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Norwegian Church Aid's Humanitarian and Peace-making Work in Mali

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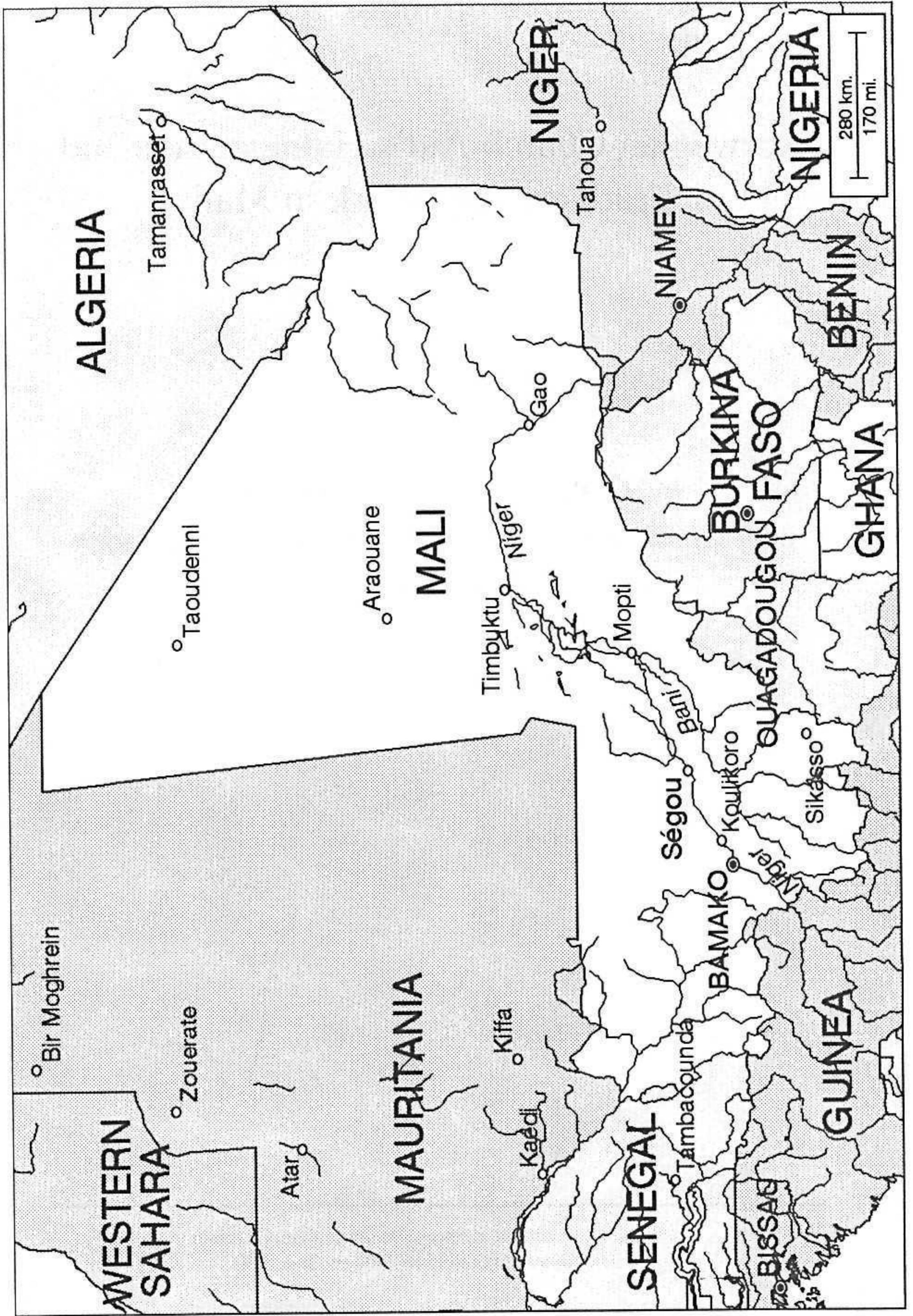


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Executive Summary: NCA-Mali Evaluation

1. Objectives & Background

The central objective of the Evaluation project was to describe and analyse the relationship between the Norwegian Church Aid's (NCA) humanitarian and peace-making efforts in Mali. Further, to use the NCA-Mali case to illuminate wider issues involved in efforts to achieve peace and reconciliation in a country supported by the Norwegian authorities.

The armed conflict in Mali began in 1990. Initially, the Malian government tended to depict the rebellion as having been imported into the North by Tuareg rebels from across the Niger. Two years later the rebellion spread to the Gourma region where the NCA is based. Its engagement in North Mali had begun in 1984 in response to drought and the ensuing famine. With the war, most Western NGOs left the region; the NCA did not. Its focus shifted from emergency relief to long-term development aid. While continuing its development programme, the NCA began explicit conflict-resolution work in 1995 with support for intercommunity peace meetings, on the basis of which agreements on disengagement from the conflict were finally reached.

Central here was the '*Kåre Lode initiative*', where the highly-respected former NCA representative in Mali was engaged to facilitate the nascent peace process in the North through his personal contact network and the work of intercommunity meetings among all rebel factions and sections of the population. This initiative, although both popularly acclaimed and undeniably successful, also gave rise to important questions about NCA involvement and practice.

The Terms of Reference emphasised accounting for the *NCA's contribution* to the Malian peace process. We found that concerns for a proper balance required that we underline the role played by the *Maliens* themselves. The question of 'who owns the peace process and product?' emerged as inextricably linked to the crucial issue of sustainability.

An important axis in the Evaluation project reflects a Malian reality, the divide between the *North* (primarily pastoral-nomadic) and the *South* (cultivators, urban settlements, central government). The NCA worked in and was associated with the North. A further aspect of the

mandate concerned relations between NCA and *other agencies* and organisations from outside Mali involved humanitarian and peace-making activities. This was interpreted to mean giving an overview of the local, Norwegian and international cooperation partners of the NCA.

The mandate asked for an analysis of the relationship between NCA's *humanitarian aid* and *peace-making* measures. In view of the NCA's programme in Mali, we defined humanitarian aid as comprising both short-term and long-term development aid; it was on the latter that the Evaluation concentrated, in line with the majority of NCA's projects and activities in recent years.

The mandate stipulated an assessment of the *role of religion* in the NCA's work in Mali. The area where the NCA is based is totally Muslim; we found, however, that factors other than religion would have to be addressed for understanding the conflict and the possibilities for a sustainable peace: notably *economy, ethnicity* and *class*. This approach links up with the secondary goal of the Evaluation Project, which was to evaluate the '*Norwegian model*' of support for NGOs, including activities aimed at managing or resolving conflict. This approach builds on a strengthened cooperation between state and non-state actors.

2. Methodology

The Report was written on the basis of interviews with key personnel in Oslo and Mali; and examination of official documents (gazettes, annual reports, long-term planning reports, statistical sources, budgets, project descriptions, as well as archival material on relations between Norway and Mali). In Mali, top officials and staff were interviewed in the NCA and partner international organisations and other NGOs. The team also interviewed important leaders of the former guerrilla formations, who later became resource persons for the peace movement; Malian government officials and politicians; women's groups; and ordinary villagers and peasants.

3. A Stable Peace?

Although steps are being taken in the direction of 'dem-

ocratisation' and 'decentralisation', these will have to produce results in fundamental aspects of *peace-building*: rebuilding the economy, reducing poverty and marginalisation, and bringing the underdeveloped North to parity with the rest of the country. Democracy and its accompanying institutions will remain mostly formal and are not likely to survive without the necessary socio-economic supports.

4. Recommendations

- a. Involvement in conflict-resolution work may involve *organisational risks*: these must be taken seriously and minimised as much as possible.
- b. *Religion* remains a serious matter, even though in the Malian case a unique combination of factors rendered it less salient. It is important that the NCA's 'cross-religious' mandate be adhered to, and that its humanitarian role not be mixed with evangelical activities.
- c. The Malian case had in Kâre Lode a vital key actor; however, the team would highlight the importance of the *right combination* of individual leadership attributes, an appropriate operational milieu and necessary organisational support. Again, the role played by Malians was vital.
- d. Respondents rightly saw the roots of the Malian conflict as lying in problems of development. Emphasis

must be placed on *meeting basic human needs* if long-term stability is to be achieved.

- e. The peace must be *followed up*, through reactivated intercommunity meetings and local-level discussions and handling of the many post-war issues still awaiting solution.
- f. The Norwegian authorities should champion the Malian case for *relief from undue international monetarist pressures*, as well as considering debt relief to this impoverished and war-torn country.
- g. *Festina lente* – make haste slowly – must be borne in mind with the pace of reconciliation. Likewise, over-hasty NCA withdrawal could prove highly counter-productive.
- h. Malians will need to be *trained for peace-building*; it would seem natural for the Norwegian authorities to provide support to this venture.
- i. Finally, more *research work* is needed on peace and reconciliation processes in war-torn societies, as well as on suitable modes of partnership/local empowerment. Better understanding of these issues is necessary in order to permit the benefits of Norwegian involvement in humanitarian and peace-making activities around the globe to be fully realised.

Oslo, September 1997

1. Introduction

The Norwegian government has promoted the concept of a 'Norwegian Model' whereby non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are provided with governmental funding to carry out their projects, at home and abroad. The major NGOs – such as the Norwegian Red Cross, Redd Barna (Save the Children), Norwegian Peoples Aid (*Norsk Folkehjelp*), and Norwegian Church Aid (*Kirkens Nødhjelp*) – have substantial roles in Norwegian society. They also raise significant funding from voluntary contributions, funding which is then used to initiate projects abroad. The government also promotes long-term development programmes through NORAD, but, again, NORAD frequently works together with the NGOs. Within the Foreign Ministry, there is also a large department for humanitarian aid which can call on teams of experts to be sent anywhere in the world at short notice.

Although Norwegians have been active as mediators and go-between in a number of conflicts it was their role in bringing about the *Oslo Agreements* on the Middle East which brought these efforts to worldwide attention. Since the Oslo Agreements, and despite the complexities of the situation since then, Norwegians have been active in the important task of raising international funding for development of the Palestinian areas.

In *Guatemala* and *Mali*, Norwegian involvement has followed a different pattern. Here Norwegian church agencies have long been involved in humanitarian aid programmes, and have been able to build upon this role to make a contribution as mediators. In neither country has there been a Norwegian embassy; in each case Norway's peace-making contribution has been very much due to the engagement and the skills of central figures. Importantly, however, these key persons have had the backing of the church agencies, and behind them the Norwegian Foreign Ministry.

1.1 Objectives of the Mali Evaluation Project

The immediate goal of this evaluation is to describe and analyse the relationship between the NGO Norwegian Church Aid's (NCA) humanitarian work and its peace-making efforts in Mali. A second objective is to use the case-study to draw attention to some of the wider and more general issues raised.

The armed conflict in Mali started in 1990. At the time, the Malian government tended to depict the rebellion as having been imported into Northern Mali by Tuareg rebels from across the Niger River, which implied a sort of 'conspiracy' theory about the origins of the conflict. Two years later the rebellion spread to the Gourma region, where the NCA is based. Most Western NGOs left the region: the NCA did not. Its engagement in Mali had begun in 1984 as emergency aid in a response to drought and famine. Within a few years, NCA involvement had grown into a large long-term development project. The rebellion added new challenges to the NCA's engagement in Northern Mali. While continuing its developmental programme, explicit NCA support to ongoing conflict resolution efforts began in 1995.

The NCA's experience in Mali, its evolving response to the pressures of the armed conflict and the Norwegian authorities' financial support enabled it to play a peace-making role. This evaluation looks into how the NCA's role in the Malian peace process emerged, the extent to which this was planned, and the cost and benefits for different implicated parties. The evaluation will underscore the importance of the roles of Malians in the peace process, thus placing the contributions of the NCA within a wider context.

An inescapable feature of Malian reality is the divide between the *North* and the *South*. Mali has since colonisation been highly centralised. Whereas the majority of the population lives as cultivators in the South, most pastoral nomads live in the North; the capital with all major institutions lies in the South; posts within the Malian government, administration and Army – also those in the North – are predominantly filled by Southerners; and the overwhelming majority of NGOs work in the South. The Malian press is almost totally Southern-based and Southern-owned. This North/South divide has been salient in perceptions of the work of the NCA in Mali.

Also of interest are relations between the NCA and other agencies and organisations in the peace process. How have the NCA and its partners combined peace-making work with other humanitarian projects? In what ways has the cooperation been successful? What were the difficulties? This links up with the second goal of

the evaluation: to consider some of the wider and more general issues highlighted by the case-study, and here the 'Norwegian model' emerges as a key concept.

The essence of the Norwegian model is a *cooperation* between Norwegian state and non-state actors in efforts at peace-making. The opposition and general distrust that often characterise the state/NGO relationship seem less pronounced – or non-existent, perhaps even positive – in Norway. Broadly speaking, the main contribution of the Norwegian state is financial support. The non-state actors – academics, NGO workers and local politicians – will have been involved in the area long before conflict broke out or peace negotiations started, and for quite other reasons than peace facilitation. Their unique knowledge of the area, their networks and long-established relations of trust are assets which the funding from the Norwegian State permits them to exploit in the new situation. This evaluation will explore how this model can be seen as an effective tool for describing and analysing Norwegian involvement in the Malian case.

1.2 Evaluation Mandate: Some Clarifications

The mandate requested an analysis of the relationship between the NCA's *humanitarian aid* and *peace-making* measures. Humanitarian aid is usually defined as urgent short-term relief, with an objective that is well-defined and limited in time and space – in contrast to long-term development programmes, where the overarching goal is the improvement of basic human needs, and the time-frame is extensive or non-specified. In the case of the NCA and Mali, involvement has been of both types; therefore, we have chosen to define humanitarian aid very broadly as comprising both short-term relief and long-term development aid. We will, however, concentrate on the latter, in line with the majority of NCA projects of recent years.

In Gourma in North Mali, the NCA has been working in an area almost totally Muslim. Nearly all its Malian employees, and probably all its beneficiaries, are Muslim. During the conflict, several features differentiating the population came into play (pastoral nomad/cultivator, white/black, ethnic distinctions, distinctions of class). Religion however, acted as a unifying factor. In line with our mandate, we have studied the role of religion in brokering and sustaining the peace. We also discuss whether the NCA played a constructive role in reinforcing this integrative factor.

1.3 Mali: Society, Ecology, and Ethnopolitical Configuration

Mali, a landlocked West African country with a land-area of 1,240,000 km², stretches from the Sahara desert in the north to the savannah in the south; 65% is desert or semi-desert and thus falls within the Sahelian zone. It has a population of about 10 million;¹ overall population density is about 8.15 per km², but the density increases from north to south. So does the rainfall; in the Sahara desert, rainfall is below 100 mm a year, whereas the southern Sikasso region receives an annual of 1,400 mm. The capital, Bamako, with a population of about 0.8 million, is situated in the southwestern part of the country by the Niger river.

Mali is among the poorest countries in the world.² There exist no reliable statistics on economic development, administrative expenditures or GNP,³ only rough estimates. Illiteracy is a major problem. Livelihood is based primarily on agriculture and livestock-keeping; these also contribute about equally to Mali's export income.⁴ Apart from a growing export of gold,⁵ very little – about 1% – of the GNP is derived from industry and commerce.

Mali has one of the world's most aid-dependent economies, with 37% of the state's expenditures presently covered by foreign aid. In 1993, aid to Mali amounted to USD 515 m., of which USD 323 m. was gifts supporting most sectors of society. Bilateral aid constitutes about 70% of the total. France alone contributes more than 30% of all bilateral aid, followed by the USA and Germany. The Netherlands, Italy and Japan also give considerable support.

Mali has been active in efforts towards West African integration. Since 1973, Mali has collaborated in CILSS⁶ with eight other Sahel-countries organised to fight against desertification and to develop early warning systems for droughts. It is a member of CEAO, a common economic arrangement involving six West-African francophone countries, as well as of ECOWAS/CEDEAO. In 1984 it joined the West African monetary union (then UMOA, later UEMOA), linking the country's monetary unit, CFA-franc, to the French franc at a fixed rate of exchange guaranteed by France.

Since about 1995, there have been indications of changes in the direction of a more decentralised structure of government. Administratively the country is now divided into eight regions,⁷ of which the three northernmost

are usually referred to as 'The North'. Until recently, each region was headed by a governor appointed by the President. The regions were divided into *cercles*, led by appointed *commandants*. *Cercles* were again divided into *arrondissements*, headed by an appointed *chef d'arrondissement*. On the lowest level of administration, a village chief – in agricultural areas – and a faction chief – in pastoralist areas – served as the direct link between administration and population. Under the latest decentralisation programme, the *arrondissements* have been abolished, and *communes* established instead; a former *arrondissement* today consists of one or more *communes*.

