

EVALUATION DEPARTMENT

REPORT 6/2018 COUNTRY EVALUATION BRIEF



Mali



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The purpose of this **Country Evaluation Brief** is to present relevant knowledge about donors' development efforts in Mali. The brief systematises relevant findings from existing evaluations of development interventions in the country. The idea is to present the findings to the reader in a succinct and easily accessible format.

Readers who want to explore key issues in depth can access the underlying reports through the reference list. At our website, you can also find a set of short "Evaluation Portraits" summarising the key contents of those documents.

The Country Evaluation Brief was researched and produced by Particip GmbH in consortium with Menon Economics.

Oslo, April 2018

Per Øyvind Bastøe, Evaluation Director

Children using a cell phone. PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO/SEYBALO

Main findings

IN THE DECADE prior to 2012, Mali was held up as a positive example of democratic governance that donors were happy to support, bolstered by popular support for democratic and participatory forms of governance. However, the political-security events of 2012 served as a “wake-up call”, substantially modifying donor engagement and the development aid context.

CRITICS HAVE LONG cited problems with public financial management. More recently, systems analyses and governance assessments have highlighted corruption and lack of trust between the people of Mali and its government as impediments to development.

AS OF 2010, budget support still played a critical role in the overall efficiency of resource allocation and support for priority sectors, especially health and education. In the absence of budget support evaluations for the recent period, the ongoing impact of such initiatives – including suspensions during the recent crises – could not be determined at the time this CEB was written.

THE DIVERSIFICATION of approaches to food and economic security (e.g. cash transfers) demonstrate creativity and commitment within the international community to simultaneously address the needs of affected populations as well as the potential negative unintended consequences of traditional interventions.

SOME MODEST GAINS have been made in women’s empowerment, but dominant patriarchal social norms persist and there is little evidence of the impact of initiatives on power relations. Furthermore, the sustainability of initiatives such as women’s capacity building associations is questionable.

THE DETERIORATION in Mali’s security environment and the increased state fragility since 2012 have raised critical questions as to whether donors pre-2012 development engagement, while largely viewed as positive, failed to address underlying issues and could have more effectively supported long-term stability.

Increased state fragility since 2012 raises the question of whether donors had failed to address underlying issues and could have more effectively supported long-term stability.



MALI

Estimated population: 17,467,108
(CIA 2017; 2016 est.)

Population under the age of 15: 47.27%
(CIA 2017; 2016 est.)

Urban population: 39.9% (CIA 2017; 2015 data)

Annual urbanisation rate (average rate of change of the size of the urban population): 5.08%
(CIA 2017; 2010-15 est.)

Human Development Index (HDI): 175 (of 188)
(UNDP 2017; 2015 data)

Gender Inequality Index (GII): 156 (of 159)
(UNDP 2017; 2015 data)

Poverty Rate (below \$ 1.90 per day): 49.3%
(World Bank 2017; 2009 data)

Adult literacy rate: 38.7% (UNDP 2017; 2015 data)

Life expectancy at birth (male/female): 58 (59/58)
(World Bank 2017; 2015 data)

Child mortality rate (under 5, per 1000 live births): 114.7
(World Bank 2017; 2015 data)

Net ODA received (% of GNI): 9.7% (World Bank 2017; 2015 data)

Corruption Perception Index rank: 116 (of 176)
(Transparency International 2017; 2016 data)

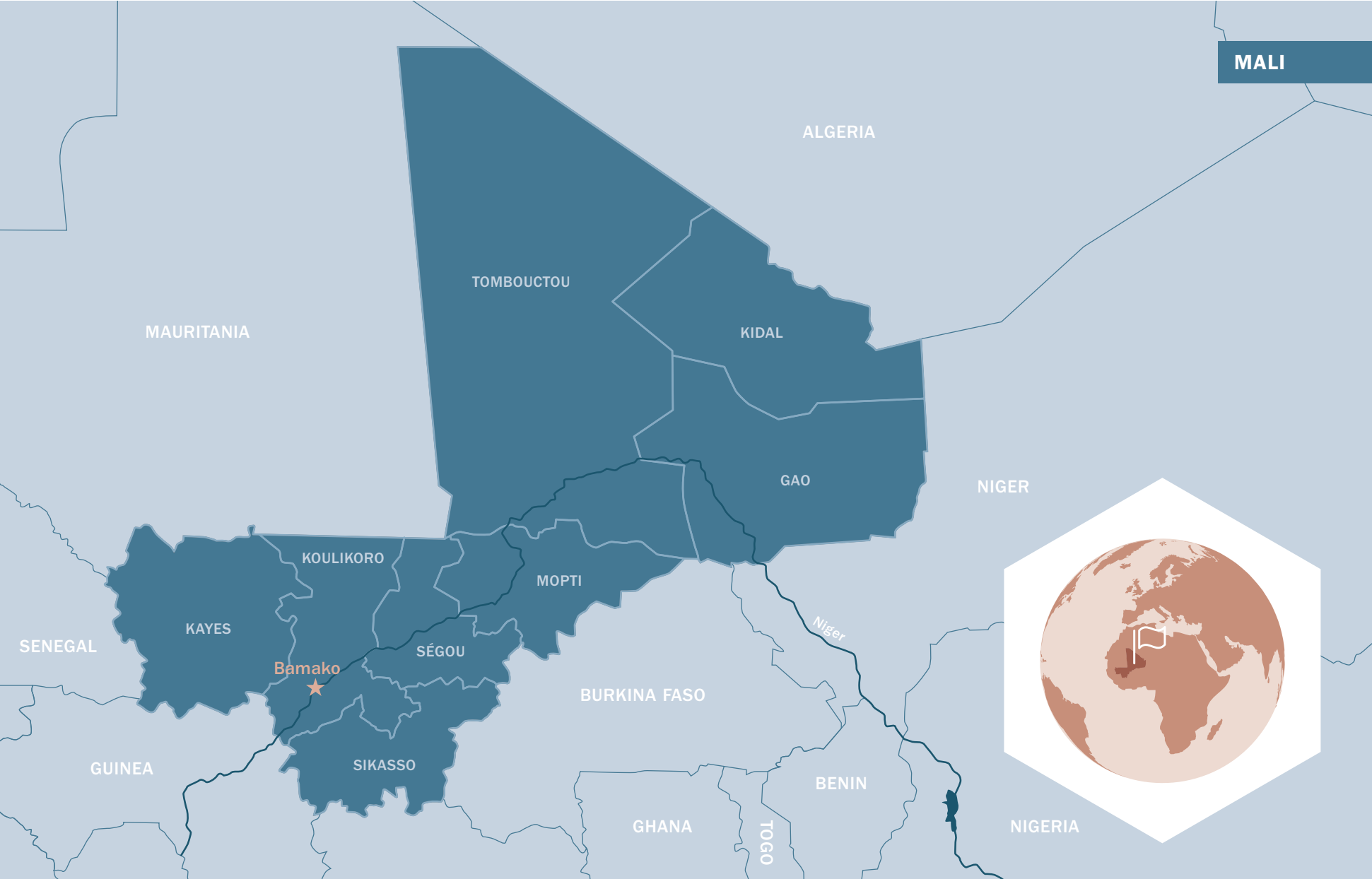
Internally Displaced Persons (new displacements in 2016 due to disasters): 8,000 (IDMC 2017; 2016 data)

Mean years of schooling: 2.3 (UNDP 2017; 2015 data)

Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, PPP (current international \$): 1,980 (World Bank 2017; 2015 data)

