

PRESS RELEASE

FROM: Fiona Bruce MP for Congleton Constituency

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Fiona Bruce and Cheshire Residents Line Dance for Africa

A fund-raising event to support programmes in Mali, West Africa, through two organisations, the Mali Initiative and Ephrata, had two visitors on Saturday 22nd May when local MP Fiona Bruce and the Mali Initiative founder, Elise Klein, who is from Australia and doing a PhD in Developmental aid at Oxford, came to support the event.

The event was held at New Life Church, Congleton with about 60 attending. The evening started with Line Dance leader Karen Burkes patiently encouraging all who came to abandon their inhibitions and join in. Most took up the challenge and, some dressed in appropriate wild west outfits, soon got the hang of it.

During an interlude, everybody had a chance to learn about Mali through a video and from a poster display. Elise Klein explained some of the projects. She said:

“Real progress has been achieved in the last six years. A school has been built near the capital, Bamako, and other classrooms built in the rural commune of Niamana. A microcredit scheme for women, which helps them start their own businesses, has over one hundred members now and a Young Entrepreneur club is helping the local community and developing business cases to start or develop small businesses. In addition, a health centre has been built that is providing basic health care and education to the community. Mali is a very poor country but we focus on potential in people. We support their aspirations to make a difference in their communities.”

Speaking at the meeting, Fiona, who has held a great interest in developmental aid in Africa for many years, and has previously visited Tanzania, explained:

“So many aid projects flounder when outside initiators depart. The Mali projects are different because right from the start they involve local people – realizing their dreams, supported by workers and volunteers from elsewhere, but always built on the energy, ideas and initiative of local people. That is the key to successful,

sustainable aid, and why I am so pleased to be here tonight to support the Mali Initiative and Ephrata”

Background Facts

- Mali is a land-locked country in West Africa with a population of 12 million.
- Mali is the fourth poorest country in the world but has been stable since 1991.
- People of different faiths and ethnic groups live peaceably together.
- The Mali Initiative was founded in 2004 in Australia and has a vision to support the dreams of local visionaries in Mali.
- Ephrata is a Christian Sports Ministry founded in 2008 and runs kid’s games, host sports evenings, develops local trainers and provides education and skills for street kids.