Various military and para-military units exist, basically manned by Southerners. For many years Mali received military training and military equipment from what is now the former Soviet Union,⁸ and Russian advisors are still stationed in the country. France and the USA have equally contributed with military support and training. Mali's paramilitary forces are organised in the *Gendarmerie*, the *Garde Republicain*, the Customs, and the *Service des Eaux et F<rets*. The excessive predominance of southerners holding governmental and administrative posts both in the South and in the North, has been among the factors in the North kindling dissatisfaction and the feeling of being 'colonised for the second time'.

Mali's population consists of many ethnic groups. In the predominantly agricultural South, much of the population belong to Mande-related groups such as Bambara and Malinke. In the North, Tuaregs⁹ and Moors (Arabs) are in the majority. They live mainly from pastoral/semi-nomadic livestock-breeding (and some gathering); in the North one also finds the Songhays, many of whom live in the Niger valley where they cultivate rice, millet, bourgou¹⁰ and vegetables. Another influential group, the Fulanis, live mainly in the area where Northern and Southern Mali meet. They are trans-humant cattle-breeders, as well as cultivators. Among both nomads and settled population, migration rates are high, particularly among adult males.¹¹

Throughout history different ethnic groups – both nomadic and cultivators, along with families and individuals – have formed various alliances. A view often put forward by Malians is that their ability – unique in the African context – to live relatively peacefully together is due to the fact that each of Mali's dominant peoples have had their era of glory and imperial dominance,¹²

together with the criss-crossing ties of *cousinage* or joking relationships that have developed between different groups.

The majority (90%) of the population of Mali are Muslims. Indigenous beliefs are held by about 9% of the population, and only 1% are Christians.¹³ In the North, all dominant groups are Muslims. The language of the largest ethnic group, the Bambara, is spoken by as many as about 80% of the population. Bambara, Fulani, Songhay and Tamasheq have been declared official Malian languages, together with French.¹⁴

All the ethnic groups of Mali are internally stratified. The Tuaregs and Moors are two leading groups where internal stratification corresponds with skin colour. The higher strata among Tuaregs are of Berber descent, those among the Moor of Arab origin. Both are 'white'. In both groups, the descendant of slaves¹⁵ are black. They speak Tamasheq or Arabic, and often also Songhay. Among Tuaregs, as among Moors, many descendants of slaves have lived not as nomads, but as cultivators. In many ways they can be seen to form a group sharing traits both with sedentary and nomadic populations, a group whose loyalty is difficult to predict. In the Timbuktu region, the proportion of former slaves in relation to 'white' Tuaregs is as high as between 60% and 70%. In Kidal the 8th region it is much lower, about 8%. Both Tuaregs and Arabs have historically tended to be organised into loose systems of confederation. Many have a deep sense of affinity with their kin, divided by French-imposed colonial boundaries between the countries of Algeria, Burkina Faso and Niger among others.

Mali is one of Africa's most drought-prone countries. The first serious drought to hit the country after independence occurred in 1967–1973, and affected the North particularly badly. The drought added to the migration of nomads that had started after the 1963–64 rebellion, a migration directed particularly towards Algeria and Libya.

In 1979 Norway received the first official petition from the Malian authorities for help to drought-stricken people, a request that was repeated every year until 1984. The second drought since independence culminated that year, followed by famine. It was in this year that three Norwegian aid institutions agreed to start working in the Mali: the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), CARE and The Commemorative Foundation of Pastor Strømme.

1.4 Humanitarian Emergency and Armed Conflicts: Background

After a short-lived federation with Senegal, the former French colony of 'French Sudan' was proclaimed independent under the name of Mali on 22 September 1960. Under this first republic Modibo Keita, the opposition leader of the Malian independent struggle, became Mali's first president. Loosening the ties to France, he turned towards the Soviet Union and China, in an effort to develop an African socialism. In 1968 Modibo Keita was overthrown by a military coup. The ensuing dictatorship imposed by Lieutenant Moussa Traoré lasted for more than 23 years. His regime put an emphasis on neutrality and nonalignment. While he opened for more liberalisation and privatisation than his predecessor, Traoré continued Mali's good relations with East-bloc countries.

Two years prior to independence (1958), several local leaders in Northern Mali had petitioned de Gaulle, demanding that Northern Mali be given the status of a separate republic. The request was not granted, and at independence the North became the 6th and 7th regions of Mali. One of Modibo Keita's chief aims was to 'sedentarise' all nomads. His disapproval of pastoralists, together with Northern dissatisfaction with being ruled from the South, were probably what caused the rebellion of 1963 to break out. A group of Tuaregs in Adrar des Ifoghas took to arms against the newly independent regime. This rebellion was crushed, and both leaders and local population were punished. Not only many Southerners hostile to Modibo Keita's policy, but also many nomads, thus welcomed the coup of 1968. The change of government did not, however, bring better times. Moussa introduced a military dictatorship, Mali's Second Republic. During his 23 years in power, political opposition was illegal, and overt opposition brutally oppressed. Over the years, anti-government protest led to the creation of organisations which in late 1990 openly opposed the regime. Both ADEMA (the Alliance for Democracy in Mali), formed by the current President of the Republic, Alpha Oumar Konaré, and one of the leading opposition parties today, CNID (Comité National d'Initiative Démocratique) were constituted in October 1990, supported by student organisations and an opposition press. The first peace accord with the Northern rebels was signed in Tamanrasset (Algeria) in January 1991.

After Moussa's fall, a new peace accord was signed in April 1992 between the rebels and the Malian transition

government of Touré. With the free elections and the inauguration of Mali's first elected president, Alpha Oumar Konaré in June 1992, Mali's Third Republic was established. The years that followed have been marked by an increased mobilization of civil society. In May 1996 there were 650 NGOs in the country, as against some 50 active NGOs in 1990.¹⁶ Increasing mobilization of civil society has also coincided with civil unrest. The final months of 1995 and early months of 1996 were characterized by confrontations between students and the authorities as well as strikes and arrests. Unrest culminated during the elections held during the first part of 1997. Mali's future is far from easy to predict.

1.5 Root Causes and Pressures

We have divided and analysed the root causes of the Malian conflict 1990–1994 as follows:

1.5.1 Preconditions

We may identify at least three main structural-cum-motivational preconditions for the conflict: the *economic* marginalisation of Northerners in general and pastoralists in particular; *political* and/or *ethnic* marginalisation; and the sheer *geographical* separateness of the North.

As to the latter, the North is, on the whole, a vast and isolated region with only minimal communications. Apart from the one main highway linking Bamako the state capital through Mopti to Gao, there is still no satisfactory road network in the North.

At the *political* level, there were no efforts made by the various regimes that had ruled Mali, from colonial times through independence up to 1992 to involve representatives of the peoples of the North in the governance of the country; moreover, decision-making at the regional, commune and *cercle* levels was generally in the hands of centrally-appointed agents of the Bamako government, individuals with no knowledge of and affinity with the area, and no interest in involving the local people in decision-making. This was a highly centralised administrative structure highly unlike the age-old, pre-colonial segmented political life to which the peoples had been long used.

Marginalisation of the North was also manifested in the *composition of the country's defence and security*

forces. A conscious policy-goal, dating back to the colonial era, had been to debar the peoples of 'fairer' skin – in effect the Tuaregs, Arabs and Berbers of the North – from any participation in the military. The French had considered these latter groups less politically reliable, as they were seen as susceptible to the religious propaganda of Islam.

In the *distribution of developmental and budgetary resources*, the North had long felt neglected by the central government. There was scant access to basic modern amenities like schools or hospitals; the people eked out an extremely precarious existence plagued by food insecurity and lack of access to water for animal husbandry as well as farm use.

While allowing for the contribution of ecological and demographic factors, Northern leaders were convinced that discrimination on account of their 'ethnic minorities' status was responsible for the continued marginalisation and poverty of their people. Denied representation, the people of Northern Mali had few supporters in government with any interest in pushing for a redress of the perceived discriminatory practices.

These then were the structural background factors underlying the rebellion. Involved were four major movements: (1) le Mouvement Populaire de l'Azaouad (MPA), (2) le Front Populaire pour la Liberation de l'Azaouad (FPLA), (3) l'Armee Revolutionnaire de Liberation de l'Azaouad (ARLA), and (4) le Front Islamique Arab de Azaouad (FIAA). All four rebel movements were either Arab or Tuareg based; the reality of nomadic life, problems of political organisation, differences of ideology among the elites, and leadership styles accounted for their fragmentation into those competing factions. The conflict which initially had seen the Northern rebellion more or less arrayed against the Bamako-based central authorities subsequently assumed a more dangerous dimension with the appearance of another armed group, le Mouvement Patriotique Malien Ganda Koi (MPMGK), a Northern group but this time Songhoy-based, catering predominantly to sedentarists and advocating the interests of black Malians. This was a decidedly ethnic formation committed to the self-defence of the sedentary population against nomadic incursions from the North.

Here a brief analysis of the *ethnic* variable seems in place. Our position is that, in the Malian case, it is not the (undeniable) existence of ethnic differences per se,

but how they are politically mobilised, that is crucial for explaining the conflicts between groups. To achieve the kind of mobilisation required to turn ethnicity from a potential into an actual conflict material, there must be a facilitating set of events and circumstances, what we call below 'accelerators' and 'precipitants'. Above all: to talk of 'ethnic' conflict does not mean ruling out the contribution of political and economic considerations; on the contrary, precisely such considerations will often be involved.

Then there were the manipulative uses to which ethnicity was put in the conflict. According to one NGO operator, himself a Malian, whom we interviewed in Mali, inter-ethnic struggles are problems created as a result of policies of exclusion and the resultant reaction on the part of others to seek their resolution. We can conclude that where central government is incapable of resolving such problems, it may resort to whipping up ethnic sentiments in the hope of either diverting attention from these problems, or enlisting support against groups who rebel. The government may even deliberately 'foster ethnicity' by sponsoring the creating of counter-ethnic movements of its own. Relating this to the specific Malian case, this respondent went on to say: 'It was not a conflict between the rebels and the people; neither was it a conflict between some ethnic groups or others, although it came to assume that dimension. No, it was the result of incapacity of government to tackle a fundamental problem; they then decided to consciously foster ethnicity as a way of enlisting the support of certain sections of the population on their side and against the rebel movements. The problem is about development, or rather inadequacy/inequality of opportunity and access to state power and the control over developmental and budgetary resources.'¹⁷

1.5.2 *Accelerators and Precipitants*

The prolonged drought of 1984–5 helped to precipitate the rebellion in the North. The drought had reduced Mali's livestock by an estimated 1,350,000 head of cattle and 2,450,000 sheep and goats, much of which had belonged to the Tuaregs. Although the sedentary peoples of the North were also affected, the nomadic culture was threatened by extinction; huge waves of mass-population migration headed towards the South as well as towards the Maghreb. It was at this point that Western NGOs, including the NCA, first intervened on a massive scale in Mali. The drought exposed the weak-

ness or lack of preparedness of the Malian state authorities in dealing with those conditions.

Most of the migrants were able-bodied young men. The emigration took many routes, but three seem particularly relevant in light of the later rebellion. One went to Algeria. It was here that young Malian Tuaregs, many of whom had lost their parents in the 1963 revolt, created an organization out of which the rebellion sprang. Most date the creation of this organization to the mid-1970s. A second route went to Libya, where many Tuaregs and Moors enrolled in Khadafi's Islamic legion, receiving not only military training but also fighting experience in desert wars fought in Chad and the Middle East. A third route went southwest, to the Ivory Coast and Nigeria in particular. Tuaregs working in these countries provided means to procure arms. The drought thus served as one of the mobilising factors for the new political leaders from the North to begin action for redressing the conditions of their people.

The second set of accelerating conditions or 'conflict precipitants' came from international economic pressures, just about the same time the drought of 1984 was setting in. The 'socialist' economic scheme was in trouble, agricultural production had slumped and was lagging behind population needs. The government was also finding it difficult to get the necessary balance-of-payments support to meet its food and capital imports requirements. Economic dependence and world market-geared agricultural production had combined with rising political mismanagement and corruption to give Mali a massive external debt by the late 1970s. According to World Bank sources, the country's debt, which already stood at USD 732 million in 1980, had doubled to about USD 1.5 billion by 1985, and to USD 2.4 billion by 1990. By the early 1980s, the regime was already bowing to pressures from the IMF and world creditor banks to apply SAP-type austerity measures which – as elsewhere – provoked social unrest, demonstrations and strikes by organised interests from society. These anti-SAP unrest and demonstrations were to increase in scope and intensity following the massive devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994. The rising poverty and deprivations associated with the regime of debts and structural adjustment in combination with stresses of environmental and human insecurity necessarily had pronounced effects for the North of Mali. As in other areas/countries near the Sahel, these new pressures far outstripped the local 'coping' strategies for 'surviving at the margins'.

Thus, the Tuareg and Arab rebellions in Northern Mali, the pervasive conditions of insecurity gripping much of the region between 1990 and 1994, and even the rise of new movement of sedentarists, the Ganda Koi (which means, in the Songhay language, 'masters of the land'), formed in 1994 by Songhays as a reaction against Tuareg and Arab rebels – none of this can be adequately explained without reference to those precipitating socio-economic conditions of debt and adjustment (Adekanye, 1995:363).

The third major set of accelerating factors came from the rising tide of Southern political opposition to Traoré's authoritarian rule. Under pressure from civil society groups, the government was forced to send its emissaries to Algeria in order to negotiate and sign a treaty with two of the armed movements, the MPA and FIAA (the Tamanarasset Agreement). Evidence of cracks had emerged in Traoré's structure of rule, even as he began to bend to opposition demands at home to grant constitutional reforms, democratise, and allow for multi-party politics. By March 1991, the dictator had been overthrown and the democratic initiative had been seized by political forces outside of the state apparatus. Other significant factors in Mali's democratisation transition process from military rule included the enlightened guidance of Lt-Col. Ahmadou Toumani Toure, the holding of the National Conference from 29 July–12 August 1991, the inclusiveness and partial autonomy of that conference, and the distinctive presence of leader Dr. Alpha Oumar Konore who later emerged victorious in the 1992 elections, and of course the common cause struck between such pro-democracy forces and the various armed ethnic movements. These were forces in the democratisation process that could work in both a negative and a positive direction: while creating circumstances favourable for launching the rebellions, those same accelerating factors also helped with the resolution of the war in the North by keeping the ultimate outcome contained within the existing state borders – rather than leading to Northern secession or even complete disintegration of the Malian state.

1.5.3 Triggers

Some of the first general 'triggers' can be found in the circumstances and events surrounding the more dynamic set of factors and forces just discussed above. In addition, more specific triggering events and circumstances relate to how each of the five major movements (see section 1.5.1.) came to be formed or to join the conflict.

Early in 1990, some 18,000 Tuaregs who had lived in Algeria as illegal immigrants were expelled and made to return to Niger and Mali. Returnees shared the opinion that the authorities in Niger had promised to provide them with the necessary means to survive after their return – which, however, the Niger government denied. Among returnees, there were rumours that international aid meant for them once again had been concealed or misappropriated. Several violent incidences took place between Niger soldiers and nomads; some Tuaregs fled to Mali after an incident at a Niger prison, and were imprisoned by Malian authorities. This led to the first Tuareg attack, by MPA against government administration in Northeastern Mali 28–29 June 1990, during which armed Tuaregs liberated prisoners and left a number of people dead.

Then, in early 1991, 31 prominent nomad leaders, including many Arabs, were executed. This, coupled the successes scored against government forces, and indications that the regime was poised to enter into negotiations, helped to induce the first four major movements into forging a common front, les Mouvements et Fronts Unifiés de l’Azawad, or the Movements and United Fronts of Azawad (MFUA). Out of these events came the meeting in Algeria and the signing of what came to be known as the Tamanrasset Agreement (1991). When the government later reneged on implementing that agreement, that, together with pressure from civil society groups generated before, during and after the National Conference, led to a new agreement: this was the *National Pact*, signed between the MFUA and the Malian Transitional Government in Bamako on 11 April 1992. The general state of insecurity and threats to life and property that ensued with the upsurge of popular forces, and the sudden realisation that the National Pact provided no guarantees or safeguards for the sedentarist groups and their interests, set the stage for the emergence of the MPMGK.