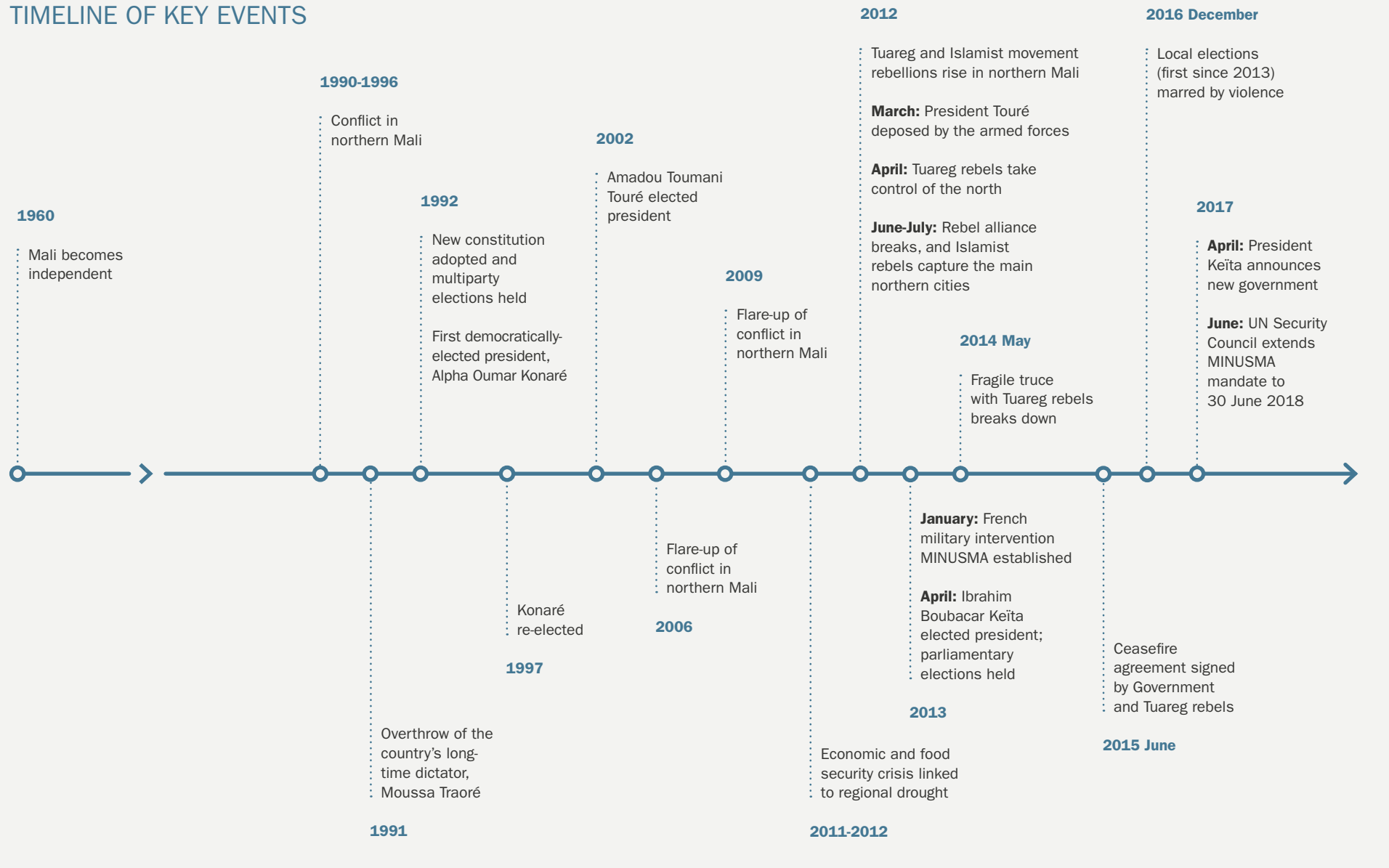


Aerial view of the area surrounding Anefis and Kidal, in northern Mali. September 2015. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/MARCO DORMINO/FLICKR



MALI

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS



1. Introduction

While one of the poorest nations in the world, Mali had become a fledgling model of governance. Shaken by political crises since 2012, Africa's donor darling is now struggling to reinvigorate previous gains.



Women walk next to a 15th-century mosque in Timbuktu. It was hacked apart by jihadists in 2012, but got restored to its former glory. September 2016. PHOTO: AFP PHOTO / SEBASTIEN RIEUSSEC/SCANPIX

Mali is one of the poorest countries in the world. Development gains achieved since the introduction of democratic governance in the early 1990s, and assumptions about Mali's stability, have been shaken by the 2012 political crisis and conflict. Prior to 2012, Mali had been a "donor darling", with foreign governments keen to provide development support to build on the positive foundations established in the 1990s. Through the early 2000s, Mali was seen to have achieved important governance gains, yet this progress was brought into question in 2012 when the government fell and conflict returned in full force to the north of the country.

No longer able to simply build on strengths, the challenge in recent years has been balancing the response to the conflict situation in the north while trying to sustain and reinvigorate the gains previously made in the rest of the country. The recent crisis has also highlighted chronic underlying issues that may not have been sufficiently addressed by development assistance during the more optimistic period pre-2012.



Malian refugees in the Mauritanian desert, March 2014, still stranded after the first refugees fled armed conflict in northern Mali two years earlier.
PHOTO: EC/ECHO/ANOUK DELAFORTRIE/FICKR

2. Methodology

The assessment is based on 25 evaluations, reviews and assessments published since 2010 and identified through a rigorous search. The sample included a few academic and other review articles to compensate for the narrower thematic focus of conventional evaluations in the country.



Bamako. PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTOS/DUTOURDUMONDE

This evaluation brief presents the synthesised main findings of 25 evaluations, reviews and assessments published since 2010. The reports reviewed for the brief were identified through a systematic search of global development co-operation databases (e.g. the OECD/DAC Evaluation Resource Centre database), websites and report databases of individual multilateral and bilateral donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as through direct communication with aid organisations in a small number of cases. In total, 50 evaluations and reports were found, and subsequently narrowed down to 25 with selection criteria that sought to ensure: a) coverage of the main sectors and areas for development co-operation; b) a balance between different sources and channels of official development assistance (ODA); c) high scientific quality. Achieving a mix of evaluations commissioned by large bilateral donors, multinational organisations and major transnational NGOs was an additional criterion.

While this approach resulted in a balanced sample, the fact that the CEBs are, by definition, based only on formal evaluations creates a certain limitation as the available reports did not adequately cover all crucial areas of development co-operation and development challenges. Furthermore,

although many donors and implementing agencies publish the evaluations of their programmes and projects, some potentially interesting reports may have been kept confidential. To mitigate these limitations, this CEB also draws on a small number of relevant academic articles, policy studies, government publications, and other types of assessment.

This sample of evaluations of aid to Mali, published during the period 2010-2017, reveals mixed results, with more generally positive outcomes in the pre-2012 period. In recent years, engagement became more complex and required a combination of development and humanitarian resources. Furthermore, while pre-2012 aid generated some positive effects on governance, education, health and other areas, it appears to have failed to recognise and address underlying issues that presented risks to stability.

