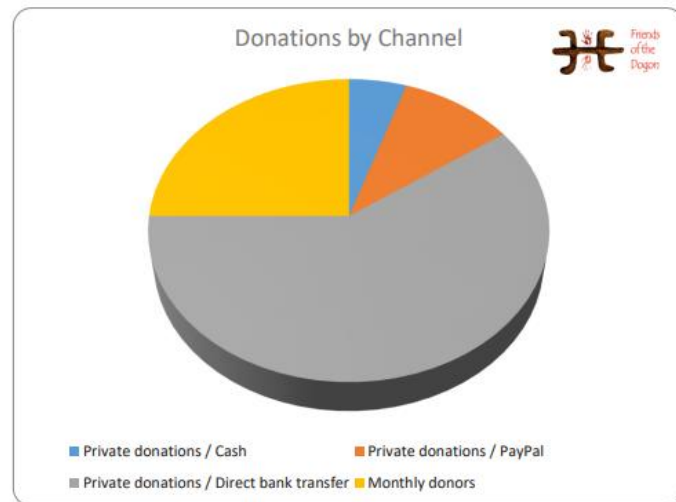
In 2023 FOD received 9,596 CHF in donations, a drop of roughly 20% from 2022. The drop was largely due to the very successful 2022 resulting from the tree planting campaign that started just before Christmas. For 2024, we aim at returning roughly to the 2022 level. The relatively large amount of funds on our balance sheet at the end of the year reflects the Christmas donation season, with the funds used for the canteen on the first days of 2024.

In 2022, 88.5% of donations were spent on projects in Mali. The remaining 11.5% consists of fees for receiving donations online through PayPal along with banking charges in Switzerland and Mali for transferring money. As noted earlier, we recognize the real cost of money transfer by calculating the significant difference between the exchange rate used by the money transfer provider, and the real exchange rate, as a cost. This difference alone is roughly 10% of the amounts transferred.

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF). We receive donations in five currencies (Swiss Franc, Euro, Pound Sterling, US, and Canadian Dollars) from around the world. Online donations are continuously converted to the base currency (CHF) using the rates offered by PayPal, and cash donations based on the daily rates. We aim to keep foreign exchange conversion impact to a minimum by converting money as soon as received.

Donations to FOD are tax-deductible in Switzerland.

\*1 CHF ≈ 1.19 USD



## FOD 2023 Income Statement (pre-audit)



All amounts in CHF

<b>Revenue</b>	<b>1.1.2023 - 31.12.2023</b>	
Private donations / Cash	CHF	489.00
Private donations / PayPal	CHF	974.73
Private donations / Direct bank transfer	CHF	5,732.00
Monthly donors	CHF	2,400.00
Grants	CHF	-
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b>9,595.73</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Charitable spending		
Donations for tree planting	CHF	4,082.31
Donations for school meals	CHF	7,063.75
<b>Total charitable spending</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b>11,146.06</b>
Banking expenses		
Bank charges	CHF	120.00
Transfer + FX costs	CHF	1,157.39
PayPal fees	CHF	53.47
<b>Total banking expenses</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b>1,330.86</b>
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b>12,476.92</b>
Financial loss	CHF	-3.35
<b>Net result</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b>-2,884.54</b>

## Balance Sheet (pre-audit)

<b>Assets</b>	<b>31.12.2023</b>	
Bank account balance 31.12.2023	CHF	1,157.11
Paypal account balance 31.12.2023	CHF	410.78
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b>1,567.89</b>
<b>Liabilities &amp; Capital</b>		
<b>Capital</b>		
Remaining funds to donate in 2024	CHF	1,567.89
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Capital</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b>1,567.89</b>

## WHO WE ARE



**Madame Atta Guindo**

*President of Mere-odjou*

Madame Guindo was chosen by the women of Doundiourou for her seriousness and dedication and her ability to get along with everyone. Born in Toroli, a small Dogon village in the Seno plain, she married into Doundiourou where she farms millet, peanuts and beans and is the mother of 4 children. She never had the opportunity to go to school but is dedicated to helping all children have access to education as well as to the socio-economic development of the village.