1.6 Nature of Major Armed Ethnic Movements

Thus there were five major armed ethnic movements involved in the Malian conflict. A brief description of the movements, beginning with the original four, follows:

- **MPA** (The Popular Movement of Azawad), with its roots in the Kidal region, gathered Tuaregs from all tribes and regions of Mali, as well as some Arabs and Moors. It was the first movement to start armed hos-

tilities: led by the charismatic Iyad Ag Ghalli (later to become a principal signatory of the Tamanrasset Agreement), it attacked a central government position in Menaka on 29 June 1990. The MPA was also the first to propose that rebel movements abandon the strategy of armed struggle and team up with the larger organised opposition from civil society to press for change in Mali.

- **FIAA** (The Arab Islamic Front of Azawad) comprised mostly Arab émigrés from Timbuktu, Kel Antsar in Goudam, and the adjoining areas of Kounta, Cherifane and Tormoze, many of whom may have served in the Mauritanian Army or Polisario. FIAA began armed attacks against the Malian state in 1990 or 1991 but achieved mass mobilisation only after the government had rounded up and killed rebel nomad leaders in Goundam in March 1991. The FIAA was led by Zahabi Ould Sidi Mohammed.
- **EPLA** (The Popular Front for the Liberation of Azawad) was organised in 1991, before ARLA (see below). It drew much of its support from the special circumstances of peoples and places among Tuaregs and Tuareg factions, as well as among some Arabs. Rhissa Ag Sidi Mohammed was the EPLA secretary-general and military chief; Zeidane Sidalamine also came to play a prominent role as the movement’s spokesman within the larger MFUA alliance.
- **ARLA** (The Revolutionary Liberation Army of Azawad) seems to have arisen from a congress held in November 1991. Its predominantly Tuareg membership included MPA dissidents and people from vassal groups. ARLA was led by Abderhamen Galla.
- **MPMGK** (The Patriotic Malian Movement of the Ganda Koi) took its name from the Songhay for ‘masters of the land’. Formed by Songhays in May 1994 as a reaction against the rebellion, MPMGK was led by Mahalmdane Maiga, who had deserted from the Malian national army precisely to organise the movement. Many observers have suspected that the central government might have had a hand in the movement’s organisation, arming and financing. One interpretation is that the movement had been meant to stall the peace process; however, the MPMGK leaders themselves may have intended their late entry into the armed conflict to be a way of latching onto the imminent peace agreement and securing concessions for their own members. The movement was in fact not a signatory to any of the peace accords (Tamanrasset 1991; National Pact 1992) or the underlying negotiations, simply because it did not exist as an organisation at those time-points.

1.7 Evolution of NCA Involvement in Mali

The NCA – Norwegian Church Aid (*Kirkens nødhjelp*) started its humanitarian work in Mali in 1984 with a famine/drought relief programme in the Gourma region. In 1987 NCA involvement changed to long-term development assistance aimed at improving living conditions, stabilising the natural environment and strength-

ening the economic basis in the region. With the uprising of 1992, NCA started to move more towards conflict resolution. Explicit conflict-resolution work began in 1995 with community meetings, on the basis of which several agreements were reached. NCA projects in Mali can be summarised as follows:¹⁸

Evolution of NCA Work, 1984 – 1995

PERIOD	PROBLEMS FACED	NCA'S MAIN FOCUS
1984–87	Drought and famine	Emergency relief
1987–91	Development issues	Long-term development aid
1991–95	Period of insecurity, rebellion & armed conflicts in the North	Long-term development assistance <i>and</i> assistance with conflict resolution & peace-making

Northern Mali has been an extremely difficult zone – as one respondent graphically puts it ‘the last zone in Mali in both the literal and metaphorical senses of the term’.¹⁹ During the difficult years 1990–94, the NCA found itself moving beyond its accustomed role as a humanitarian relief agency towards involvement in conflict

resolution and peace processes. Much of the remaining body of this Evaluation Report constitutes an evaluation of that transition, as well as the activities of the NCA in the Malian peace process, and prospects for sustainability.

2. Theory, concepts, methodology

2.1 NCA Within the World of NGOs

There is a long tradition of humanitarian aid, from a variety of ideological motives. Perhaps one major step in civilisation was when, as in ancient Egypt, societies began to stockpile grain for years when there was a bad harvest: society took upon itself responsibility for feeding the unfortunate. In the development of modern societies, many functions such as the provision of educating and medical aid have often begun with the initiatives of individuals and voluntary organisations, and later become institutionalised and taken over by official services.

This dynamic relationship between non-governmental and the governmental organisations and their role in the field of humanitarian aid continues to be a significant political issue at a time when major international forces are pressing governments to reduce spending and rely instead on 'market forces'. And there are inherent advantages in people organising themselves to solve their own problems. On the other hand, voluntary agencies can rarely afford to provide the kind of services (mass education, health care) needed to turn a poor society into a comfortable one.

Most of today's armed conflicts are in the poorer countries and in societies which are not succeeding in coping with the increasing pressure of expanding populations, decreasing resource bases, and international economic demands. These societies may well have certain resources of value in the world economy – precious stones in Cambodia, coffee in Rwanda, iron ore in Liberia, etc. – but these resources are not managed in such a way as to benefit the bulk of the population.

The poorest third of the world's nations have less productive land per capita than the middle third, who in turn have less productive land than the richest third. The poorest nations are generally not 'agricultural' countries with productive land waiting to be developed but countries similar to, say, France at the time of the French Revolution, where people were flocking to the cities because there was no more land for the new generation. What this means, essentially, is that the particular form of ecological adaptation to the given environment (nomadic herding, settled agriculture etc.) is no

longer able to provide for the needs of the population. Either the system must change, people must move, or the society will collapse in starvation and chaos.

This perspective helps to explain several developments in the international aid field, not least involving the NCA. Previously, the notion was that droughts occurred intermittently; when they did, aid was needed until the people could plant their fields in the next rainy season. But what if the drought is due not simply to the random variations of nature but also to changing world climate and to over-exploitation of, say, grazing resources? This cannot be solved by an emergency aid programme from outside. What is required are structural changes, national and international – in turn resulting in social conflicts which may lead to war. Peripheral groups may come to feel that their problems are not being dealt with by leaders in the capital and that they would be better off seceding. Local power-mongers grab what they can, at the expense of the population. Outside parties intervene, sometimes to ensure access to resources, but increasingly in order to help ameliorate the conditions of the most 'vulnerable groups' – such as the poor, the sick, the elderly, women, and children.

In Mali, the 1984 drought overburdened the environment of the Northern nomads, forcing large numbers to move either across the borders or elsewhere in Mali. The tensions which this generated subsequently led to the emergence of several guerrilla movements, directed against the government. What began as a 'natural disaster' became a social disaster. Once war erupts, it becomes a complex emergency because it exposes the failures of the total system to provide for the needs of the population: they need much more than milk powder, medicine or blankets; people need to be helped to acquire the means to 'development' so that they can better cope with their environment. But, first of all, they need get the whole social system functioning again.

It is against this background that the United Nations, INGOs, NGOs, and others have been increasingly confronted with the need to find ways of intervening in catastrophic situations where there is no real functioning government, or where, even where there is a government, it is necessary to bend the rules in order to get help through to the most needy. Security becomes a

major factor not only for the population but also for the aid agencies. Indeed, it is almost getting to the stage where international 'peacekeeping' forces are conceived of primarily as a means of protecting aid agencies, which have sometimes become the subject of attack.

One must recall, however, that the root causes and pressures underlying the emergency are invariably political, economic, demographic, and ecological – not military. 'Peacekeeping operations' (however defined) are not enough. For there to be a sustainable peace, warring parties must be helped to reconcile and negotiate an end to their conflict and agree to run a common, more representative government. Problems thrown up by the war must be attended to; former combatants, refugees, and internally displaced persons must be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society; infrastructure must be resuscitated. Above all, huge investments are needed in post-war economic reconstruction, combined with social development, to ensure against a return to armed conflict. Those are the directions in which NGOs and their humanitarian work have been moving, and the Norwegian Church Aid has been in the forefront.

2.2 Linking Relief, Development Work and Conflict Resolution

The necessity of linking 'relief' or 'humanitarian work', 'rehabilitation' and 'development' has now come to be the accepted practice in the operations of most aid agencies. 'Better 'development' can reduce the need for emergency relief; better 'relief' can contribute to development; and better 'rehabilitation' can ease the transition between the two'.²⁰ This principle appears also to have been the driving force behind the evolution of the NCA work in Mali.

More recent developments have necessitated a further extension of the scope of operations of relief and development aid agencies, to include *mediation* in local conflicts. Widespread concern has arisen on the part of relief and humanitarian agencies that their very relief and development work may be put at risk unless the root causes, instead of symptoms, of emergencies and internal conflicts are addressed. Increasingly, agencies have found themselves helping to promote 'conflict resolution', 'conflict management', and 'peace-building'.

Guatemala is said to be the NCA's first 'success-story' in linking traditional relief operations, development

work and conflict resolution, followed by Mali. But the analogy between the Latin American case and that in sub-Saharan Africa can be misleading. Guatemala is basically a class-structured society, albeit with some elements of ethnic stratification; in Mali, the problems of peace-making and peace-building involve a considerable ethnically-segmented dimension. Issues of interethnic coexistence have been central in efforts at conflict resolution in sub-Saharan Africa, including those in Mali and the Sudan. Neglecting this factor here could result in aborting the twin processes of demilitarisation and democratisation, returning post-conflict states to armed conflicts, if not courting new disintegrative dangers.²¹ Another difference concerns the strategies adopted by the NCA in approaching the peace process. In Guatemala, NCA involvement had been at the highest political level. In Mali, by contrast, NCA efforts at peace and reconciliation as mounted by Kåre Lode -former NCA Resident Representative and himself a long-time missionary – concentrated on intercommunity involvement, later progressing upwards from the local through regional to national level.²²

Despite those differences, the two cases share a common distinctive feature, as a recent NCA-sponsored Report by Sissel H. Føyn (1997) also makes clear. Both involve integration of community development, long part of the NCA's humanitarian relief and development aid programmes, with the new global concerns about 'peacemaking' and 'peace-building', and the pressures for the organisation to take on some of these new concerns.

2.3 Peace-making and Peace-building as Developmental Concepts

Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung (1969, 1976) made the first original attempt at formulating and distinguishing between what has become the most-used trinity of terms for conceptualising post-Cold War international problems, their analyses, and settlements. These are the concepts of *peace-keeping*, *peace-making*, and *peace-building*. In his view, 'peace-keeping' (e.g. with UN peace-keeping forces) largely adopted the focus of separating two relatively equivalent forces – but was much less successful in bringing them together again. This was most notable in asymmetric conflicts – i.e. today most of those between government forces and various peripheral groups suffering from 'structural violence' (Galtung, 1969) 'Peace-making' adopted a conflict resolution approach. In Galtung's view, also this

approach fits more readily into asymmetric conflict, where an actor-oriented approach could more easily be pursued by strong actors who can throw resources and resourcefulness into the conflict, changing the game a bit, but essentially preserving the system (1976, p. 293). 'Peace-building', however, is seen as an associative approach whereby structures must be found that remove causes of war and offer alternatives to war (ibid., p. 298).

Of these concepts, particularly the terms 'peace-making' and 'peace-building' have become part of international jargon since the publication of the UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's *An Agenda for Peace* (1992) and its supplement (3 January 1995). Boutros-Ghali writes of the nature of the post-Cold War international environment and the increased responsibilities that he saw thrust upon the UN as an international organisation in conflict-ridden regions. He writes about moving the international community from conflict management to conflict anticipation and prevention, or 'preventive diplomacy'; from 'peace-keeping' operations, as traditionally conceived, increasingly towards 'peacemaking' and 'post-conflict peace-building'. Subsumed under 'peace-making' is a complex of tasks that include: mediating between warring groups, and encouraging them to reconcile and negotiate an end to their conflict; the signing of peace agreement, ceasefire, separation of forces, disarmament, demobilisation; creating new unified armed forces, and setting up a (transitional) government of national unity, often predicated on the principle of power-sharing. 'Post-conflict peace-building' centres on building the necessary supports for sustaining the peace process, such as reintegration of ex-combatants; refugee repatriation and resettlement; electoral assistance; rebuilding the civilian police and judicial institutions; repairing the physical and psycho-social damages of war; resuscitation of national infrastructures; programmes of economic reconstruction; social development.

Central to these twin processes of peace-making and peace-building is the need for 'an integrated approach to human security', stressed by Dr Boutros-Ghali as the international community's new agenda for waging peace. Provisions for basic 'human security' – in the sense of the term used by the UNDP (1990) as covering the basic security needs of the populace regarding food, shelter, health, job, and security of the person and of life itself – are considered an essential prerequisite for preventing a return to conflict or the possibility of new

conflict cases breaking out. Another writer (Pugh, 1995: 321, & 328) has commented thus on 'post-conflict peace-building': 'Peace-building was now being described as a means of developing relationships and infrastructures, often within states, to reduce or eliminate the prospects of a lapse into conflict.(...), 'as a policy of external international help for developing countries designed to support indigenous social, cultural and economic development and self-reliance, by aiding recovery from war and reducing or eliminating resort to future violence. These ideas and concepts provide the underlying theory-framework of this Evaluation Report on NCA humanitarian and peace-making work in Mali.

2.4 Methodology

2.4.1 General Approach

In the NCA's latest 'Ideology-programme', peace-making and peace-building appear for the first time among the main overall objectives. According to NCA staff, this reflects the recognition that conflict and war had erupted in many of the areas in which they were already engaged, and that they had become drawn into peace-making and peace-building efforts in the same areas.

This decision corresponds to an overall trend in NGOs and research environments alike, where conflict resolution emerges as a common topic of interest. The mandate of this evaluation also indicates that the topic is an emerging field to be reflected upon, rather than a well-established field in which clear theoretical and methodological tools have been developed. In accordance with the mandate's request to see the NCA's humanitarian and peace-making role in Mali as a case-study, we have emphasised the open-ended and question-producing aspect of the evaluation, with less emphasis on conventionally assessing project efficiency. Thus we have placed the case-study within the theory-framework of peace research more generally and the 'Norwegian model' more particularly. As the NCA's development programme in Mali has been evaluated several times, most recently in 1995, we have carried out yet another evaluation of that kind. Instead, we explore the ideas and relationships that emerged as decisive for NCA engagement and its contribution to the Malian peace process.

2.4.2 Main Sources of Data

Interviews with central members of NCA headquarters in Oslo provided both quantitative and qualitative in-

formation concerning the NCA's engagement in Mali. Various documents (annual reports, long-term planning reports, statistics, descriptions of particular project etc.) were made available, and we were also able to consult personal archives containing letters and other non-public background information. The interviews also helped us to understand the importance of central governing ideas such as neutrality, the role of religion for the NCA, as well as NCA-attached persons' views and understanding of the NCA and the peace process. Interviews with former NCA-directors have provided valuable insight into how differently the same job can be carried out, and the benefits and limitations of the different choices of emphasis.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, besides providing quantitative data and access to archive material on the relationship between Mali and Norway, shared reflections on the areas where Norwegian aid has been concentrated, and on the relationship between NGOs and the state in general and the MCA and the NCA in particular. This helped us form an idea of the specific qualities of the Norwegian model.

Interviews with NCA staff in Mali gave us an understanding not only of how the NCA works in Mali today, but of the daily costs and fears involved in working for an NGO accused of being one-sided during a violent conflict. Various differently positioned persons and institutions in Mali were visited, and their opinions and knowledge documented through interviews and written material. About half our time in Mali was spent in the North, the rest in Bamako. We interviewed NGO-partners as well as government officials and politicians at different levels, former members of the different rebel movements and MPMGK, participants at the local intercommunity meetings, villagers and returned refugees. Staff working for the UNHCR and the UNDP, who are instrumental in organising the return of refugees and the reinsertion of ex-rebels into society and function as partners in relation to the NCA, were likewise interviewed.

2.4.3 Professional Profile of Evaluation Team

The team comprised three researchers attached to the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), and one attached to the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) at the University of Oslo. Professor J. 'Bayo Adekanye, the team leader, is a political

scientist with international experience and a broad theoretical and comparative knowledge of wars and peace processes from studies conducted in several African countries. Dr. *Malvern Lumsden* is a senior researcher with expertise in conflict resolution and field experience in several conflict areas. Researcher *Inger Skjelsbæk* assisted in interviews, provided background information and organised much of the drafting of the report. Anthropologist *Gunnvor Berge* from SUM has for many years worked on the research part of the SSE-program in Northern Mali. The fieldwork for the present evaluation was conducted by Adekanye and Berge.

Two researchers were appointed to serve as consultants to the Evaluation study: *Tor A. Benjaminsen* (SUM) and *Tove Degnbol* of the Department of Geography and International Development Studies, Roskilde University, Denmark. Final editing was carried out by PRIO Language Editor *Susan Høivik*.