Key donors of the programmes in the sample are bilateral and multilateral entities, including the US, EU Institutions, the World Bank, France, Canada and Germany. The channels and trends in funding reflect the differing needs of the periods before and after 2012. Interventions have focused on budget support, governance (e.g. public financial management, justice sector, local governance), strengthening of civil



A Dogon woman winnows millet in Teli, March 2016. PHOTO: FLICKR

society, food and economic security, education, health, and women's empowerment through, for example, access to education, savings initiatives, and sexual and reproductive rights. While the CEB focuses on these key areas to understand the development context and interventions, programmes featured by the evaluations under study also include livelihoods, agriculture, child protection, the climate-conflict nexus, and internal displacement and refugees in the region.

3. Country context

Widely considered a regional success story for a decade, Mali confronted an ill-fated series of shocks starting with the drought of 2011–2012. The rise of Tuareg and Islamist rebellions in the North thereafter started the country on a downward trajectory from which it has yet to rebound with wide displacement and a referendum still on hold.



Two boys are climbing cliff dwellings on the Bandiagara Escarpment in Teli, which was listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1989. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/MARCO DORMINO/FLICKR

Mali, a landlocked Sahelian country in West Africa, has faced myriad inter-connected challenges to development, from high population growth rates, and violence and insecurity in the north, to an undiversified economy dependent on subsistence agriculture, livestock and global markets for gold and cotton. Mali also experiences recurring natural hazards: droughts, irregular rains and floods affected one-third of all Malian households in 2007-08 (World Bank 2011), with the impacts of drought felt again in 2011. Mali currently ranks 175th out of 188 countries and territories on the Human Development Index and 156th out of 159 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (UNDP 2017).



Woman working in the greenhouse of Sidibe Argo-Techniques outside Bamako, growing watermelons, sweet peppers, tomatoes and other vegetables. November, 2013. PHOTO: DOMINIC CHAVEZ/WORLD BANK/Flickr

Yet, despite the limited economic diversification and vulnerability to climatic shocks and stresses, Mali maintained a stable macroeconomic environment through the 1990s and 2000s. In particular, the processes of democratisation that began in the early 1990s supported peace and stability, as well as institutional change. In 1991, a comprehensive democratisation process was undertaken after the overthrow of the country's long-time dictator, Moussa Traoré. In 1992, Mali adopted a new constitution, which contained guarantees on human rights and multiparty democracy. That same year, Alpha Oumar Konaré became the country's first

democratically-elected president, ostensibly breaking cycles of authoritarian rule and unconstitutional seizures of power since Mali gained independence in 1960.

While subsequent years were not without political challenges, Mali made progress in strengthening democracy and respect for human rights, and was considered a success story of democracy in West Africa, with donors gladly supporting the Government and its development agenda. In 2010, Mali was one of the few African countries that was classified as "free", according to the Index of Freedom in the World (BMZ 2011).

Nationally, income poverty fell, with the percentage of poor decreasing from 55.6 per cent (66.8 per cent for the rural population, which accounts for roughly three-quarters of the total population) in 2001 to 43.6 per cent (51.0 per cent for rural) in 2010 (IFAD 2013).

However, the events of 2012 changed both the reality and the perception of Mali's stability. Mali dropped from 79th to 38th on the Fragile States Index between 2012-2013, with its ranking falling annually to reach 29th place by 2016. Following on the heels of the economic and food security crisis of 2011-2012, the

political security deterioration began in 2012 with the rise of Tuareg and Islamist rebellions in northern Mali. Over the decades, Mali has faced recurrent threats to security as a result of rebellions in the northern regions of the country, particularly Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal, involving representatives of Mali's Tuareg, Arab and Peul/Fula ethnic communities. While the conflict of 1990-1996 quietened, the situation remained tense. From 2006, conflict in the north flared up several times, peaking in 2009 and, more substantially, in 2012.

The destabilising effects of 2012 were felt nationally, with President Amadou Toumani Touré being deposed by the armed forces shortly after the crisis in the north began. In alliance with Islamist groups, Tuareg rebels took control of the north, leading to an (unrecognised) declaration of independence. However, Islamist groups turned against the Tuareg rebels to take control of the north. Unable to restore its authority in the rebel-held areas, the Malian government requested international support. French forces intervened to stabilise the northern regions, followed by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), established in 2013 with a broad mandate to support security and stabilisation. In 2015, the government of Mali and the Tuareg-led rebel



The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established in 2013. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/MARCO DORMINO/FICKR

alliance signed a ceasefire agreement. The peace deal did not include the Islamist insurgency, and insecurity not only remained but spread to central Mali. In response, MINUSMA's mandate was extended, and is currently authorised through to the end of June 2018.

The conflict and instability in northern Mali from 2012 also led to large-scale internal and external displacement, requiring humanitarian assistance both within Mali and in the wider region. A humanitarian response had already been mobilised in 2011 following a regional drought that resulted in a humanitarian crisis across the Sahel region, but in the years immediately following the conflict, humanitarian needs and operations expanded.



A woman receives consultations at a medical clinic in Gao, May 2014, run by MINUSMA. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/MARCO DORMINO/FICKR

In August 2017 a referendum on the constitutional reforms that formed part of the 2015 peace deal was put on hold in order to undertake new consultations following opposition from political parties and civil society. The reforms would have included new presidential powers, the creation of new regions, and a degree of autonomy for ethnic Tuaregs in the north (Reuters 2017). As of October 2017, the process remains on hold. Critics have suggested that the lack of popular support is the result of a process that was “not inclusive and the proposals include ‘opportunistic’ reforms” (Diawara 2017). Moreover, “the debate around the constitutional revision has revealed deeper social dynamics that the Malian authorities and their partners should pay attention to” in relation to the

limitations of the peace process, as well as other areas of governance (ISS Today 2017). Furthermore, “[s]low implementation in the area of development has weakened buy-in to the [peace] process among northerners, while perceived concessions to armed groups and northerners have weakened buy-in in the south” (IPI 2017).

While economic growth outlooks are positive, the events of and since 2012 changed the international image of Mali, while also exacerbating conditions – including high rates of poverty and exclusion, poor infrastructure and services, chronic food insecurity, low development indicators, and ethnic and political tensions (UNICEF 2013). Other current concerns, however, pre-dated these recent political-security crises, including a dysfunctional justice system, systemic corruption, lack of government dialogue with civil society, and insufficient resources to strengthen the full exercise of social, economic, and cultural rights. Weak state capacity and revenues also limit “its measures to foster economic inclusion”, and the “Malian state is not able to systematically combat poverty on its own” (BTI 2016: 19).

Despite some of the earlier mentioned improvements, approximately two-thirds of Mali’s population of 17 million live in poverty, with women particularly affected. The gender disparity is illustrated in literacy rates: while 56 per cent of male youths are literate, only 39 per cent of females are. These ratios are similarly reflected in both primary and secondary school enrolment (Oxfam 2017). Respect for women’s rights is subject to religious interpretations and practices that affect their health and severely limit their education, participation in governance, and social and economic independence.



Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, president of Mali since April 2013.
PHOTO: JEAN BERNARD VERNIER/JBV NEWS/POLARIS/SCANPIX

While economic growth 
outlooks are positive,
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4. Donor engagement in Mali

Donor engagement in Mali reflects the trends of the political-security context. After several years of increasing ODA dominated by the public sector, assistance dropped in the post-2012 period and then levelled off, with an increasing amount of ODA redirected towards NGOs and multilateral organisations, and humanitarian assistance emerging as a more significant sector.