Born in Doundiourou Seno, Mamadou had to walk 8km for primary school, then attend secondary school 20km away. He tried to continue his education in Bandiagara but could not afford to finish his studies, returning to the village to work as a tourist guide to support the education of his brothers and sisters. When tourism collapsed, he gathered the women of the village to form an association to try to address the crisis. He has CEAP training (Champs École Agro-Pastoral) given by the FAO, after which he organized a group of 25 households to train them in agricultural and pastoral techniques and village saving and credit associations. Mamadou speaks 5 languages, including Dogon, Bambara, French, English and Peulh.



**Mamadou Guindo**

*Field Coordinator of FOD and  
General Secretary of Mere-  
odjou*



**Serge Pfister**

*President of FOD*

Serge worked on seven missions for Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders), as a logistician, administrator and project coordinator, in Sudan, Ethiopia, Congo and Myanmar. Presently teaching, he is active in several associations, with a focus on promotion of solar energy and support to refugees newly arrived in Switzerland (MSc Environmental sciences, UNIL, MEd Haute Ecole Pédagogique, Lausanne).



**Audie Hazenberg**  
*Vice-President of FOD*

Having lived in Tanzania for two years as a child, Audie has always been drawn to Africa. She studied lions for two years in the Serengeti before moving to humanitarian work for Doctors without Borders. She has worked as logistics coordinator for relief projects in the Republic of Congo and in Darfur, as well as in Myanmar. In between projects, she has guided bicycle and hiking trips around the world for Butterfield and Robinson, as well as pursuing personal bicycle adventures in central Asia. She currently lives in Switzerland where she teaches natural science at a post-secondary college. Audie is the Vice-president of Friends of the Dogon. (MSc Biodiversity Conservation, University of Leeds; BSc Zoology, University of Guelph; MEd Haute Ecole Pedagogique de Lausanne).

Henkka is an international educator and academic researcher who has been involved in sustainability and corporate social responsibility for the past 20 years. Prior to his academic career, he worked in multinational business finance which led him to become an entrepreneur in corporate social responsibility consulting. His key research and practical interest lies in transforming the often abstract concept of responsibility into practical projects that create significant impact to local livelihoods. He also has experience leading an international non-profit research organization. Henkka, a native Finn, is based in the Alps. He is the treasurer of Friends of the Dogon (PhD in Corporate Social Responsibility, Leeds Beckett University; MSc Economics, Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration). For his research, pls visit his [Google Scholar profile](#).



**Dr. Henkka Kuokkanen**  
*Treasurer of FOD*



**Saakje Hazenberg**  
*Secretary of FOD*

Saakje has worked in wildlife research for several conservation NGOs and now works in ecology monitoring in Jasper National Park in Canada. With her sister, Audie, she both lived in Tanzania as a child and worked guiding cycling trips for Butterfield and Robinson around the world. She has also travelled extensively on independent cycling epics, including a trip across Mali where she made friends with Mamadou and the villagers of Doundiourou. (MSc Forest and Nature Conservation, University of Wageningen; BSc Biology, University of British Columbia)

Craig is an entrepreneur from New Zealand, now based in Switzerland. His extensive world travels included a cycling trip across Mali with Saakje where they made friends with Mamadou and the villagers of Doundiourou. He is presently working on a new start-up company and is an advisor to Friends of the Dogon. (Bcomm Marketing, Auckland University).



**Craig Stoddart**  
Adviser to FOD

### Smart Cuts Ltd

Professional partner and donor to FOD

<http://www.smartcuts.ch/>



FOD would like to thank Smart Cuts Ltd for their commitment in supporting FOD since the early days, and their valuable financial support to the people of Doundiourou.

Craig dancing in Doundiourou in 2002.



Friends  
of the  
Dogon

<http://friendsofdogon.org/donate-now>

Facebook: [FriendsofDogon](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofDogon)

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