2.4.5 Limitations of Methodology and Approach

The first limitation relates to the very *short time* allocated: following the first round of interviews in Oslo, we had only a little over two weeks for fieldwork in Mali, and for this, only two members of the team could go. There was perhaps also too little time spent gathering information on the NCA itself in relation to the surrounding structure. It proved difficult to assess the efficiency of the NCA in achieving its objective, as these are pawns in whirlwinds over which the NCA has little control – unfortunately a typical problem in evaluating social projects.

The second limitation concerns *language* difficulties. As the project leader comes from Nigeria and does not speak French, the other team-member often had to double as interpreter in Mali. This went remarkably well, and at least three of the Malian respondents humorously noted that it was symptomatic of the colonial legacy that none of them could communicate directly with the project leader as a fellow African, but required the assistance of a European interpreter to do so!

Finally, although Mali was a new country for study for some in the team, all team-members rose to the challenge and made valuable contributions. We ourselves feel that we have succeeded in addressing the core objectives of this evaluation project.

3. NCA Humanitarian and Peace-making work

(A) Humanitarian Work

3.1 Objectives

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is a religious NGO with a *humanitarian* mandate, rather than a religious agenda. The humanitarian involvement of NCA workers is religiously motivated, but their objective is not to act as missionaries in the field. Guiding all their efforts are the five basic values of compassion, justice, participation, responsible stewardship of God's creation and peace. Development is seen as a qualitative process conditioned by the realisation of these values.²³

The overall goal is to save and protect human lives.²⁴ The agency's priorities will be determined by the relative poverty of the region in which it engages (NCA seeks to give preference to the most needy groups and countries), groups and societies which fall outside the interest of the media and other organisations, and how skewed the distribution of resources is.²⁵ According to the NCA Long Term Plan 1995–99, the agency will work to address poverty and oppression at local, national and international levels. The focus is on people, and marginalised groups of people in particular.²⁶

The NCA does not claim to be either a neutral organisation, or a solidarity organisation. The primary obligation is to help people in need and this calls for intervention in areas where their actions can be politically interpreted. It is therefore essential for the NCA that it be open about its intentions, the 'development partners' with whom the NCA seeks to collaborate, fundamental aspects of their operations and the like – a policy of transparency. When working in situations of conflict, the NCA stresses communication with members of all sides of the conflict. This approach calls for well thought-out means of communication where the parties involved are both aware and able to accept that the NCA has contacts with several parties and at several levels. Such an approach is a difficult one, and NCA workers have many times found themselves in dangerous situations.

This overall approach makes personal contacts increasingly important. The advantage of such 'transparency', according to NCA employees, is that when it works they have managed to bring conflicting parties closer together. Because they are open to all parties, they do

not take steps which all parties involved have not been informed about.

The Norwegian NCA staff see their organisation as having certain advantages. Because Norway is a small country with no super-power intentions, they are not perceived as threatening as other Western NGOs funded by the governments or the publics of large and influential countries might be. NCA workers have also underlined that their religious basis influences their relations with those they try to help. In some areas it may render collaboration and communication more difficult, but in Mali, even though almost all their employees and the population with whom they work are Muslims, they feel it has actually facilitated communication and commitment. This is also central to the role of religion in NCA's peace-making work in Mali, to be commented on later in this report.

As mentioned above, the NCA started its humanitarian work in Mali in 1984 in response to the drought and famine. In 1987 the character of NCA involvement changed from short-term relief to long-term development assistance. The rebellion that started in 1990 had little influence on NCA activities in the Gourma area until May 1992, when five leading Tuareg Malian NCA employees were executed by the Malian army in revenge for a rebel attack on the NCA base and the administrative post in Gossi. The peace treaty – the National Pact – had been signed only weeks earlier, on 11 April. Rather than bringing peace, the treaty appeared to have contributed to the worsening of the security situation; the conflict escalated into what could have become an ethnic nightmare during the next three years. Due to the insecurity caused by rebel attacks, the national army counter-attacks, and the appearance of the MPMGK (the patriotic movement of Ganda Koi) as a new armed group, the administration was evacuated from the area. The aggression of MPMGK was directed at 'white' nomads, and in the following months about 120,000 persons left Northern Mali. Most of the 'white' pastoralists from Gourma left for Burkina Faso, those living close to Timbuktu left for Mauritania, and those living in the Adrar left for Algeria. Many others displaced themselves internally, and to this day have not been accounted for in any official refugee statistics.

During this difficult period, NCA employees continued work in Gourma under the motto: 'wherever possible, whenever possible, with whatever activities that are possible to carry out.'

In 1995 local Songhoys and Tuaregs took the initiative to end the violence and create peace. This they did by organising intercommunity meetings both north and east of the Niger river (in Menaka and in Bourem). War-weariness seems to have been a major factor motivating the movement towards peace in the North. The NCA was approached by a number of people from all sides of the conflict – government, rebels, influential locals – and was requested to support the peace process. This they did by helping to organise a number of intercommunity meetings in the Gourma. At the same time the NCA continued its development work in the area. An overview of this peace-making work involving the NCA is provided in the next major part of the chapter.

3.2 Programmes and Projects

The objectives of the NCA's humanitarian work are divided into three main categories: (1) Long-term Development Cooperation, (2) Emergency, Rehabilitation and Refugee Assistance, and (3) Information and Communication Work. In the strategy document 'Towards the year 2000', the NCA's long-term development aid is defined as aid aimed at improving people's chances of mastering their own situation, and contributing to changing the conditions which cause poverty, suffering and impoverishment (p.11). In this process, the NCA plans to rely on cooperation with what it terms 'international partners'. The document also stresses a wish to increase the NCA's long-term development aid efforts and expand the agency's expertise in this field.

The NCA's initial involvement in Northern Mali has already been presented. The decision by the NCA not to withdraw from the region following the end of the emergency crisis in 1986 necessitated a change in the agency's rationale for involvement in Mali to development aid. The long-term Gourma project has several goals, which can be summarised as follows:²⁷

1. *Securing Food Production*: production of rice and other grains, production of fonio, gardening, loans for purchase of animals, vaccination of animals, securing dams and dikes, canoe sale, watering for gardens and animals.

2. *Environmental Security and Rehabilitation*: protection zones, stabilising sand-docks and secure sluices, production of plants and planting trees, building of houses without using wood.
3. *Empowering of Groups and Local Authorities*: teaching people to read and write, creating local newspapers, local activity centres, building and reconstruction of schools, creating cooperative structures, financial support for school material.
4. *Health*: training of paramedics ('barefoot doctors') and midwives, provision of drinking water, support to the authorities in their vaccination programme.

3.3 Activities Executed

The major components of the NCA's long-term development programme have remained the same since 1987. In line with the overall NCA philosophy of contributing locally to sustainable development, it had made a plan for withdrawing from Gourma as an operational NGO long before the rebellion broke out, with the goal of replacing its direct intervention with bilateral cooperation between the NCA and Malian organisations/institutions from the year 2000. Rather than expanding its activities, NCA is therefore currently focusing on securing local involvement in existing development projects.

In 1996, the NCA did expand its activities to include rehabilitation projects. These aim primarily at preparing Gourma to receive and reintegrate refugees, by rebuilding damaged infrastructure and increasing the access to clean water. The original plans for the rehabilitation projects included direct support to returning refugees in the form of a 'package' consisting of some goats, sheep, a donkey, millet, cooking oil and a small sum of money. It was later decided not to carry out this part of the plan, but to concentrate more on components related to rebuilding and repairing infrastructure. Part of the funding provided (ca. NOK 400,000) was spent on the continuation of the intercommunity meetings – the 'Kåre Lode project'.²⁸

The long-term development programme in the Gourma region consists of 25 different projects among 55 different communities. Although the projects remain the same, the NCA has made certain changes:²⁹

1. *Securing Food Production*: 'Food security' is now measured in terms of the number of months that an individual household has adequate amounts of

food, rather than the relative health of children. Instead of providing further loans for purchase of animals, the NCA will attempt to develop a system for following up how the money has been spent. The NCA will give loans to what they call pre-cooperative and cooperative structures in 1997 – i.e. to women’s groups who engage in trade and other income generating activities. No money will be allocated, however, until the NCA has evaluated the loans granted prior to 1997.

2. *Environmental Security and Rehabilitation:* no changes.
3. *Empowering of Groups and Local Authorities:* In 1997 the NCA will emphasise work on a clearer overview of the possibilities of cooperation with and strengthening of technical institutions in order to ease their withdrawal from the region by the year 2000.
4. *Health:* no change

NCA withdrawal has been a source of dispute within the organisation, and was one of the most commonly-criticised NCA decisions mentioned in our interviews in Mali. The disagreement has concerned the manner, the speed, and most of all the timing of withdrawal from the region. Why withdraw right after a war-situation when the population – some asserted – is worse off than when the NCA started in 1984? More detailed plans about NCA’s future involvement in Mali are currently under discussion at headquarters. We have, since returning from fieldwork, been informed that the restructuring now planned does not involve complete withdrawal from Mali.

3.4 The NCA, a ‘Traumatised NGO’?

Many of the Malian staff workers underlined the ordeals they had undergone as employees of the NCA during the conflict. They referred to the NCA as a ‘traumatised organisation’. Looking back, most were of the opinion that the NCA headquarters had taken the right decision in not pulling out, but a few felt that the cost had been too high, and that the NCA should have closed down its activities. Most of those who had had to execute the decision with fear for their lives were Malians. It demanded great courage to stay and continue to work – ‘when possible, where possible, with whatever activities that are possible to carry out’.

- As many as seven NCA workers were killed by the Malian army during the rebellion. Five were arrest-

ed in Gossi and taken away on a lorry on May 14th 1992, later to be found executed. Two were killed by the army in an attack on the NCA’s grain elevator at Banguel in mid-1995, where also approximately 100 tons of grains were stolen.³⁰ The loss of colleagues marked the employees deeply.

- It did not make it easier to bear the loss and reconcile the staff that the first five killed were rumoured to be rebels, and that they had been denounced by former or present employees.
- NCA lost many four-wheel-drive vehicles to the rebels. Even worse, this heavy losses of material was used by the Malian Press in Bamako as evidence that the NCA was in fact collaborating with the rebels.
- A few central Malian members of the NCA staff became high-profile leaders of different rebel organisations. This fact was used by the Malian Press and other opponents of the NCA as proof of their partiality in the conflict, whereas the NCA in fact enforced a policy of not employing anyone belonging to any rebel movement (Lode 1997). Those continuing to work for the NCA had to live with the bewilderment that former colleagues and leaders were suddenly publicly branded as enemies of peace, development and the Malian state.
- The agitation in the Malian press portraying the NCA as a rebel supporter was intense. In Bamako, NCA employees they feared attacks on the buildings, in Gossi attacks actually took place. We were shown bullet-holes in the walls that the present staff live with as reminders of this close and turbulent past. Many of those we spoke with criticised the irresponsibility of the press for aggravating the conflict, particularly throughout 1994.
- Particularly in the North, many NCA workers carried out their daily tasks well knowing that they might become the next victim of the growing violence directed against civilians, and some expressed fear for their families.
- We were also told of incidents where NCA workers who had worked on development-projects in particular villages over time, were in 1994 told that they were unwelcome by the same villagers.

Terje Eltervåg (now deceased) was NCA Resident Representative (director) from 1990–94, and experienced the escalation of violence. He insisted on continuing the development programme, and on spending as much time as possible in the Gourma region himself. On several occasions he hid nomads searched for by the

Malian army, on occasions he himself had to be hidden when MPMGP-adherents were searching for him. On one occasion he accompanied an employee summoned for interrogation at Timbuktu, in the hope of preventing harassment. This employee in 1991 became one of Mali's very first Tuareg ministers, and Eltervåg's possible protection of him at that time carried over into a long and close relationship between the NCA and parts of the Malian elite. Unavoidably, Eltervåg became a man about whom the opinions are very divided. His view that he would protect those in need of protection whether nomad or sedentary, which in practice meant that he happened to protect mainly nomads because those were the most exposed ones, aggravated the accusations of the other side of the NCA as partial.

The new NCA Resident Representative Finn Andresen has a background from public relations. He started working in mid-1994, when the distortion of the NCA and its work was at its strongest in Mali. He immediately set about trying to change public opinion about the NCA as a rebel-supporting organisation by launching a massive campaign about its main objectives and devel-

opment projects. In giving priority to this work, he got the full support of central Malian staff members, who felt that their development efforts had been unjustly represented in Mali, and who suffered from the reputation of their working place.

Andresen, contrary to all other NCA heads, chose to live in Bamako. Together with his second-in-command (a Malian), he had an information video produced about the NCA – *Pour le développement du Gourma* – which was broadcast five times in all on Malian TV. According to Malian staff it functioned as a crowbar in changing the public opinion about the NCA towards the positive. Andresen put his position as honorary consul to maximum use, taking part in high-level meetings with the government as well as meetings within the diplomatic corps, in hopes of obtaining and sharing information to facilitate the work of NCA workers engaged in development activities. He did not find it appropriate that the NCA should engage itself directly in peace-making work, fearing that this might harm the workings of the development programme run, and strengthen the accusations of the NCA as a biased organisation.

(B) Peace-making work

3.5 Preliminary Phase

NCA work on peace-making in Mali can be divided into two phases.³¹ The first phase involved building up informal contacts, networks, and personal communications with major actors in the Malian conflict, key and influential members of the community in the North, as well as local notables, that were to prove useful for the initiative subsequently mounted. The work of the NCA at this phase is not documented, but from interviews we have put together the following description of this work. After the conflict in Mali began to bear on the NCA development programme, a group at NCA headquarters got together and agreed that the NCA should engage in peace-facilitating work in Mali. Only two-three persons from the Norwegian NCA staff were involved in the actual work, the Norwegians responsible for West Africa at NCA Headquarters and the Resident Representative (Terje Eltervåg) in Mali. This delimitation of tasks to Norwegians was agreed upon by Malian staff-members, who were too exposed and vulnerable to be involved or kept informed about the nature of the work. The delicate nature of the venture required a conscious decision to keep these efforts secret and not extend information about them to the entire NCA membership. But it was important that the NCA hierarchy supported these unofficial, preliminary efforts at groundwork for launching the organisation's peace-making role.

The techniques used depended heavily upon the fact that three central persons in the conflict –

Zeidan Ag Sidalamine, general secretary for FPLA, Zahaby Ould Sidi Mohamed, general secretary for FIAA, and Mohamed Ag Erlaf, minister in the Malian government since the Tamanrasset peace agreement of 6 January 1991 – had all held central positions in the NCA. The role the NCA-members took on was to assist in reconciling given protagonists or parties, who were until then not on speaking terms. They helped facilitate discussions between them; through personal telephone conversations, and helped to pass on to the government any observable signals of change in attitude on the part of rebel leaders towards peace. For example, it was generally known by Njell Lofthus and his team at the West Africa desk at NCA Oslo that the Malian government was listening in on most of their telephone conversations with rebel leaders. However, this proved

functional to the objectives of the peace process, as it provided a way to communicate positive information about changes in attitude and readiness to negotiate.

When the NCA's involvement in 1992 also came to include peace-making efforts the flow of information became an important factor. NCA headquarters saw it as important not only to facilitate information-flow between actors in Mali, but to participate in international fora and contribute in putting Mali on the international agenda. These efforts were again organized by the office of the Coordinator for West Africa at NCA headquarters in Oslo.

In Mali, the NCA gathered information about the conflict, encouraged actors to participate in forming common strategies which promoted peace. These efforts were coordinated by a person hired by the NCA for that purpose, Kåre Lode.

3.6 The Kåre Lode Initiative, or 'Oiling the machinery'

The second phase of NCA work on peace-making involves much of what has been called the *Kåre Lode initiative*. The background was a European Community (now EU) Commission hearing which gave rise to a request for someone to do research on how the various strata and groups involved in the Malian conflict related to one another. Kåre Lode was nominated as the person most suited for such a role, but the European organisation was too slow in responding. The NCA hierarchy considered the project a very sound idea which they could follow by themselves, so they proceeded to make the necessary contact with the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to seek the necessary support. The NCA Resident Representative in Bamako supported the peace-making idea, but did not think the NCA should be seen directly and formally shouldering the responsibility. So the NCA headquarters, perhaps on the advice of the MFA, made plans for Kåre Lode to proceed independently.

There were several reasons for choosing Kåre Lode as facilitator of the intercommunity meetings which can be considered the main activity of the NCA's peace and reconciliation efforts. Lode had served as former Resi-

dent Representative of NCA Mali from 1987–88. This gave him intimate knowledge of the country and the people. In the years prior to his NCA involvement, he had also been a missionary in the region. His period as Resident Representative coincided with the time when the NCA was at its most dynamic and expansive, which added to his reputation in Mali as a man who got things done. Through these activities he had built up a network of contacts and relationships, particularly at the grassroots, which could be mobilised to strengthen the Malian peace process. Above all, Lode's high personal qualities, his integrity, and his proven ability to create confidence and trust were seen as precisely the kind of qualities needed in the leader of the project.