Mothers wait to vaccinate their babies, Bamako, 4 November, 2013. PHOTO: DOMINIC CHAVEZ/WORLD BANK/FLICR

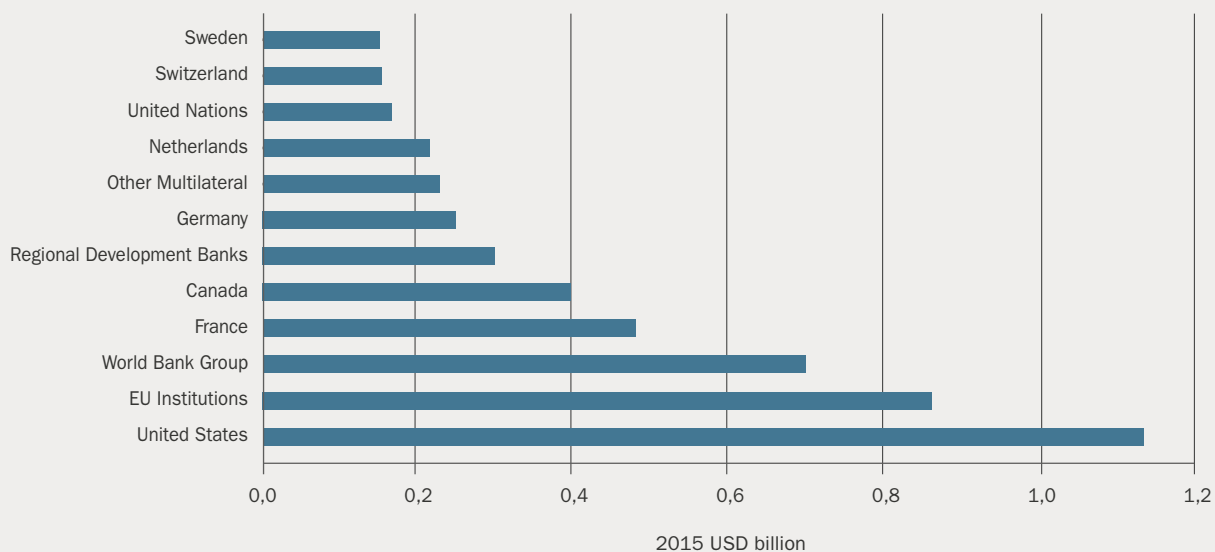
TRENDS IN ODA

From 2002-2011, ODA steadily increased from USD 610.35 million to USD 1.14 billion, with a large spike in 2006 of USD 2.92 billion, of which 2.16 billion was related to debt relief initiatives corresponding to key contributions through the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative/ Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. In 2012, however, ODA dropped slightly, before returning to 2011 levels, but without returning to the previous pattern of steady annual increases. This pattern echoes the donor interest and engagement with Mali prior to the 2012 crisis, the suspension or reduction of development support in 2012 in response to the conflict, and, for some donors, redirection of funds towards humanitarian support at this time.

SOURCES OF ODA

As can be seen in Figure 1, Mali's top ODA donors comprise bilateral and multilateral donors. During the period 2011-2015, USD 5.8 billion in aid was provided to Mali, with the US as the top contributing donor (19 per cent of total aid during this period), followed by EU Institutions (15 per cent) and the World Bank (12 per cent). Norway comes in 18th, with USD 70.11 million during this period – 1 per cent of total aid to Mali.

FIGURE 1 // TOP 12 DONORS OF GROSS ODA, 2011-2015

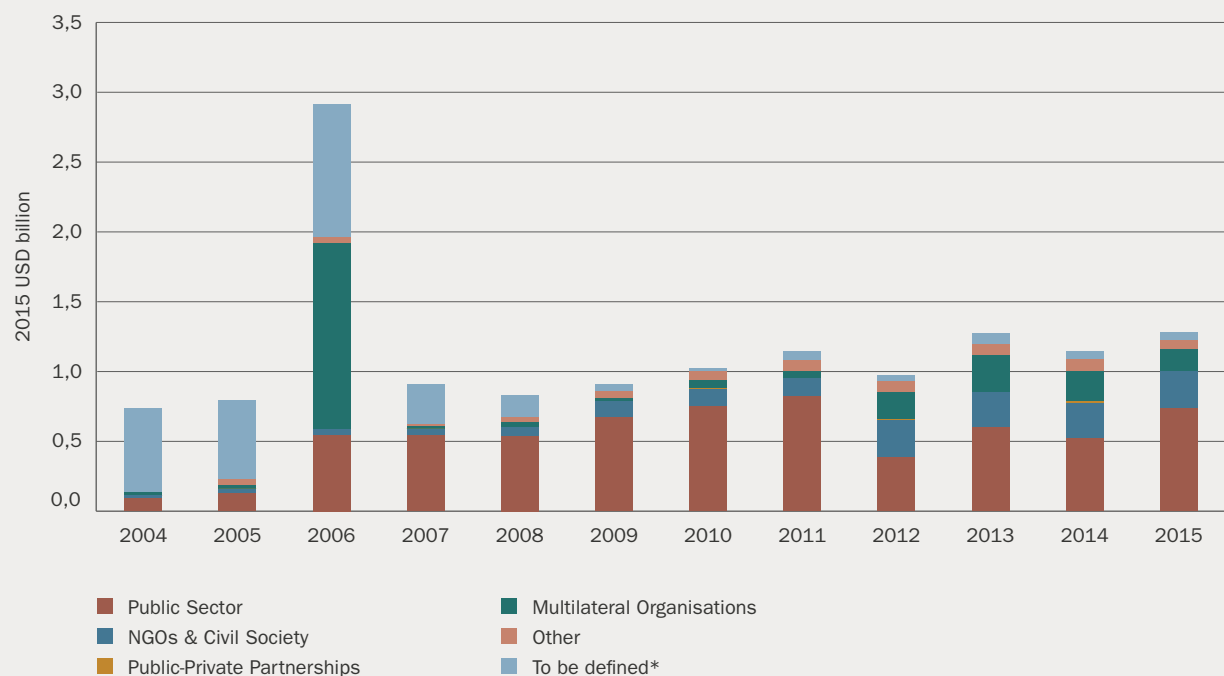


SOURCE: OECD CRS AID ACTIVITY DATABASE DATA 2017

CHANNELS OF ODA

Despite the fluctuations over the 10-year period, the public sector has consistently remained the main channel for ODA funds (see Figure 2). However, one main channel that has seen a significant change in the last five years is that of NGOs and civil society. There has been a notable increase both in the volume of funding to these actors and as a proportion of ODA compared to the preceding period, with the biggest rises in 2009 and 2012. The 2012-2015 period also saw a considerable rise in funding through multilateral organisations, the shift aligning once again with the change in context. Some of the funding through multilaterals also found its way to NGOs, increasing their proportion of ODA fund implementation. For example, while NGOs directly received less than one-fifth of direct resources, through partnership agreements with UN agencies they delivered more than 50 per cent of the assistance funded by DFID during 2012-2013 (DFID 2015).