NCA-Oslo engaged Kåre Lode as a consultant in the period from 20 August 1995 to 29 March 1996, to facilitate reconciliation work in the Gourma region. His task was to facilitate the organisation of intercommunity meetings.³² His period of engagement coincided with a growing engagement for peace in Mali. A few intercommunity meetings had been organised by local leaders and representatives of the different rebel movements prior to and independent of the NCA initiative, the first one as early as in January 1995 in Menaka. The movement gained momentum with the support of Lode and the informal group which he put together in order to help him plan the actions and organise the meetings. In all, they facilitated 37 meetings.

Information regarding the content and methodology of these intercommunity meetings, as well as on the structure of participation, is documented in the works referred to in note 35 above. What follows here is intended as only a summary. The strategy for the meetings was organized under the following headings:

1. *Zonage* (representation from different zones). Zones were defined, not according to administrative borders, but rather in terms of activities and agricultural areas. The NCA insisted that people of different zones meet who normally would not want to meet, an approach intended to bring together conflicting parties within an area.
2. *Cadre et Contenu* (framework and agenda). Kåre Lode and his support group of four emphasised that representatives from the different communities and groups within a larger area participate in the meetings; another central point was that the representatives be seen as credible and truly representing their particular group. One limitation with this approach has been that some groups proved difficult to reach and define, especially among the nomads of the North. The ideal situation would be for the orga-

3. *Principe Démocratique* (democratic principles) Local administration, political parties, partners in development projects and in some cases representatives of the Movements were invited, but only as observers. The presence of these observers gave the event a sense of importance, but it also created difficulties in maintaining balanced meetings. The NCA made conscious efforts at inviting members of civil society, such as distinguished members of a group, religious authorities, a women's representative, a representative for young people and one for the elderly.
4. *Cadre Formel* (formal setting). The signing of the contract between a consultant of NCA/coordinator of F.A.R-Nord and the person with main responsibility for the meeting took place in the presence of many people, of which two signed as proof.
5. *Cas de Villes* (the case of the towns and cities). Because the towns have a different composition of peoples from that in the countryside, the approach to meetings in non-rural areas had to be different. It was recognised that meetings in the towns were perhaps even more urgent than elsewhere due to the physical proximity of the different groups (political, parties, organizations, associations, etc.)
6. *Encadrement* (setting the stage/frame training). The preparation of every meeting was done in cooperation by members from the Mobile Support Teams (EMA)³³ from Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao, together with resource people and consultants. The meetings attracted hundreds of people – sometimes a thousand – who had to be fed and provided with a copious flow of green mint tea, sometimes for two days. This necessitated considerable organisation, and was the main reason for the need for supplementary funding.
7. *Communication*: because of the great distances involved, participants often had to travel far in order to attend the gatherings, not infrequently taking two days by camel. Lode estimates that he drove 30,000 km in the seven months of his field engagement.

Much of the first funding that the NCA received from MFA (NOK 450,000) was used to elaborate a strategy for the intercommunity meetings, to prepare a standard for contracts with the persons agreeing to take on the responsibility for each meeting, and to organise the first six meetings. A report of 29 April 1996 by Kåre Lode evaluates the process. He notes that the first months of the project were very successful and that the work done in these months enabled geographic expansion and widening of the formal structures. This meant that the NCA expanded their work to include more meetings. He goes on to say that three components emerged as a result of this effort:

1. That the project would include more of the Timbuktu province.
2. That it would be unfortunate if were only the NCA which was involved in this process.
3. That the amount of funding received from Norway – c. NOK 350,000 – would not be sufficient.

Some NOK 67,500 went to support follow-up activities from NCA-Oslo. It was at this stage that Kåre Lode contacted Dr. Henner Papendieck, director of the German North Mali Programme; and in December they established FAR-Nord, an international fund to promote peace and reconciliation in the North, supported by Canada and Switzerland in January 1996. Lode agreed to function as its coordinator, and to forward proposals for new steps for discussions to the steering committee. Lode also notes that cooperation with the members from these countries proceeded smoothly.

To demonstrate the growing importance attached to these meetings as they became acknowledged as contributing to the peace process – and to the emergence of a more democratic form of governance – we would like to draw attention to a particular development that took place in terms of formal setting. The first meetings were considered of little consequence by men of influence, both in Bamako and in the North. As the impact of the meetings became clear, members of the old elite (deputies in particular, who could participate only as observers), made attempts to get control of the process. Some among them tried to use the meetings to promote themselves in the political struggle. That these meetings grew in significance is also shown in the changes in signatures on the meeting contracts for the meetings. The first contracts were signed only by Lode and the person taking on the organisational responsibility for the meeting. With increasing success and political influence, contracts had to be signed as having been ‘seen’ by the Commissariat of the North. In the third and final stage, the Commissioner for the North himself³⁴ actually co-signed the contracts.

These intercommunity meetings had several immediate consequences that enabled people to believe that a peace process was now underway:

- some marketplaces were opened and started to function normally
- some disputes over the use of resources were voiced, some resolved
- banditry (theft of cattle and cars) was reduced
- there was now communication between people from different sides in the conflict.

That peace was finally installed is eloquent testimony to the success of the intercommunity meetings. As Poulton & ag Youssouf’s report for UNIDIR summarises the results:

The peace negotiations truly emerged through Civil Society: a symbiosis between community leaders of what we have called ‘traditional’ Civil Society, and younger leaders in the ‘modern’ Civil Society, including local and international NGOs well-established in the North. (p.6)

This formulation is highly indicative of the interest in the Norwegian Model which is itself an example of the mobilisation of civil society.

Could peace have been achieved in Northern Mali *without* the efforts of the NCA and of Kåre Lode? There can be no doubt that the NCA contribution was a very important one, but – and this is necessarily speculative – the conditions for peace were already there: what the Kåre Lode initiative helped to do was to translate these conditions into an actuality. The crucial role played by Malians in the peace-making process is discussed at length in Chapter 5 below.

3.7 Repatriation Programme

At the end of 1994, there were approximately 115,000 Malian refugees, including about 55,000 in Mauritania, some 30,000 in Algeria, and 30,000 in Burkina Faso. The period of fear and insecurity generated in the North by the armed robbery, killings, violence and counter-violence in the years 1994–95 added several more thousands to the refugee population.³⁵ Most were nomads; but since there are Tuaregs and Arabs (or ethnic Moors) who are not nomads and other non-Tuareg and non-Arab groups that are not sedentarists, the problem of repatriation could be not as clear-cut as that (see Sections 7.2 & 7.7 below).

According to Judy Becher, head of UNHCR sub-office in Timbuktu also covering Mopti and Segou,³⁶ the cumulative figure of refugees repatriated stood at 14,412 as of March 1997. The figure pertains to refugees mostly from Burkina Faso and Mauritania. The Evaluation Team was officially informed during its study-tour of Mali in February/March 1997 that a meeting of the governments of Mali, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso was soon to be held to discuss the repatriation problem, particularly of Malian nationals still in refugee camps in

Burkina Faso. Information available as of 5 June 1997 indicated that 3,000 of the Burkina-based refugees were now to be moved back to Mali; these latest returning refugees are not going to be dispersed to their home areas, but rather concentrated in one area, in the north-east, close to the Burkina Faso border. The inherent problems in concentrating ex-refugees rather than dispersing them to their home areas are discussed in Chapter 7.

A more immediate issue was the promises concerning the repatriation package. This came to throw aspects of the NCA's peace-making work in controversy, and is thus important in the context of the present report. Moreover, discussion of that issue can provide a backdrop for understanding the grievances harboured by some of the returning refugees, mentioned in Ch. 7. Some of the returning refugees whom we interviewed in Gossi³⁷ as well as at Gourma Rharous³⁸ complained bitterly about the UNHCR/NCA making promises to them about certain reintegration benefits and not carrying these out. To this, NCA Resident Representative Mons Sydness said that the ex-refugees were partially right in viewing the NCA repatriation involvement as one that might be interpreted as amounting to a promise, but insisted that the task was carried out for and on behalf of the UNHCR, rather than being the NCA's own. Moreover, the NCA had had to withdraw from the whole collaborative repatriation exercise with the UNHCR when the former, on examining the repatriation package, came to the conclusion that the UNHCR had made huge promises to returning refugees that the latter agency was not in a position to execute.

The repatriation programme is an integral part of the peace-efforts and development efforts.³⁹ According to Kåre Lode⁴⁰ most of the reconciliation meetings ad-

ressed the issue of repatriation. There was general dissatisfaction with the efforts of the UNHCR. There was, apparently, no communication between the top leaders of UNHCR in Mali and the local authorities, and none of the UNHCR programmes which were supposed to have facilitated repatriation are said to have been carried out. Kåre Lode tried to contact UNHCR-Mali, but this did not lead to further actions on UNHCR's behalf. The NCA then sought instead to facilitate repatriation through their general efforts in the peace and reconciliation and long-term development programmes. Refugees who were willing to cooperate were to have been provided with a Norwegian 'package' worth about NOK 2,000,⁴¹ as one of the rehabilitation projects. However, as explained in 3.3. above, that component of direct help to the refugees was never implemented.

3.8 Other Activities: Peace-building

More recently, the NCA has been involved with the execution of tasks and projects within the ambit of the *peace-building* (as opposed to the *peace-making*) role. Much of this activity has been funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Projects include work in support of democratisation and training for decentralisation, as well as support for the organisation and conduct of the recent general and presidential elections in Mali. There are also plans to support the structure of municipal governance and administration, through assistance in developing the committee system and training it to be accountable. As Mons Sydness, NCA Resident Representative and Norwegian Honorary Consul for Mali explained to us in March 1997, the NCA has come to be involved both in the administration of the funds and the implementation of these peace-building projects in Mali.

(C) Financial aspects

3.9 Long-term development project

Operational support for the International Development Programme:

	1995	1996
Funding from NORAD from the SSE fund:	NOK 15,077,000	NOK 8,639,000

Additional: extra funding from the Norwegian MFA, a total of NOK 5 million, and a specific amount for development project in the Gossi area of 9,093,000.

The most important contribution to the Gourma programme has been the SSE grant, set up under NORAD to support emergency programmes in the Sahel, Sudan and Ethiopia and administered by NORAGRIC. In 1993 the SSE grant to the NCA amounted to NOK 15 mill.,⁴² which was 87% of the total amount of funding the NCA managed to allocate to the region. In 1994 the funding from this grant was reduced to 70%. The NCA intends to reduce their involvement in the Gourma region towards the year 2000, which will mean that SSE funding will decrease accordingly.⁴³

3.10 The NCA Conflict Resolution Project

More recently, the budget headings that have come to attract support and the allocations to these are as follows: (a) conflict resolution project and (b) the peace and reconciliation project. For the Conflict Resolution Project the NCA was first granted NOK 450,000 from the MFA. This sum was granted after some hesitation.⁴⁴ The critique against the alleged bias of the NCA towards the Tuaregs was one element in this context. The grant was divided as follows:⁴⁵

Initial Funding for 1996 from the Norwegian Foreign Ministry:

Money for the project	NOK 433,000
Administration in Norway	NOK 17,000
Total	NOK 450,000

Additional Funding for 1996 from the Norwegian Foreign Ministry:

The Norwegian Foreign Ministry granted an additional NOK 5 million over the SSE grant to support the conflict resolution projects.

3.11 The NCA repatriation and rehabilitation project

Funding for the repatriation and rehabilitation project:

- * The funding for this project is the same as for the peace and reconciliation project.
 - * In addition, the NCA receives some financial support in executing activities in co-operation with UNHCR.
-

Apparently, the 'extra' funding of NOK 5 mill. referred to in official documents and mentioned under point (A) above, was identical with the additional funding mentioned in both (B) and (C). Of this sum, NOK 400,000 was allocated to the intercommunity meetings (the Kåre Lode project), with the remainder going to rehabilitation projects. This NOK 5 mill. was granted for the period 1 January 1996–1 July 1997. NORAD has since agreed to prolong the project period until 1 September 1997.

The NCA plan to have two or three expatriates in Mali until the year 2000 (Resident Representative, an accountant, a technical coordinator). The Malian staff numbers 50 people, 19 of 'key personnel' – leaders, officials and skilled staff. (See the NCA regional year-plan for West Africa 1996 for further details.)

Other external actors and the NCA network

4.1 Defining Partnerships

Partnership has a distinct definition within the NCA.⁴⁶ The term normally refers to financial support in a giver/receiver relationship, but the NCA has redefined the concept to include *all* relationships, not only economic ones:

Partnership is a common effort to achieve a common goal, based on common trust and openness. (LTPWA, p. 7)

NCA lists what they see as the most *important components* in establishing a partnership.

- Shared visions, mode of work, values and attitudes on crucial points.
- Shared information about partner policies, goals and budgets.
- Credibility with target groups.
- Legitimacy with project leaders.
- Respect for partner autonomy.
- Mutual openness and trust.
- Wish to share common problems
- Clear instructions concerning mutual demands, obligations and rights.
- Good and frequent communication and exchange of information.

The NCA defines the *goals* of partnerships as follows:

- Sustainability: sustainable development is dependent on how the NCA is rooted in local organisation and grassroots organisations.
- Double effect: to maximise the potential inherent when efforts are pooled together by partners, towards a common goal.
- Mutual growth and development: an open door for communication when one of the parties needs feedback or inspiration; likewise, the parties ought to feel obliged to guide each other if one feels that the other is off-track.

To promote partnership and cooperation the NCA has decided on the following *strategies*:

- Facilitate the creation of, and participation in, fora – planning groups, programme committees, round-table conferences, etc. – where different aspects of the partnership are discussed and responsibilities and rights decided.

- Organise/facilitate gatherings where several of the NCA's collaboration partners can meet for mutual exchange of information and experiences

The partnership structures involving the NCA are defined according to the following three categories:

1. Bilateral cooperation with churches and other organisations which belong to or work among NCA's priority groups.
2. Multilateral cooperation, involving international agencies.
3. Co-operation with local communities and local authorities

Since 1984, the NCA has been mostly occupied with work direction cooperation with local communities and local authorities, with relatively few other cooperative partners. Their goal for 1995–99 is to increase the number of bilateral and multilateral partnerships. After the year 2000 the goal is for the NCA to decrease its engagement in the region and focus more exclusively on bilateral cooperation. The NCA envisions partnership with, among several possibilities, local groups in Gourma (LTPWA, p.11).

4.2 Major NGOs

An overview of NCA interrelations in Mali must begin with a reference to the *SSE programme*, which includes as recipients Norwegian NGOs, Malian and Norwegian researchers/research institutions and local partners. The NCA regards its collaboration with the SSE programme as central to its own long-term development projects.

CARE is one of the international NGOs that the NCA collaborated with in Mali. They joined in running a specific programme – PURTS (*Programme Urgence Repas*) – to provide children with school lunches. The NCA has also cooperated with *OXFAM* in the follow-up of a meeting held in Gabero and financed by *OXFAM*, where community organisation was one of the main themes on the agenda. The *Association Cooperation de Reserche pour le developpement (ACORD)* is another NGO active in the humanitarian and peace-making work in Mali. But the NCA appears to have had only indirect contacts with that body, through *OXFAM* Mali. The Evaluation Team was able to interview Bakary

Diarra, ACORD coordinator, in Gao, who had been working for ACORD ever since 1985, and seemed therefore uniquely placed to provide us with relevant information.

4.3 Donor Countries and Multilateral Agencies

The most important countries that have been historically involved in Mali have been France, Germany and the USA. These are also the major donor countries.

After having conducted six intercommunity meetings, the NCA was advised to cooperate with other partners in their peace and reconciliation work. This was motivated by financial reasons, as the NCA had initially allocated only NOK 350,000 NOK⁴⁷ for peace and reconciliation work, and by political reasons – the NCA had been accused of being biased towards the Tuaregs. These circumstances led to the creation of the *Fonds d'Aide pour la Réconciliation et la consolidation de la Paix dans le Nord-Mali*(FAR) Nord. The initiative was taken by Kåre Lode of the NCA and Dr. Henner Papendieck, director of the Northern Mali German cooperation. Switzerland and Canada joined the group in January 1996 and together they decided to financially support and organise 22 new intercommunity meetings. Kåre Lode was asked to coordinate the efforts of FAR-Nord.