FIGURE 2 // TOTAL ODA BY CHANNEL, 2004-2015



*The category "To be defined" is related to the fact that the OECD's mapping exercise to apply CRS categories retrospectively is still ongoing. Aid flows that have not been mapped yet are marked as "To be defined". In contrast, the category "Other" applies to aid flows that have already been mapped, but which could not be placed in another channel category. SOURCE: OECD CRS AID ACTIVITY DATABASE DATA 2017

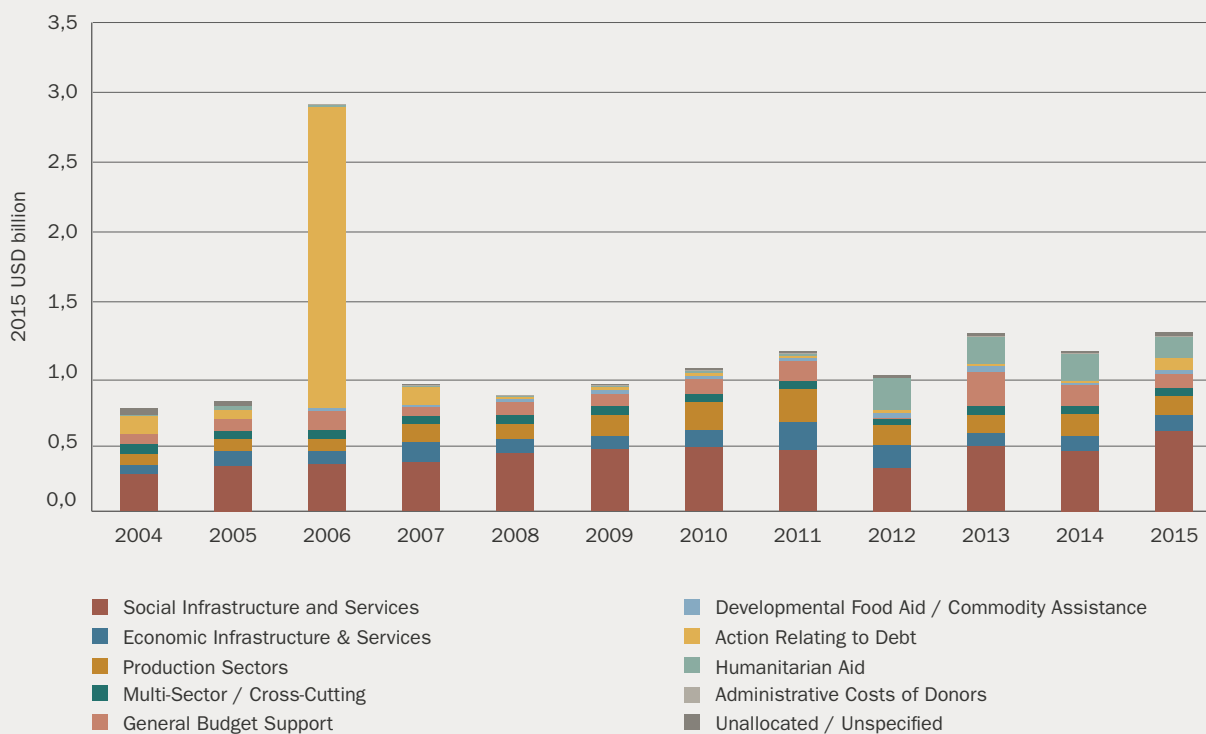
MAJOR SECTORS

Over the last 15 years, budget support (mainly in the form of general budget support) has also experienced considerable highs and lows, with a dramatic drop in 2012 to USD 9.4 million, from USD 149.2 million the previous year. Responding to the events of 2012, as noted above, many donors suspended their development projects and stopped budget support, redirecting funds to UN agencies and NGOs operating in the country. With the establishment of a transitional Government and the promise of elections in 2013, some development actors returned. Most notably, by 2013, donor funds were being re-injected with the highest general budget support for the entire period (USD 246.2 million), before dropping again by half in the following years.

Starting in 2012, there were dramatic shifts in humanitarian funding, reflecting the crisis response (see Figure 3). Humanitarian funding jumped from USD 28.3 million in 2011 to USD 219.9 million in 2012, and averaged USD 319 million per year thereafter, with food security the leading sector (OCHA 2017¹). It has been observed that the co-ordination of aid between national and international institutions and

1 Managed by UN OCHA, the Financial Tracking Service captures international humanitarian aid contributions from across a range of actors, including but not limited to ODA donors. While ODA reporting does include humanitarian sector spending, FTS is used here to provide a fuller picture.

FIGURE 3 // TOTAL ODA BY SECTOR, 2004-2015



SOURCE: OECD CRS AID ACTIVITY DATABASE DATA 2017

between development and humanitarian entities “is a component of Mali’s expected success in efforts to rehabilitate, reconcile and thus produce peace dividends”² (USAID/AFD 2015: 41).

2 Original French text: “...est au Mali une des composantes de la réussite escomptée des efforts de réhabilitation, de réconciliation et donc de la production des dividendes de la paix.”

5. Evaluations of aid

The evaluation sample shows a diverse range of areas for donor engagement, with differing degrees of success. It also illustrates how the changing context – moving from an apparently stable situation characterised by democratic progress to one of conflict and instability – impacted the aid environment and donor perceptions.



A view of the audience at a performance by a youth theatre in Gao, a project to promote peace and reconciliation, February 2014. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/MARCO DORMINO/FLICKR

Focusing on those sectors most prominent both before and after 2012, the following areas are highlighted here: budget support, governance, civil society development, food and economic security, education, health, women's empowerment and gender equity, and land as a cross-cutting issue.

BUDGET SUPPORT

Budget support played an important role in Mali in recent decades. During the 2003-2009 period, budget support (both general and sector) provided the Government of Mali with the ability to reach a “critical mass” of financing. Coupled with “its flexibility as a financing instrument, as well as the existence of the annual national strategy review that it helped to institutionalise over 2003 to 2009, budget support assisted in improving the overall efficiency of resource allocation and in meeting the critical strategic requirements of the priority sectors” (European Commission 2011: 11).

Positive outcomes (including an expansion in coverage and access) triggered by budget support were also seen in education and health. Overall, budget support was determined to have “significantly contributed to achieving goals in the national poverty and growth strategy, and sectoral strategies” (Government



February 2017, MINUSMA organised a monthly convoy of civilian and military vehicles to supply remote UN bases in the north of the country. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/SYLVAIN LIECHTI/FLICKR

of Canada 2013). It is also seen as having “substantially furthered macroeconomic management [...] and having ensured key support for public investment in the social sectors, thus contributing to growth, increased access to basic social services, and income poverty reduction” (European Commission 2011: 13).

However, reviewing the 2003-2009 period of budget support, long-standing problems were identified relating to treasury management, commitment control, as well as bank reconciliations and management

accounts. This highlighted the need for increased accountability and efficiency in financial management, which, if achieved, would contribute to greater development results through an improved public expenditure process (European Commission 2011). For example, observed “weaknesses” in “treasury management and public accounting” meant that “the authorities cannot have an accurate knowledge of the Treasury situation” – an issue that would need to be addressed as a priority moving forward (Ibid: 142). Furthermore, while general and sectoral budget support was effective during this period, “when the objective

is to finance a given policy and to monitor it”, using it to change national policy “through conditionality (of decentralisation and State reform or of public finance management reform), the consequences were losses of coherence in implementation and higher transaction costs” (Ibid: 149).

With no budget support evaluations available for the recent period, the impact of the suspension of development programmes and budget support – on which many basic social services depended – as a result of the conflict, or efforts to address the highlighted weaknesses, could not be determined at the time this CEB was written.

GOVERNANCE

As for most sectors of co-operation, governance support can be characterised through two phases: before and after 2012. In the decade prior to 2012, Mali was held up as a positive example of democratic governance that donors were happy to support, bolstered by the popular support for democratic and participatory forms of governance. However, the political-security events of recent years served as a “wake-up call” (UNICEF 2013: 18), having both highlighted and exacerbated the weaknesses of democratic governance in Mali. This in turn shifted the attention of governance programmes

from strengthening a system perceived to be already working well to the long process of re-establishing democratic order and addressing root causes of conflict in the north.