The continuous peace-building, disarmament and demobilisation of ex-combatants in the region is financed through a trust fund (*Fonds d'Affection Speciale*) for Northern Mali channelled through the UNDP, with the United States and Norway among the major donor countries. France, Belgium, Japan and the Malian government themselves also contribute as well as Canada and the Netherlands. The total amount announced by the donors was USD 9,479,169 as of February 1997. The fund is intended to facilitate repatriation of ex-combatants to the region.

4.4 UNHCR, UNDP and Other International Agencies

Collaboration between the NCA and other agencies in the humanitarian area has a long history. The NCA has cooperated with the World Food Programme (WFP) on distribution of food, with the UNHCR on refugee repatriation, and with the UNDP on arms and the military, among other issues.

UNHCR became involved in the region in November 1995. The goal was to facilitate repatriation of refugees, mostly Tuaregs and Moors, from the neighbouring countries of Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger.⁴⁸ The NCA had initially cooperated with UNHCR on a specific refugee repatriation project, but, as mentioned above, broke off that working cooperation when the NCA realized that UNHCR was making ambitious promises to returning refugees that the latter agency was not in the position to implement. The UNHCR finances part of the work conducted by the NCA.⁴⁹

UNDP support began in 1994, upon request from the President of Mali to study the conditions of the country and make recommendations on the proliferation of small arms. The government formally addressed the UNDP to establish a UN Resident Coordinator for facilitating contacts with the donor community on the 'Northern questions'. UNDP's support facilitated a revitalisation of the so-called '*Commission Paritaire*', co-chaired by the Foreign Minister, and on a rotating basis, by a senior Ambassador or aid official. Of significant symbolic value was the 'Flamme de Paix' which the UNDP helped to arrange in Timbuktu on 27 March 1996: this was a public ceremony where 3000 arms were collected from ex-combatants and burned. The UNDP also helped to arrange a civil society seminar in Bamako in July 1996 where the task was to redefine the military's role in society.⁵⁰

Tore Rose was appointed the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bamako. His good relationship with Kåre Lode facilitated contact between UNDP and the NCA.⁵¹

4.5 Religious Bodies

NCA is part of a world-wide ecumenical network of churches. It cooperates with the WCC (World Council of Churches) which comprises 311 member churches with 360 million members, and the LWF (Lutheran World Federation) with 106 member churches and 60 million members.⁵² The NCA wishes to give priority to cooperation with church organisations.⁵³ Of all the funds and financial support that the NCA gave through bilateral or multilateral cooperation in West-Africa in 1994, 91 % was given to church organisations. In Mali, because there is only a small Christian population, money has been given mostly to secular organisations.

4.6 NCA Links

According to the NCA regional year-plan for West Africa, the NCA's main cooperation parties in Mali are local communities, local authorities and local advice bureaux in Gourma. The NCA will also increase cooperation with PSDS-Mali (*Programme de Solidarité pour le Développement au Sahel*).⁵⁴ Those who work in the Gourma long-term development programme cooperate formally and informally with other organisations and Malian and Norwegian researcher through the SSE programme.⁵⁵

There is some cooperation with Mali national authorities regarding approval of the NCA's work, but more important is the collaboration with local authorities such as the CLDE (*Comité Locale de Développement*) and the CTA (*Collège Transitoire d'Arrondissement*).

Cooperation between the NCA and the CLDE/CTA has been executed in good accord with the objectives and strategies defined.⁵⁶

4.7 Other Norwegian Contributors

Most of the NCA's financial resources comes from Norwegian authorities. In addition to these funds, the NCA has a steady income from its members and from collections from various sources.⁵⁷

In the peace and reconciliation work other Norwegian organisation in the region supported Kåre Lode's efforts. In the work with the six first meetings, *Strømme-stiftelsen* provided him with office space and *Den Norske Santalmisjon* helped with accounting and other practical matters.

5. Malian role in the humanitarian and peace-making processes

5.1 Not as Passive Beneficiaries or Actors

Here we assess the degree of local ownership of the humanitarian and peace processes. Thus far, the impression may have been given that the external role was the prime mover of things in the domain, while inputs from the Malian end were no more than those of passive beneficiaries and actors. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

5.2 *Les Recontres intercommunautaires*

Here we wish to underline the role of Malians themselves in *initiating* the various intercommunity meetings that were to make the peace possible. Many of these meetings took place before Kåre Lode came onto the scene. These earliest meetings marked a beginning, but suffered from being too localised, ad hoc, sporadic and unorganised, as well as lacking a common accepted leadership. However, towards the end of 1994, things began to change.

The first organised, serious initiative towards peace was that led by the village chief of Bourem, Tourem, Hafizou Alhere Toure, in November 1994. This was a truly intercommunity peace meeting whose results quickly reverberated far and wide. People like Zeidan Ag Sidalamine, who later came to work with Kåre Lode on the latter's own project, are known to have derived their inspiration from that Bourem meeting. It confirmed the will to peace that had been emerging as a phenomenon general to the larger society, civil society groups, and even combatants.

The November 1994 meeting was followed by others – among them, one in Bourem in January 1995, and notably in Mbounda in September 1995. Thus, Kåre Lode could not have used a more apt term for describing the situation when he talked of the inundation of 'the wave of these intercommunity meetings' across Northern Mali. It was the momentum from these intercommunity meetings that the arrival of Lode and his group helped further to propel and finally translate into the subsequent peace in Mali.

5.3 Role of Religious Leaders

The mandate required us to analyse the role of religion in humanitarian and peace-making activities involving not just the NCA but also the Malians themselves. Clearly, religion combined with humanitarianism was an important consideration for the initial intervention of the more evangelical and missionary NGOs. Likewise, the personal religious convictions of key actors, including Kåre Lode, were also relevant here.

All the parties to the Malian conflict and the soldiers of the national army were Muslims – after all, Mali is predominantly (90%) Muslim, and in the North all the dominant groups are Muslim. Why, then, was Islam not used by any of the dominant groups, either in their war against the central government or the violence against one another, particularly that of the Ganda Koi against the Tuaregs and Arabs? From the experiences of countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan, for example, intra-Muslim sectarian conflicts could prove as catastrophic in their effects as those normally associated with the violence between the two major organised religions of Islam and Christianity, especially where the sectarian differences making for such conflicts also coincide with the lines of ethnic cleavages. But in the Malian case, even intra-Muslim sectarian conflicts did not occur.

At two of the group interview sessions in Northern Mali that the Evaluation Team attended in the course of its field work in the Gourma area, the spokesmen made a point of emphasising the near homogeneity of the members present in terms of religion, even while being each a composite of 'white' and 'black'; that most of the members present were Tamashek-speaking but each of the interview groups also included a few Arabs and Songhoy. We were told religion has never been a highly divisive factor in any of the communities – and, we were assured, it will never be allowed to be.

In our considered view, all this is related to the unique configuration of Malian society as to religion – the nearly homogeneous religious outlook; subscribed to by a patchwork of many, small ethnic communities, with no group larger than others put together; and the fact that the Northern historic city of Timbuktu had also been the place from which became spread the benefits

of learning, culture, and commerce. Above all, Malians as a whole have come to have a great sense of their own history, and about what contributions all the peoples of the area are believed to have made to human civilisation.⁵⁸ This is due in part to the efforts of the country's first post-independence president, Modibo Keita, who used selective historical symbolism to foster that collective sense. This unique set of factors in the configuration of Malian society makes for moderation in the attitudes of the generality of the population and works against religious fundamentalism. It has also meant that all the major conflict group leaders from local to national level could unite on religious issues, could welcome into their midst and meetings a Christian peace-maker like Kåre Lode, and even recite along with the latter passages from both the Bible and Koran, without being dogmatic in such matters. Only in that sense can one begin to understand or find meaningful several statements made by both Kåre Lode and Njell Lofthus regarding the links between religion, war and peace in Mali's current history.

The statements include the following: 'If the *kadis* and the *marabouts* taught what was written about peace and war in the *Qur'an*, the result should automatically be positive', and 'if Islam was more than just a cultural heritage, it would be wise to remind the leaders of the meetings that this task was being done in the presence of God'. And, most remarkable of all, the statement written at the end of every contract signed between on the one hand the NCA representative and on the other the leaders of groups at each of the intercommunity meetings held to advance the cause of peace: 'May the all-mighty and merciful God bless the efforts of his humble servants'. It required intercommunity meetings of relatively homogeneous, non-sectarian members to be able to get everyone present to say 'Amen' to these.

In our view, great importance attaches to the core values that have come to be attached to the Norwegian Church Aid organisation qua organisation: (1) compassion, (2) justice, (3) participation, 4) responsible stewardship of God's creation, and (5) peace. (See Føyn, 1996, p. 3.) Also important was the general perception that both the people and government of Norway were guided by those values in their foreign-policy objectives and actions – a point underlined by all the Malians we talked to in the field. Above all, they also spoke very highly of the qualities of the man who led the NCA initiative, Kåre Lode: his abilities in generating confidence, trust, and friendship, his humility, commitment, moral integ-

rity, and empathy, and above all his belief in the innate goodness of man (and woman). These considerations have contributed to endear both the NCA organisation and its former Resident Representative Kåre Lode as much to the *kadis*, the *imams*, and the *marabouts*, as to his fellow Christian evangelists and missionaries; to promote, rather than impede, the intercommunity talks towards peace. But at the same time, for both the NCA and Kåre Lode, it had meant tapping into what has been described (Føyn, 1997, p.63) as 'an unused cross-religious dialogue potential' within the NCA set-up for its humanitarian and peace-making activities.

5.4 Women For Peace Movement

An analysis of the role of women in the Malian peace process must begin by underlining their low participation as soldiers on both sides of the war. Compared to the experiences of other African conflict cases like Ethiopia/Eritrea, Mozambique and South Africa, the number of women recruited to fight on both sides of the Malian conflict had been very few. Admittedly, full data are not yet available; and what materials we have come indirectly from the National Commission for Reinsertion handling the programme for the demobilisation and reintegration of ex-soldiers (or PAREM). Out of the total 3,552 ex-combatants demobilised from the various armed opposition forces in the Timbuktu area, only 258 or 7.0% were women, nor is the proportion likely to be any higher in the two other demobilisation centres at Kidal and Gao, not to mention the national army. Many of the so-called ex-combatant women demobilised at Timbuktu were, in fact, not soldiers, but had come to be numbered among the ex-combatant demobilised population by way of compensation for the losses they had suffered as a result of the war, including their husbands, children and property.⁵⁹ Women's role here, then, is better understood as that of *fighters for peace*.

That is where the activities of the group called Women For Peace Movement come in. This movement – *Mouvement National de Femmes pour la Sauvegarde de la Paix et de l'Unite National* or the National Movement of Women for the Safeguard of Peace and National Unity (MNFPUN) – started in 1991, although it was not until 5 June 1992 that it became registered as national non-governmental organisation (NGO). The Evaluation Team was able to interview two high-ranking MNFPUN members: one in Timbuktu (interviewed 8 March 1997) and Mariam Djibrilla Maiga, MNFPUN

National President (interviewed 10 March 1997). Theirs was the first organisation to begin working to bring peace to the North. Their activities were started when Ahmadou Toumani Tuore was still in power; and the organisation participated when the National Pact was signed. Though now a national NGO, the organisation was started by women from the North, and its national president comes from the North. The contribution of the women's group to the peace process has been recently summarised in a paper that the president presented at a regional conference on disarmament, development and the prevention of conflicts in West Africa. The source (Maiga, 1996) lists the contribution of MNFPUN to include the following:

[A] *joué un rôle déterminant sans le ragrement pacifique du conflict Touaregue. Le MNFPUN a contribué à la création des conditions et mecanismes du dialogue entre les parties en conflict (les combatants MFUA, MPMGK, les forces armées et de sécurité, les différentes communautés, les victimes et les plus hautes autorités du Mali).*

[A] *A participé aux negociations informelles avec les parents et proches des parties en conflict, le pays mediateur et d'autres personnalités.*

[A] *A beaucoup contribue à la reconnaissance légale du Pacte National et a son utilité comme facteur de paix et de stabilité; pacte national dont le MNFPUN a participé à l'élaboration des documents de base, aux négociations.*

Avec le retour de la paix, le MNFPUN a initié depuis aout 1996 un processus de restructuration et de réorientation de ses activités et a retenu quatre domaines prioritaires: prévention et gestion des conflicts; démocratie – paix et de décentralisation; développement durable; communication.

5.5 The National Accord⁶⁰

MILITARY: The National Pact is predicated on the basic recognition by the parties of Malian society as an ethnically diverse society, and the necessity for reflecting this in the composition of the central executive organs of state power. This means recognition of power-sharing as an essential principle of governance, a principle that permeates much of the provisions of the National Pact, which will not be detailed here. But it is perhaps at the military level where the enshrined power-

sharing idea comes out most vividly. Among the essentially military provisions of the agreement were measures to integrate sizeable numbers from among the ex-rebel movements and their officers with the national defence. It was on the basis of this that more than 2,000 ex-combatants drawn from the four original armed ethnic movements – ARLA, FIAA, FPLA, and MPA -became absorbed into the country's national defence and security forces. In this way, one of the major factors and sources of complaint that had sustained continuation of the war was removed. Again without going into detail, we may confirm that the military power-sharing arrangement agreed to the pact was based on an act of national reconciliation and of trust, a recognition of the need for creating a new national army sufficiently representative of Mali as an ethnically diverse society.

INSTITUTIONAL: The National Pact recognises the authoritarian and non-representative nature of the old political cum administrative structure, and the need to make it more democratic, accountable and representative. The provisions creating a three-tier system of administration, bottoming up from the local through regional to national – a considerably decentralised structure close to federalism – were aimed at achieving these institutional objectives. on and government. The new structure of decentralisation, provided it can be realised, would constitute a remarkable achievement. The emergent structure of rule should provide sufficient checks for preventing excessive concentration of power at the centre, while also promoting regional autonomy and some self-government for the *cercles* and *communes*.

ECONOMIC: Finally, the National Pact includes certain provisions essentially economic in nature. Among these are the provisions that assume Northern Mali to be a backward and marginalised region, and consider it necessary for special developmental assistance to be mounted here on projects in key areas (water resources, agriculture/husbandry, health, education, for example) aimed at bringing the region to parity level with the South. Besides the special development assistance, what is called in the peace agreement *as un programme special de developpement du Nord du Mali*, there are the funds which the National Pact calls to be set up for financing the reinsertion of ex-combatants, repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, and assistance and compensation to all those who became victims of the consequences of the armed conflict in the North. Parties to the National Pact hoped that the international community would help provide much of the needed

funds for implementing the various programmes and projects envisaged under the settlement.

Running through the National Pact is an emphasis on the need for concrete measures aimed at the restoration of confidence, elimination of factors making for insecurity, and the installation of common security for all. The series of negotiations that finally led to the signing of the Pact had been long, and much of this took place under foreign mediation and in Algeria – but there could be no denying that this was a Malian document and produced by Malian leaders themselves

5.6 Assessing Degree of Local Ownership of Product and Processes

If there was one subject most of the Malian respondents interviewed were united on and felt strongly about, it was about the *local* ownership of the peace product and processes, and that this should not be assigned to the workings of some external agency. These respondents included some of erstwhile rebel leaders now working in government, the NCA's own Malian executives, other Malian NGO operators, important resource persons who had worked with Kåre Lode on his initiative and are known to respect him very highly, women's groups, as well as ordinary people in cities and towns, local village chiefs in the North, and peasants. The standard question posed was, 'how do you assess the relative contribution of Malians and external interests to the peace process?' The following sample from the responses should speak for itself.

(a) 'Maliens have really drawn on the country's cultural resources to produce the peace. Outsiders would not believe it, but Mali has come to develop into a big family. Problem of ethnicity is not as simple as some writers make it. There are so many inter-ethnic linkages, inter-ethnic marriages, shared historical experiences, and so on, that provided a useful ingredient in the making of peace. To emphasise the contribution of these cultural resources, however, is not to underestimate the economic, social and development issues and their relevance.'

(b) 'The problem was and still is a Malian one, and is for Malians to solve, and it is only Malians who can solve it. The role of the external agents can only be that of facilitating the various processes and therefore outcome.(...) If the neighbours have been killing them-

selves and do not start talking to one another and there is an external mediator that tries to help the two sides talk, the very moment the external mediator leaves, the once-warring parties will start fighting again. One says this without denying the great resources of experience, finance, commitment and contribution that the Norwegians brought to bear on the peace process. Obviously, these have proved very important. But don't forget that although the sources of the initial conflict are between Malian groups, and certain external interests from the international community have helped with mediation, but that same international community also supplied the arms and ammunition, equipment and other means with which the armed groups continued to fight and kill one another.' (from one of the resource persons relied upon by Kåre Lode in his initiative)

(c) 'Genuine peace-making begins from the grassroots, not in air-conditioned offices at some distant centre. The good initiative towards peace started before Kåre Lode came on to the scene. What his coming did was to build upon and help advance what had previously started by financing more of these grassroots efforts, talks and intercommunity meetings and helping to advance their cause and objective organisationally.' Pressed further to suggest a rough weight for the relative contribution of the internal and external factors, this respondent assigned 60% to the local efforts, meaning to the Malians, and 40% to the financial and foreign support and back-up by others. 'If we take organisation as a resource, for example', continued the source, 'it would be a mistake to see this as limited to the foreign actors, neither was the financial. Many Malians are known to have donated cows and other resources to the peace-making process.' (from a Malian top NCA executive)

(d) '...it was the Malian input that was the determining factor. The first meeting was held without the contribution by anybody. It was made without the financial inducement by any external agency. It was the will to peace on the part of the Malians themselves that decided the breaking out of peace. The conflict was 'ripe for resolution' (...) However, the peace itself remains fragile, as long as the root causes responsible for the initial conflict are still unresolved. And the root causes relate to development, conflict over scarce resources, and poverty. The linkage between poverty and conflict is a very close one. You need to reinsert people into development. You need to begin to address those issues of poverty and marginalisation, if you are to sustain the peace. In short, more is needed to sustain the peace than

the war-weariness or will to peace that led to the cessation of the hostilities and armed conflicts.’

In building the necessary supports for the consolidation of peace, it was implied, obviously the assistance from the international community cannot but be crucial.

Perhaps most importantly, the top Norwegians in the NCA themselves affirm the Malian ownership of the process. For example, according to Finn Andresen, NCA Resident Representative in Mali from 1 July 1994 to 30 June 1996, ‘the Malians themselves had started the peace meetings before external involvement’⁶¹.

Njell Lofthus, in charge at NCA Headquarters for long-term projects in West and Central Africa, says that the NCA has never participated in negotiations: ‘The organisation’s role has been much more ‘timid’, if you will – they have been *faciliteurs*.’ According Lofthus, what gave the NCA its unique position was the Malians who had been on its staff – Zahaby became leader of the Moor rebel movement; Zeidan, of one of the Tuareg rebel movements; Ag Erlaf, minister in the Malian government. Thus the NCA was in the position to act as go-between. Finally, Kåre Lode likens his own role to that of a lubricating ‘oil in the machinery’ of the intercommunity meetings.

6. Inter-play of NCA Humanitarian and Peace-making Work

6.1 An Inherent Contradiction?

For any aid agency, the change from a previous preoccupation with humanitarian relief cum development work to peace-making functions will tend to be attended with considerable debate and disagreement. So it was with the NCA case in Mali, a fact of which the MFA has been aware. We found evidence of considerable conflicts within the organisation, between those who cautioned against a precipitous change in the agency's traditional mission or role and others who argued such a change was warranted by the very circumstances that both the agency and its development partners in Mali found themselves.⁶³

How much of all this stemmed from the relationship between traditional humanitarian cum development work and the new peace-making functions being in actual fact inherently contradictory, or at least deemed to be so? How did the key participants view it between then and now? Interestingly enough, when these questions were posed to the three key actors on the intra-Norwegian end of those debates – Finn Andresen, Njell Lofthus and Kåre Lode – none admitted there had been any such contradiction.⁶⁴

6.2 NCA Humanitarian Work as Stepping-stone to Peace-making

Humanitarian work and the peace-making role have increasingly come to be closely linked with the NCA's traditional work on development, despite the disagreement indicated above. And, despite difficulties in carrying out this work, a way has usually been found to bring both the humanitarian work and peace-making efforts into a new harmony – or rather, the NCA's long-standing achievements in the humanitarian field have proved a useful stepping-stone towards the organisation's subsequent role as a facilitator in peace-making in Mali and external. An important factor here is the circumstance, already noted, that those who became leaders of the rebel movements used to work for the NCA. This helped to create a unique set of circumstances for the NCA's role in directly and indirectly influencing the peace process.

Six considerations recur in the lists of factors independently suggested by our interviewees as responsible for

the NCA's unique position and role as a facilitator of the peace process and the agency's success in this:

- (1) the general perception among Malians about the NCA being a caring organisation;
- (2) the fact that it stayed back in Gourma and was unwavering both in its work and continued commitment towards helping the poor and the needy, even in the most trying times and circumstances, long after other Western NGOs had pulled out;
- (3) that the agency had its base in the North where much of the intercommunity 'peace action' was, but where the agency had also managed to build up a sufficiently critical mass of clientele, networks, and support groups;
- (4) the genuinely motivated thrust of the NCA's humanitarian cum developmental work and its dividend;
- (5) the sterling qualities of its top-most leadership; and, of course,
- (6) the fact that the NCA did not need to seek permission of the Norwegian government to begin playing the 'peace-maker', at least initially, neither did it need to ask for money.

Of these considerations, the two most emphasised by Malians in our interviews are those variables centring on the nature of the NCA as a value organisation, and the qualities of its leadership as seen to have been exemplified in Kåre Lode. One cannot completely rule out some utilitarian elements in the identification of people here with the NCA as both a humanitarian agency and peace promoter, although the scheme of explanation presented does not make provision for these.

Mention has been made of the apparent disagreements and differences in approach between two key figures, Finn Andresen and Kåre Lode. In our view, the important point is this: *the right combination of individual leadership attributes with an appropriate organisational milieu or support base was required to be able to produce the NCA's successful intervention in the Malian peace process.*⁶⁵

6.3 Preparing Malian Pillars of the NCA Work for War and Peace

What of the role the Malians themselves working in the NCA played both during the war and in the transition to

peace? The Evaluation Team spent time with NCA Mali staff to allow them, not only as NCA executive staff members but also as Malians, to talk freely about themselves, give their own views about events and personalities, and assess their own role both in war and during the war-to-peace transition.

Here we must begin with the difficult years of 1991–94 which we know very much disturbed the processes and executions of various NCA projects and programmes, in part because these were predominantly based in the ‘combat zone’. How, then, was it possible for the Bamako office to claim to have executed 90% of projects and programmes during that same period of insecurity? Although the Norwegian staff had been evacuated, said one informant (interviewed in Gossi 3 March 1997), it was the efforts of the Malian staff staying behind that ensured continuity in the execution of projects and programmes. Besides, the Malian staff knew the whereabouts of their workers who had been forced by the insecurity and outbreak of war to flee; the staff knew where and how to track these workers down and get them to return to work, which they in fact did. Also, the fact that the Malians in the top executive arm of the NCA remained behind in the North, while the Norwegians had to be evacuated, could not but have exerted both a stabilising and positive influence towards peace.

Even before the period of insecurity, it was on this cadre of staff members past and present that the Norwegian leadership in the agency had relied in building up an infra-structural base of networks, contacts, and supports in much of Northern Mali. In short, the top Malian members of the NCA executive staff in Mali constituted the ‘pillars’ on whom had long rested much of the of the NCA’s development and humanitarian work here, but now also on which was to be built the peace process.

Serving to further buttress the point is Kåre Lode’s testimony that a number of Malians who had previously served on the NCA Mali senior staff proved useful for the NCA peace project. Specifically mentioned were:

- *Dr Hamida Idoual Maiga*, a medical doctor working previously at the National Centre for Health; started working for the NCA in 1985; employed as Coordinator of Health, was at the time second in command in the health section of the NCA Mali hierarchy. (Interviewed by Evaluation Team.)
- *Zahaby Ould Sidi Mohammed*; promoted Deputy Director of NCA Mali, December 1987; Secretary-

General of FIAA and the Leader of MFUA; signed the National Pact of 1994 for and on behalf of all the unified movements and fronts MFUA. (Unavailable for interview as he was serving with the UN in Haiti.)

- *Zeidan Ag Sidalamine*; recruited to the NCA in February 1988; became Secretary-General of FLPA; member of Kåre Lode’s cellule d’appui; was the rapporteur in the negotiations resulting in the signing of the National Pact; spokesman at the March 1996 ‘Flame of Peace’ ceremony; currently Councillor and also with the Commissariat of the North (Interviewed by Evaluation Team.)
- *Mohammed Ag Erlaf*; member of the NCA senior staff; former member of MPA, MFUA; various positions in government since 1991; was in regular contact with Kåre Lode; said to be the author of the concept the National Pact; Member of ADEMA; currently Minister of Labour and Transport (Interviewed by Evaluation Team.)

Among the many Malians in influential positions, who, while not directly employed by the NCA, were closely associated with NCA top executives, whether Malian or Norwegian or both, Kåre Lode has mentioned:

- *Aghatan Ag Alhassane*; engineer by training; member of FPLA, MFUA; Member of Kåre Lode’s cellule d’appui; signed the 1994 National Pact on behalf of the Commissariat of the North; currently *l’adjoint au Commissariat au Nord* (Interviewed by the Evaluation Team)
- *Abacar Sidibe*; a trained agriculturist; said to have had considerable experience in grassroots mobilisation in the North; served as adviser for the German development programme in the North; the only Fulani in Lode’s cellule d’appui; currently *Conseiller* in the Ministry of Rural Development (Interviewed by the Evaluation Team)
- *Ibrahim Ag Youssouf*, together with Zeidan Ag Sidalamine responsible for designing the intercommunity meetings; only known PhD holder from the Gourma; resource person for the NCA and researchers; currently UNDP advisor in Bamako (Interviewed by Evaluation Team)

This is yet another demonstration of the contribution to the Malian peace process by a select group of influential Malians with NCA-related experiences and contacts.

6.4 Impact of War on NCA Organisation and Activities

The onset of the Armed conflict came upon the NCA unexpectedly, and destabilised its work. The anarchy created by this inevitably crept into the organisation, and was responsible for some of the problems of disloyalty and lack of discipline among some (mainly junior) workers during the period of insecurity. As to the disruption brought by the war to NCA activities, projects and programmes, this has already been touched upon above, as has the decision to evacuate the Norwegian staff from Gossi.

Another way in which the war badly affected the organisation was that it sharpened some of the latent sources of disagreements and dissent within the organisation and over the thrust of policy. Definitely the war brought to the fore the existence of a rift between NCA-Oslo and NCA-Bamako over such issues as, what should be the agency's relationship with the Malian government; whether NCA Mali could continue its policy of supporting the Tuareg poor in the Gourma area without being seen as supporting the armed rebellion against the government; etc. Increased attacks by the national army against many of the NCA's bases of operations in the North did not help. Perhaps, for the agency, the worst impact to be felt from the war was when on two occasions (1992 & 1995) the army targeted and killed seven Malian staff members of the NCA, all of them Tuareg.

6.5 Dilemma and Anguish of War for the Malian NCA Executives

The dilemma and anguish of the war proved difficult for those Malians still in NCA employment. The dead were personally known, and in one or two cases even related to them. Mention has been made of the Malians in the executive arm of the NCA who stayed behind in the North during the war exerting both a stabilising and positive influence in the direction of peace. It was not, however, easy for them to play that role.⁶⁶ For example, they all went through serious moral and organisational dilemmas, as a result of being caught between two tendencies: safety of self and loyalty to organisation, support for peace and sympathy with rebel cause. The sectional role of the national army in the region should also be noted. By attacking some members of one group and sparing others, it tended to have exacerbated problems of intercommunity staff relations. As they saw it, it was not the NCA organisation in the North that was under constant threat of physical attack by the army, but

their very selves and lives; those remaining staff members who were Tuareg did not feel secure, neither could they any longer trust their non-Tuareg colleagues. On the other hand, those non-Tuareg workers who stayed loyal to the NCA ideals did not like being distrusted or even likened to 'Fifth columnists' within the organisation.

For, although it had long been accused of a pro-Tuareg bias, the NCA Mali programme had never run a mono-ethnic organisation, but 'recruited from all social and ethnic backgrounds'⁶⁷. This was a positive thing to have done, but that deliberate recruitment policy also came to have its own costs when the war came and got intensified. For one thing, it proved disruptive for the organisation qua organisation, as members now came under pressure to indicate where their loyalties lay. NCA workers found themselves being divided under the mounting pressures of the war into ethnic groupings and factions.

6.6 The Planned Hand-Over (Partnership)

The decision to cut back on Norwegian direct involvement in the humanitarian cum development work in Mali, and to hand over to Malians as development 'partners' (what has come to be tagged the 'partnership' programme) is a plan that very much antedated the war, but which the NCA headquarters is intent on implementing, irrespective of the circumstances and effects of the recent war. This raises a critical question of the timing and appropriateness of carrying out that plan so soon after the recent tragedy; and whether it may not be wise to defer the programme's implementation until some of the physical and psycho-social damages of the war have been sufficiently repaired. This in turn relates to the larger sustainability problem, which is dealt with in Chapter 8. At this point, let us simply summarise the reactions of Malian senior NCA staff members to the planned hand-over.

The views of most of them concerned the timing, not the termination of the NCA involvement itself. The NCA has long planned to phase out, they said; the process has been long evident, not least since the NCA Mali programme has had increasingly smaller budgets. Ordinarily, as persons to succeed to direct authority when the Norwegians finally leave, they said, they as Malian senior staff members of the NCA should be happy to accept the challenge of responsibility that the planned handing-over entails. But their concern was

about not just the programme and its sustainability but also the whole Northern region which stands to be affected. They felt it to be ironic that just when huge external assistance is badly needed for the development of the North in order to consolidate the peace, the one agency that had been in the forefront of the campaign to achieve that object would be pulling now. They warned that should the kind of assistance the NCA had until now been providing to the North be terminated precipitously, even before the present fragile peace becomes consolidated, this might lead to the unravelling of the peace itself.

We were not able to get any precise suggestions on how many years the planned hand-over should be delayed,

however. To a specific question about the sustainability of the programme following the NCA's planned withdrawal, a Gossi-based Malian staffer distinguished between aspects of the programme relating to (a) infrastructures, such as schools, medical, farming inputs, and (b) training, education, etc. In his view, much of the first could perhaps be sustained, but the latter could not.

Officials at NCA headquarters are currently discussing the agency's mode of operation from the year 2000. It is possible that some of these considerations will be factored into the final decision in terms of detailed plans.

7. Key issues in transition process impinging on NCA work

The preceding pages have made clear the multi-faceted nature of the transition process involving the NCA's recent activities in Mali. The major highlights: (1) For Malian society the process had concerned the transition from authoritarian breakdowns to democratic openings. Simultaneous with the latter was the change from the 'command' economy to a more liberal one, marked by the rule of market forces, and the introduction of adjustment-style reforms. (2) The second process is the transition from war to peace, from conflict to what has come to be called the post-conflict phase. The third and fourth processes of transition involve the NCA as an organisation: (3) regarding the agency's change from its traditional preoccupation with emergency relief and development towards a new peace-making role; and (4) the planned transition towards a 'new partnership' with responsibilities for development planning and management handed over to Malians.

Various issues impinge on the NCA's humanitarian and peace-making activities here, many directly war-derived. Nine such issues have been identified in our research as particularly significant: (a) demobilisation and reinsertion of ex-combatants, (b) return of ex-refugees, (c) what Malians refer to as *revendication*, (d) surplus weapons and banditry, (e) power-sharing versus political inclusion, (f) democratisation, deconcentration and decentralisation, (g) conflict between the nomads and sedentarists, (h) contradictory effects of adjustment, (i) the land question. Some of these issues could be crucially important for gauging the prospects for the long-term stability, reconciliation, and sustainable development of such states.

7.1 Ex-Combatants

PAREM is an acronym for the government programme of socio-economic reinsertion of ex-combatants from Northern Mali, specifically created to take care of the problems of the erstwhile armed ethnic formations thrown up by the Malian civil war and with the transition to peace. The problems concern the demobilisation of those ex-combatants and their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. PAREM is considered necessary for the consolidation of the peace process and for human development in the regions of Northern Mali. The programme is targeted on groups of ex-combatants that

have been registered and are awaiting to be reintegrated into socio-economic life. In certain cases, it may intervene to ameliorate the social and economic environment in which demobilised ex-combatants are to be reinserted. As such, the mandate of PAREM as a national programme dovetails with that of the *Commissariat au Nord*. The core of PAREM's activities is carried out under the agency of a newly created state body *la Commission Nationale de Reinsertion* based within the *Ministry of Territorial Administration and Security*. Also, on the Board on PAREM are the representatives of other ministries like those of Public Functions, Rural Development, Finance, and of course those of the *Commissariat au Nord*.