While programmes designed to strengthen governance in Mali in the years prior to 2012 had some positive outcomes, their impact on governance in post-2012 Mali is limited. For example, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), working with a local partner, introduced in 2011 a project to support multiparty dialogue, legitimate political parties, strengthen interaction between civil society and political society, and strengthen cross-cutting themes such as gender. Overall, it was found that the project had a positive impact on the political environment; in particular, the multiparty platform “proved an effective approach to enhancing constructive dialogue between political parties and building common ground for democratic consolidation” (NIMD 2015: 33). However, while these outcomes were positive, it has also been observed that the multiparty platform may not be the most effective when what is needed are structural reforms or addressing issues such as marginalisation, both of which would be needed to address conflict dynamics and the underlying causes of instability. It has been argued that “governance shortcomings continue to

undermine security in the country”, and efforts to generate “short-term peace” may work against “long-term stabilisation goals” (Lebovich 2017: 3).

In looking at that instability, one assessment of the governance situation in 2013 has gone so far as to suggest that the social contract between the Government of Mali and the people of Mali has been “fractured”, undermining all areas of governance and socio-economic development. In particular, the assessment cites “illegitimate and ineffective institutions; weak capacity; significant challenges facing reconciliation; and inadequate civic engagement” (USAID 2013: 2). It is argued that these factors are all inter-related and cannot be treated in silos, and that they must be addressed in “future governance programming, given the overall challenges they pose to achieving sustainable impacts” (Ibid.: 2).

In 2014, an assessment examining the key challenges to democracy, human rights and governance in Mali highlighted underlying issues (e.g. in the areas of rule of law, political competition and accountability) that had received little attention in the evaluations of governance projects from the pre-2012 period (USAID 2014). Despite having had two decades of democratic elections, political competition

Despite having had two decades of democratic elections, political competition was found to be limited to a small set of political elites.

was found to be limited to a small set of political elites. According to the assessment, “power [remained] concentrated in the presidency, and the combination of client-patron relationships and political/economic corruption has overturned the formal checks-and-balances systems” (USAID 2014: v). It has been argued that corruption did not improve with the introduction of democratic systems: “though commonplace under the Traoré dictatorship [1968-1991], [corruption] became institutionalised under the Konaré administration” (Harmon 2014). Malians surveyed through the 2014 assessment expressed the view that the fight against corruption was not being adequately addressed by the government, with no major improvements to the legislative and institutional frameworks related to corruption

(USAID 2014). This was similarly echoed in further studies highlighting the perceptions of pervasive corruption, which also noted disaffection among Malians with the post-2012 Keita government and its anti-corruption platform as having seen no change in the corruption that affects their everyday lives (Bleck/Dembele/Guindo 2016). Overall, “corruption remains a major problem” in Mali (Freedom House 2017). It takes different forms, including payments or gifts for goods and services (locally referred to as *magouille*), favoritism and nepotism, non-existent or irregular government employees, diversion of funds, and bribery and recompenses (Harmon 2014). In 2014, the IMF voiced concerns over corruption related to extra-budgetary spending, and temporarily suspended financial support, lifting the suspension following a government audit and agreement to hold senior government leaders to account. However, “concrete actions remain to be seen on promises to hold government officials accountable for financial mismanagement” (US Government 2017). References to systemic corruption selectively appear in relation to other more recent governance-relevant evaluations, but no large anti-corruption initiatives were identified in the reviewed evaluations.

Also, the pre-2012 period was not without criticisms, particularly in relation to public financial management, as highlighted earlier in relation to budget support. However, despite this chronic issue, when comparing the situation of 2010 to a decade earlier, there has been considerable progress in bringing the Malian public financial management systems closer to international standards – in particular, in the areas of budget planning and transparency. However, no detailed assessment of progress since 2010 was available at the time this CEB was written.

Gains related to the judiciary, however, have been more limited. Even where there have been “modest results” following interventions, they “have not yet proven sustainable” (Government of Canada 2013). The key chronic challenges have included a judiciary “severely constrained by its lack of independence, weak professional ethics and a lack of resources and capacities, and the fragmentation of the system of internal and external financial controls” (BMZ 2011: 57-58).

Informal aspects of governance also play a strong role in Mali, and, while more difficult for outsiders to assess, they have not been ignored by donors. For example, as part of their engagement on accountability, strategies and approaches, German development co-operation

has taken informal aspects of governance into account, evidenced most strongly in German support for decentralisation and local governance. In particular, German engagement has “paid [attention] to strengthening local governments’ capacities to facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue and to involve all relevant actors, including traditional institutions, in new approaches to local governance, service provision and economic development” (BMZ 2011: 58). German development support for accountability has also taken into consideration the role of the media, identified as a key driver of accountability. However, while German engagement is viewed positively (i.e. as an asset for other donors in policy dialogue with Malian authorities), it has not been “harnessed for wider efforts of the donor community to strengthen domestic accountability systems” (BMZ 2011: 58).

Taking a wider view of decentralisation, which began in 1993, while “formal administrative structure is a lasting achievement of Mali’s donor-supported democratisation and decentralisation process [...] administrative performance is highly uneven across the country”. The “powerful” central administration contrasts with “local administrations [that] remain poorly institutionalised” as a result of “insufficient” regional and municipal devolution plans and resources (BTI 2016: 6).

CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

Closely related to governance has been donor support to Malian civil society. Despite progress in structuring and strengthening civil society organisations, they “remain weak in terms of their capacity to develop well-established positions and to take concerted action” (Government of Canada 2013). Donors such as Canada and Sida have included civil society engagement to complement their governance programmes. For example, Sida’s Local Democratic Governance programme incorporated capacity building for civil society. However, immediate outcomes are difficult to gauge as “taking into account the weaknesses of local civil society organisations, these processes take much longer for stakeholder ownership and for positive and meaningful change”³ (Sida 2010a: 39).

One approach was particularly highlighted for its success. Supported by Sida, Diakonia engaged in civil society development, but instead of direct intervention the approach was to provide primarily financial support for initiatives suggested by NGOs and national and local associations, thereby stimulating project proposals coming directly from civil society

³ Original French text: “Compte tenu des faiblesses des OSC locales, ces processus prennent beaucoup plus de temps pour une appropriation par les acteurs concernés et pour parvenir à des changements positifs et significatifs.”



Women and children wait in line to receive medical consultations, Bamako, June 2014. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/MARCO DORMINO/FICKR

organisations and supporting “learning by doing”. While there were some human and material resource limitations and some issues related to monitoring indicators, there were “several cases in which the actions financed have contributed to sectoral improvements in the situation in the intervention areas, as well as at the national level”⁴ (Sida 2010a: 35).

FOOD & ECONOMIC SECURITY

Food security is a key area of concern for engagement in Mali, where significant proportions of the population are food insecure, a situation exacerbated by climate and conflict shocks and stresses. Food and other in-kind

⁴ Original French text: “Il existe plusieurs cas dans lesquels les actions nuancées ont contribué à des améliorations sectorielles de la situation dans les zones d’intervention, ainsi qu’au niveau national.”

Food and other in-kind transfers have been the main social safety net programmes in Mali.

transfers have been the main social safety net programmes in Mali, although there has been movement towards more cash-based responses wherever possible (World Bank 2011).

The World Bank has assessed social safety net interventions addressing structural and institutional frameworks, cash and near-cash transfers, food transfers, universal subsidies, labour-intensive public works, and fee waivers for health. Overall, while transfers play an important role in keeping poverty levels lower than they might otherwise be, it was found that the existing programmes and system are “too limited and fragmented to constitute an appropriate response to poverty and vulnerability”. Furthermore, the “State needs to play a greater role in the organisation, consolidation and perpetuation of the different components of the social safety net system” (World Bank 2011: 28). While this 2011

evaluation obviously could not determine the impacts of the post-2012 political-security context, it can be assumed that it would have hampered the state’s ability to play such a greater role. With respect to food assistance, the two central actors (supported by various donors) have been the WFP and the International Committee of the Red Cross, both working through networks of local partners/societies.

Co-ordination with, and contribution to, government food aid programmes is also a key parameter in the food aid sector. Food aid was a particular focus of the 2011-2015 period, as the 2011-2012 drought caused a food security crisis, quickly followed by the conflict, in which food security was the top funded sector for the humanitarian response. Food aid presents challenges in terms of logistics, programming and targeting. In order to prevent negative impacts on farming communities, there has been an increase in cash-transfer programmes, which aim to mitigate negative impacts, while also aiming to avoid or postpone negative coping strategies (DFID 2015).

Overlapping with food assistance/nutrition, school feeding programmes have proved highly successful in improving enrolment rates (WFP 2011). Education activities have also been incorporated into government programming

and were “instrumental in the formulation and implementation of school feeding policy in Mali in 2009” (WFP 2011). However, the nutrition programmes have not had a significant impact on the overall nutrition status of the population.

Finally, income generating activities have also been implemented to address food and economic security more broadly. For example, it was found that UK support to income-generating activities helped to “encourage on-farm consumption, improve nutrition and families’ health by diversifying food, and covering additional education and health costs” (DFID 2015: 8).

EDUCATION

Even before the recent crises, more than one million children in Mali were out of school and classrooms were crowded. Budget support and programme-specific funding have contributed to both positive and mixed education outcomes. With respect to budget support, between 2002 and 2009 the gross enrolment rate for basic (primary) education rose, repetition rates fell and completion rates increased. Without general and sector-specific budget support, “it would have been impossible to generate the education sector outputs (school buildings, teachers and textbooks) correlated with improved outcomes” (European Commission

2011: 12). As noted earlier, evidence as to the potential effects of changes to budget support, especially the drop in 2012, was not available in the evaluation sample.

For programme-specific support, Norway has been one of the leading donors for education in Mali, increasing funding to education even while overall ODA funding to education declined. Norway is also the largest donor to UNICEF's programme for basic education and one of the top donors to the Global Education Partnership. These programmes at least partially met their learning outcome objectives (faring better on gender equity), but both were criticised for weak documentation of results, and the resulting challenges in determining programmatic impact. Similar mixed results were also found in other donor-funded NGO initiatives (Strømme Foundation 2012a).

Overall, UNICEF (with support from multiple donors across different programmes) has played a leading role in the education sector programme, including during the transition from development to humanitarian interventions in 2012-2013. The crisis in the north had displaced 85 per cent of teachers and 75,000 children in the region, while schools were looted and damaged. During this time, the UN agency effectively sent relevant supplies to the north.



School children in a classroom in Gao, December 2014. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/MARCO DORMINO/FICKR

However, reactivating the school system has been challenging. An evaluation found that “limited numbers and capacity of implementing partners and Government counterparts, coupled with certain internal weaknesses of the UNICEF Education section, affected the response. Although unclear targets and indicators do not allow for a proper assessment of the effectiveness of the response, major

differences between expenditure and implementation rates indicate efficiency problems” (UNICEF 2013: 9).

Despite this, the reportedly strong collaboration between the UN agency and the Ministry of Education has been highlighted as “grounds for optimism” (UNICEF 2013: 9). Furthermore, schooling was also shown to be a useful avenue

for UNICEF's programme for the protection of children, including abuse, violence and, in particular, reducing child labour, although it was noted that teachers would require additional training in childhood knowledge, child psychology, and especially vulnerable children (Strømme Foundation 2012a).

HEALTH

Mali suffers from some of the worst health indicators worldwide. As with education, budget support has been highlighted as being particularly effective for health services. During the 2002-2009 period, there was expansion in each of the key outputs of the health sector strategy, with a particular improvement in the number of functional community health centres, which would not have been possible without both general and sector budget support. Over the same period, significant improvement was observed in the majority of health outcome indicators, particularly the use of antenatal services. These achievements can be partly explained by the contribution of budget support to the financing of additional health personnel (European Commission 2011).

Another highlighted area of positive evolution – this time, programme-specific support – is work on HIV/AIDS in Mali, where WFP has played an important role in defining the new

government policy and in explaining the importance of nutrition in caring for people living with HIV (WFP 2011). For reasons previously explained, evidence for potential effects of changes in budget support for health after 2012 was not available.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT & GENDER EQUITY

Mali has various sociocultural customs that entrench gender inequality and prevent or limit the full and equal participation of women and girls in society. Recent years have seen the Government ratify most international treaties on the rights of women and children. However, at the national level, only modest reforms have been adopted, and dominant patriarchal social norms continue to be influential.

Where programmes have had gender as a cross-cutting theme, and where there is data available, the findings are largely satisfactory. Specific programmes targeting women and/or programmes with objectives specifically focused on gender feature prominently in the sample of evaluations of development engagement in Mali. These programmes include interventions aimed at improving girls' enrolment and ensuring transition from primary to secondary education, opportunities for safety net savings, women's political participation, institutional and economic capacity building, and family planning.

Programmes for women and girls have achieved positive outcomes.

Some of these programmes for women and girls have achieved positive outcomes, but others less so.

For example, women's empowerment has been particularly targeted through an Oxfam initiative promoting the successful transition of girls from primary to secondary schools. Resistance was initially encountered from parents, as well as from the wider communities, as the idea of empowering girls was seen to “import” other cultural values that can lead to losing control over the education of girls” (Oxfam 2017: 6). However, despite this, the programme achieved some clear, if small, successes. The main findings of the evaluation suggested that girls from the project schools on average scored positively on 70 per cent of the indicators, in contrast to 67 per cent of non-project girls. The 3 per cent difference was found to be statistically significant, and illustrated a positive impact of the project on girls' empowerment

overall (ibid.). It is, however, a small gain and, at the same time, there was very weak evidence of the impact on power relations within the girls' surrounding networks.

A programme implemented by Oxfam America took a different approach, considering gender in relation to the saving and credit programme "Saving for Change". Women were drawn to Saving for Change over other options because the requirements to qualify were "much less onerous than other formal credit programmes". Women "set the rules about how much money will be contributed, how loans are taken, and what will happen if someone does not repay" (Oxfam/Freedom from Hunger 2013: 88). It was also viewed as flexible in times of economic crisis. Overall, it was concluded that the programme generated positive, although modest, impacts across its objectives, with the exception of health.

In contrast to the above, a Norwegian Protestant Mission programme on capacity building of women's associations was less successful. Despite a generally "acceptable" result for the two-year initiative, the programme experienced a lack of trust between associations involved, human resource issues, and low participation in capacity building, among other issues. Moreover, successes

were recorded for some of the associations involved that do not have the structures to be sustainable, raising questions as to the impact of this approach on women's empowerment beyond the short-term (Normisjon 2012).

Lastly, with a long-standing commitment to sexual and reproductive health rights, funding from the Netherlands has supported UNFPA and international NGOs in family planning activities in Mali. Little progress has been made, in part due to cultural barriers and fear of side effects, and in part due to insufficient stocks and poor quality of health services in remote areas. One positive effect was a discernible shift to views that are more receptive to family planning, and there is "moderate evidence that Dutch support to [sexual and reproductive health rights] in Mali has contributed to the shift" (MFA Netherlands 2013: 78).

These examples and evaluations of women's empowerment illustrate that some traction, albeit small, has been created, which offers a foundation to build on given a long-term perspective and appropriate resources.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Land

Land issues directly and indirectly touch various dimensions of development. As such, "dysfunctions of the land sector hinder investments and economic development and have serious consequences for livelihoods, social peace, and political stability" (AFD/World Bank 2015: 96). An assessment of land issues found that "conventional policy options, tools and procedures tentatively implemented during the past few decades to streamline and unify land markets and improve land administration have achieved limited results" (AFD/World Bank 2015: 2). Land dynamics also present a challenge for women's empowerment, with women having little access to land via public transfers, non-customary markets, and customary channels, be it for residential or agricultural purposes.

However, while land issues are addressed as a tangential constraint in some evaluations of assistance to Mali, access to land was largely unaddressed in the evaluation sample and would appear to require greater attention as a key development concern for the country.

6. Lessons learnt

While highlights of the pre-2012 period were laudable for general budget-support to government priorities, direct investments made thereafter to health, education and women's empowerment became more visible and fruitful.



Residents of Timbuktu maintaining Djingareyber Mosque, a World Heritage Site, applying traditional repair techniques. February 2017. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/TIECOURA NDAOU/FLICR

STRENGTHS

The evaluations cover two very different periods for Mali, both in relation to context and development assistance, but in both periods it is possible to highlight positive outcomes of development engagement. In the pre-2012 period, especially prominent was the impact of both general and sector budget support. Furthermore, while the health and education sectors benefited from donor support in both the pre- and post-2012 period, the diversification of approaches to food and economic security (e.g. cash transfers) simultaneously addressed the needs of affected populations, as well as potential unintended negative consequences of traditional interventions. While the gains are small, even minor movements in women's empowerment are noteworthy and present an opportunity.

WEAKNESSES

While governance support during the pre-2012 period was largely viewed as positive, the events of 2012 and subsequent reflections have raised critical questions about whether development support for governance really addressed issues that could generate long-term stability. It suggests an inadequate or partial understanding of governance, and insufficient recognition of warning signs presented by



Scenes from life in Gao, December 2014. PHOTO: UN PHOTO/MARCO DORMINO/FLICKR

regular flare-ups in the north. In addition, chronic issues that existed in both the pre- and post-2012 period – most notably, public finance management and the justice system – highlight particular weaknesses in governance interventions. Another area that was regularly critiqued is capacity building, which has received significant amounts of development assistance. It remains a challenge, both in relation to civil society engagement and to women's empowerment programmes.

GAPS

The events of 2012 and the subsequent years have shaken the development enterprise in Mali, but a real understanding of how the events of 2012 have impacted on development approaches is largely missing from the evaluations. While there is acknowledgment of the shifting of donor resources from development to humanitarian assistance – especially in the 2012-2013 period – and the levelling off of ODA, it remains unclear how this has affected critical areas of co-operation and modalities/approaches (e.g. budget support) used to implement aid. More importantly, two

central questions for the future emerge:
1. How should development programming change in relation to the different political-security realities in order to re-establish democratic governance and address underlying factors (which have become more visible and exacerbated in recent years)? 2. Were some of the positive impacts reported for the period 2002-2011 missing critical areas that might have addressed these root causes?

An additional critical gap relates to land. The discussion of land as a cross-cutting issue drew primarily on one assessment highlighting the importance and complexity of land. However, there was limited or no attention to land in the programmes evaluated during the pre- and post-2012 period. Given the impact that land can have across a diverse range of issues, including conflict, socio-economic conditions and gender equity, this is an area that requires more substantial and dedicated attention.

Finally, a stronger evidence-base in evaluations is required to enable donors to effectively support development action. The evidence base of the sampled evaluations has some observable weaknesses. Evaluations largely demonstrated an emphasis on output and, to a lesser extent, outcome indicators, with limited attention to impact. Moreover, the

analysis of programme-specific effectiveness often emphasised correlation, rather than necessarily establishing clearly the causation links to the implemented activities. This may, in part, be influenced by methodology limitations, with the vast majority of the evaluations available depending only on qualitative methodologies (primarily desk studies, with in-person or remote key informant interviews) and only three evaluations of the sample using quantitative/mixed methods components. The emphasis on qualitative-only evidence was also critiqued in the evaluations themselves. Evaluations of implementation in northern Mali were further limited, as field visits almost universally cited security constraints preventing visits to the north, which may also have influenced findings. Selected evaluations in the sample had already cited donor requests to implementers for stronger monitoring and reporting. Donor interest in stronger, evidence-based evaluations (including wider use of mixed methods) would motivate programme stakeholders to reassess, adapt and implement measures to generate sustainable change.

LOOKING AHEAD

Recent studies included in the sample have highlighted the need to address critical **governance** issues, including re-establishing trust between society and the government.

A stronger evidence-base in evaluations is required to enable donors to effectively support development action

Overall, the coming period of development assistance will need to consider both new and recurrent drivers of instability in Mali, and find sustainable ways to address them to ensure long-term development gains. In particular, deep reflection on root causes that may not have been addressed in the earlier period should lead to adjustments to governance interventions.

One of the observed gaps in governance engagement, and which has been cited as a particular concern, is corruption. While accountability issues have been targeted in specific areas, corruption is a complex and systemic problem. A related area that has also been chronically problematic, irrespective of the 2012 events, is the justice system. Both of these problems require an innovative and

more holistic approach than has been adopted in the past.

The evaluations have also shown the positive effects of development engagement in various sectors. However, the **sustainability** of successful interventions was raised directly and indirectly in a number of evaluations as a potential cause for concern. The findings suggest that positive short-term results may not actually indicate development gains unless they can be sustained, especially when targeting cultural and behavioural change. As with governance approaches, this may require changing the traditional programming approach and design. For example, while there was select discussion of the **theory of change** behind the interventions, it remained limited overall. Theories of change could have shed some light on assumptions and potential design changes needed for sustainability. They could also help in thinking about how to generate development gains in the new context, and in understanding how root causes that have not been addressed could be, and need to be, addressed in the future.



Following conflict in the North of Mali, hundreds of thousands of people are displaced within the country. This man found refuge in Mopti, February 2013.
PHOTO: EC/ECHO/ANOUK DELAFORTRIE/FICKR

The new context has also changed the types of aid actors operating in Mali, with a considerably increased presence of humanitarian aid since 2012. The expansion of the aid field, in terms both of donors and implementers, calls for attention to effective co-ordination between humanitarian and development actors.

Overall, while development engagement has not been without positive gains, achieving the development goals for Mali requires a change in approach to a more critical, holistic view, taking into consideration the underlying drivers of instability.

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Abbreviations

AFD	Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development	PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
CEB	Country Evaluation Brief	UN	United Nations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
CRS	OECD Creditor Reporting System	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
DFID	UK Department for International Development	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
EU	European Union	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
GII	Gender Inequality Index	WFP	World Food Programme
GNI	Gross National Income		
HDI	Human Development Index		
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre		
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development		
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs		
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali		
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation		
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy		
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs		
ODA	Official Development Assistance		

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Photo: *Vendor at Bamako market.*
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