Technically, the tasks of disarmament and demobilisation come under the Commissariat au Nord, if not in fact the Ministry of Defence, but not PAREM. According to its mandate, the National Commission for Reinsertion, set up under the National Pact of 1994, if there had been such an effectively functioning state agency, was supposed to help deal with the basic functions like: cantonment (of ex-combatants), disarmament, demobilisation, and integration (into the national armed forces), while leaving out the task of reinsertion proper to PAREM. However, the central state agency which was to have helped to ensure disarmament of the demobilised ex-combatants proved unable to achieve this, without first addressing the ex-combatants' own human security concerns, including the economic and cultural values attached to the possession of weapons (more on this in section 7.4 below). By the time PAREM started operating in mid-1996, it was only in Timbuktu that some disarmament could be said to have preceded demobilisation as well as reinsertion. In Gao, where a programme of reinsertion was begun without having first achieved disarmament, one inevitable consequence was the March 1997 incident in which armed ex-combatants took over the PAREM office.

Admittedly, the population of demobilised ex-combatants that one is talking about here is a much smaller size than the numbers which other post-conflict states in Africa (Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique) or Latin America (Guatemala and El Salvador) for example have had to grapple with. The total population of the ex-combatants in Mali stands at about 9,000. The distribu-

tion of the demobilised population of ex-soldiers in the Timbuktu area is shown in the Table below.

Distribution of demobilised combatants by organisation

	EX-COMBATANTS Number	EX-COMBATANTS %
ARLA	270	7.6%
FIAA	632	17.8%
FPLA	140	3.9%
MPA	1,200	33.8%
MPGK	1,310	36.9%
TOTAL	3,552	100.0%

Total number of women: 258 widows
Source: PAREM, Timbuktu

PAREM has been criticised in its operations on a number of grounds. Some of the figures and names submitted for certification are known to have been inflated for ethnopolitical reasons by the respective ex-guerrilla movements. The PAREM authorities know it, but again for political reasons, have not been able to do anything about this. In our field interviews in Mali (February/March 1997) we also heard criticism of what was regarded by some Malians as the high foreign-exchange utilisation content in the operations of the programme, and the question was asked whether this was not one of those situations where African governments are being obliged to employ expatriates as part of the overall aid package. Another informant protested: ‘Any post-war programme for sustaining peace and reconciliation cannot, and should not be limited to dolling out money to ex-combatants that money is in any case used to buy radios and such good, that is for fun rather than for some productive activities. Real development should be the objective. And people must be inserted.’⁶⁸

The more widespread criticism concerns the differentiated nature of the programme, which singled out ex-combatants for differential treatment, while leaving out the majority of the population. Interestingly enough, a number of the current Malian top NCA Executives interviewed at Gossi also feel strongly about this. They referred to the CFA 400 million (or NOK 5 million) made available by NORAD/SSE for the repatriation and reintegration of refugees even as the budget for development aid was being cut. ‘But’, one of them asked, ‘what about those Malians who stayed behind working on NCA projects – digging wells, etc.? Are they to be punished for remaining faithful to execution of pro-

jects? Shouldn’t integration be approached from a more global perspective, rather than targeting only on ex-refugees and for that matter ex-combatants? The problem is a developmental problem which applies equally well to all – refugees, internally displaced personas, combatants, farmers, nomads and sedentarists.’⁶⁹

It was the PAREM Coordinator himself, Paul Howard, who best summarised the place of the whole reinsertion programme within the peace-cum-development equation: ‘All PAREM is doing is buying time, but for whom – for the government, for local administrators – I am not in the position to know or say. Sustainability of the peace depends not on PAREM but on development, on education, etc.’ he said.⁷⁰

7.2 Ex-Refugees

The analysis of the first key post-conflict issue facing Mali since 1995 already spills over into the second, that of ex-refugees. The phenomenon of repatriated ex-refugees as well as non-returning internally displaced persons, in their thousands, roaming the streets of major cities and towns, and made angry and disillusioned by the conditions of lack of jobs and incomes, is a familiar problem facing all of today’s post-conflicts states. In the Malian case, because of the composition of its ex-refugee population, the problem about their repatriation was not that they might be left on the streets of major cities and towns searching for non-existing jobs and sources of income; coming from mostly nomadic albeit poor and marginalised backgrounds in the North, the ex-refugees would prefer to be returned to their accustomed ways and means of livelihood as nomadic pastoralists. This was, of course, after they had been rehabilitated, paid their promised resettlement entitlements, and allowed to recover their abandoned properties if not yet destroyed. It is in relation to some of these latter matters that the Malian experience with the repatriation and reintegration of its nationals displaced as a result of the 1990–1994 war bears some points of similarity with the comparative experience of other post-conflict cases.

There is a core problem here: how to repatriate refugees who are nomads?⁷¹ However, the problem is not as clear-cut as it may first appear. Although most of the refugees forced out by the war were nomads, the repatriation problem came to be complicated by the intrusion of and often times cross-cutting considerations such as the ethnic, inter-ethnic, and even racial, caste system, etc. Most of the refugees who fled from the

Timbuktu area were originally nomads. Many have undergone some sedentarisation in the various refugee camps where they have been forced to stay and acquired different skills and even vocation. Now they want to insist on basic things that go with their new sedentary life. For those ex-refugees who had been sedentarists before being forced out by the war, returning home meant not being able to repossess their prime resource and means of livelihood, land. Thus, the repatriation programme here harbours the potential danger of intensifying rather than reducing the acute struggles over scarce land, and if not nipped in the bud could cause the region to return to armed conflicts.

Considerations like these must have informed the decision of the UNHCR to begin a new experiment aimed at concentrating in one location, rather than dispersing to the home areas, the fresh groups of refugees from among the 25,000 ex-Malian nationals whose repatriation from Burkina Faso has most recently begun. Concentration of newly returning refugees in one location, it is hoped, would help avoid the entanglements of the repatriation programme with the land question. For the land earmarked for the experiment is as unoccupied, and located near the Burkina border. The experiment is not without its own inherent dangers, however. Depending on the extent of homogeneity the resettling of members in ethnic, religious and cultural terms, such a concentration could conceivably lead to the emergence of an 'ex-refugee warrior' community or become a potential recruitment ground for raising para-military force (s). Neither of these eventualities is likely to be healthy for the country's post-conflict democratic order.

7.3 *Revendication*

Revendication concerns returning abandoned properties to their owners following the end of war, or arranging for compensation. In the Malian case, most of the properties relate to land and cattle, and therein lies the problem. The issue of such post-war claims becomes very much entangled with other acute and fundamental issues, particularly the conflicts between nomads and sedentarists and the land question. With the refugees from Burkina Faso now returning, that issue is certain to acquire even greater salience.

7.4 *Surplus Arms and Banditry*

On 27 March 1996, in the historic city of Timbuktu, was held an event both fundamental and symbolic for Mali,

signalling the formal launching of the post-conflict peace-building programme: the *Flamme de la Paix*, or the bonfire for peace. Mali's newly elected civilian ruler Alpha Oumar Konare presided over an enormous bonfire of weapons from the Tuareg ex-guerrilla fighters, in a ceremony that attracted a lot of attention and positive reaction from the international community, and became a significant land-mark.⁷² However, the tasks of disarmament are far from completed.

Mali now faces a large and widespread diffusion of arms. Many of these arms, believed to be secretly hidden, remain in the possession of ex-rebels who can quickly retrieve them for use, at the slightest opportunity and for whatever motive. As in other post-conflict states, Mali now experiences considerable trafficking in illegal arms fed, no doubt, by the currently prevailing instabilities in neighbouring countries. Acts of armed robbery and banditry, including car-jackings, have also been reported on the increase.⁷³

There is evidence indicating the involvement of some ex-soldiers in the illegal arms trafficking together with their cross-border transfers. That involvement is attributed to a combination of factors – residue of cultural attitude to the possession or distribution of arms, monetary motive, the war legacy, and poor reintegration of ex-combatants in the society. Those factors combined are one ground for those who want the programme of reinsertion of ex-combatants strengthened rather than weakened. While the old saying about 'war making thieves and peace hanging them' may be true, poor reintegration of ex-soldiers in peace time does pose its own problem of insecurity. As one Malian respondent put it: 'earlier, people conducted animal raids, now they conduct car-raids'.⁷⁴

From studies of other post-conflict states we know that the typical ex-soldier tends to possess at least four to five guns at the point of demobilisation; and when disarmed and demobilised, he/she turns in only one, while hiding the remaining guns elsewhere. There may not be need to resort to the use of these illegally stocked 'surplus weapons' if the ex-soldier is properly reintegrated and has sustainable means of livelihood and the society faces no immediate prospect of 'return to war'. A central PAREM expert admitted to us that, despite all the symbolism and positiveness which the exercise about the Flame of Peace has come to generate, the tasks of disarming the ex-movements are far from complete; and that the objectives cannot be finally realised

until and unless the more fundamental problems of poverty and development are addressed.

7.5 Power-Sharing versus Political Inclusion

The institution of a power-sharing arrangement between the government and the various armed opposition movements, as we saw in our analysis of the National Pact, had proved indispensable in bringing about the Malian transition from armed conflict to peace, and from military-authoritarian break-downs to civilian-constitutional rule beginning from 1994. But it is barely three years into the post-conflict peace-building stage and already the whole power-sharing arrangement and its exclusionary aspects are provoking negative reactions.⁷⁵

For example, one respondent whom we interviewed⁷⁶ criticised this aspect of the peace settlement thus: 'The National Pact ending the war was a deal between the elites of the major armed movements and the government'. Of course, this applies only to the leaders of the movements, rather than the generality of their members. 'Only the leaders are occupying important posts in government or even at the international level. But their followers are disillusioned. Increasing numbers of these are known to be going back to Libya for training. These are worrying signs'. Meanwhile, in effecting that deal that resulted in leaders of the various movements being brought into government, both sides seemed to have conveniently forgotten that there were in fact two phases or sides to the war, what the respondent differentiated as (a) 'war between government and rebel movements', and (b) 'civil war, directed by both sides of the conflict against the population and civil society, including the NGOs.' The power-sharing arrangement enshrined in the National Pact was targeted at tackling problems at the former level, while remaining silent on issues raised by the latter. By so doing, said this respondent: 'the people were simply left out, their needs and interests and worries were not factored into the consideration, nor were these addressed in the National Pact.'

As if re-echoing the same point, one of the villagers interviewed at Rharous observed:⁷⁷ 'Between the former armed combatants and the government there is no problem; in fact they have settled their so-called fight, as leaders of the ex-rebel movements have now been brought into government. The mass of population has been left out. And yet when the ex-rebel movements

and government were fighting, it was the poor population members that suffered.'

But there were others, also interviewed, who disagreed with such views on power-sharing. Many of these were beneficiaries from the current power-sharing operations. The list included: Aghatan Ag Alhassane, *l'ad-joint au Commissaire au Nord*, formerly member of MPA, MFUA; Zeidane ag Sidalamine, Councillor with the Commissariat of the North, formerly leading member of FPLA; Mohammed Ag Erlaf, Minister of Labour and Transport, formerly member of MPA, MFUA; Oumar Hamida Maiga, and *ex-Ganda Koi* in charge of institutions at Equipe Mobile d'Appui, Gao; Mohammed Ag Mahmoud, *coordinateur Adjoint du PAREM* former member of ARLA; Fihiroun Maiga, Expert PAREM, Suivi des projets, Timbuktu, and former member of MPMGK. For these, the institutional framework of power-sharing continues to a useful means of governing a divided society like Mali and for preventing it from slipping back into war. Yet even these sources affirm that more will be required than power-sharing in the political and military spheres to get stability and democracy installed here; and that the existing arrangement can scarcely survive, unless efforts are directed towards solving the larger problem of socio-economic underdevelopment and marginalisation.

7.6 Democratisation, Deconcentration and Decentralisation

One major change taking place in Mali even as the questions of transition from armed conflict to peace were being addressed concerns *democratisation*. That process saw the breakdown of the one-party, military-dominated, and authoritarian system in place since 1968, and its replacement in 1991 by what was hoped would prove genuine grassroots-based institutions of democratic governance. The change was preceded by such an explosion of organised social groups, interests and forces thrown up from civil society that many observers thought democracy was finally in the process of being installed. Those were the circumstances under which President Alpha Oumar Konare and his ruling Alliance pour la Democratie au Mali (ADEMA) came to power. But many may now wonder whether 'Mali's democratic credentials' have not become tarnished by the April/June 1997 general elections that involved serious irregularities and confusion enough to make one question validity of some of the counts.⁷⁸

Even the most optimistic Malians whom we interviewed (several months before the recent elections) did not think the question of ensuring participation, inclusion, and conduct of elections in a free, fair and transparent way had finally been resolved. Many were convinced that this was unlikely unless and until such more fundamental economic issues as food security and marginalisation were tackled. Nor have the new reforms in the direction of a more decentralised system of governance and administration taken root yet. Democratisation has not yet been translated into any basic structural change in the system of administration handed over from the colonial past. These considerations, plus the factors of underdevelopment and lack of education and public awareness, have meant that the structure of devolution of power and authority has not changed much from deconcentration to decentralisation as promised.

It is a structure contrary to what the NCA stands for. As the NCA Chef du Bureau in Bamako, Fatoumata Cisse, puts it, 'NCA Mali practised decentralisation long before decentralisation became a fad. The NCA people lived with the people, ate with them, shared their views. The organisation has long emphasised the necessity for local inputs, interests and needs to be factored into the development projects.'⁷⁹ It was only natural for the NCA to be very interested in things that would help nurture and sustain the new government's decentralisation programme.

The term 'decentralisation' is not found in the National Pact, just as its use is also avoided in the new Constitution.⁸⁰ The term carries a certain risk, particularly for the central state elites. The problem is how to achieve the particular objectives and goals associated with or presupposed by conditions of the North at the point of transition, without having to carry the risk connoted by the term. The question now is whether there is enough political will for getting around the risk as well as the necessary financial resources for implementing the requirements for gaining regional autonomy.

7.7 Conflict Between Nomads and Sedentarists

The 'nomads versus sedentarists' issue has long been a source of conflict in Mali. In most recent times can be said to have even grown worse, for several reasons. First, the issue involves certain ethnic dimensions, as indicated by the rise of the Ganda Koi movement (although, as mentioned, the fit between the two is by no

means perfect). Second, the nomad/sedentarist issue is very much intertwined with the land question, particularly access to cultivable land and pastures, to which we return in section 7.9.

Third, the NCA has been long involved here, starting with its initial policy of attempting to make sedentarists out of nomads. That policy remains controversial and has received much criticism.⁸¹ 'Sedentarisation' is seen as but a continuation of the undisguisedly pro-Tuareg bias of which the agency had long been accused (although this, to us, sounded inherently illogical). The NCA people whom we interviewed denied any connection between the two; and even their long-alleged pro-Tuareg bias, they thought, was grossly misunderstood. They said that the NCA's basic ideology and commitment towards helping the poorest of the poor had meant the agency would necessarily be tilted towards helping that section of the community – nomads – which happened to have been mostly Tuaregs. The problem is, whether an agency that has been so active in intervening on mostly one side in the nomad/sedentarist conflict can now be trusted to be no longer partial in resolution of that issue.

7.8 Contradictory Effects of Adjustment

The Terms of Reference for the Evaluation made no mention of the economic dimensions to the sustainability of the NCA's humanitarian and peace-making activities in Mali. Seeing this as a serious omission, the Team decided to fill in the gap.

The economy of Mali is said to be doing well now, following the replacement of Traoré's 'command' structure with a more market-oriented one and backed by the introduction of IMF/World Bank-style adjustment reforms. Mali's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate is said to have been increasing since 1994 and estimated to have reached about 6% in 1996. But Mali still numbers among sub-Saharan Africa's most indebted low-income countries, with a debt burden clearly 'non-sustainable'. Its debt in relation to export earnings and GDP is in the neighbourhood of 620% and 100%, respectively. In consequence, debt arrears have been mounting.⁸² Because of the initial state of indebtedness Mali was forced to introduce structural adjustment programme (SAP) reforms, including the devaluation of the CFA franc, trade liberalisation, tight control of the money supply, cut-backs in social spending, reduction in public employment, and

privatisation of state-owned companies. The deleterious effects of such policies, including their tendency to increase poverty and exacerbate conflicts, have been abundantly documented (see e.g. Adekanye, 1995).

It has not been possible for the Evaluation Team to systematically assess the impact of SAP on NCA work in the humanitarian, peace-making and peace-building areas. But it would have been surprising if findings regarding this were different from the experiences of other countries which are undergoing post-conflict peace-building are also having at the same time to implement market-style austerity measures. Such measures have been found to constitute 'obstacles to peace-building' in Guatemala and El Salvador, as well as in several of Africa's post-conflict states (Markakis, 1997). The UNRISD-based 'war-torn societies' project researchers have noted the same problem:⁸³

'Recent research and experiences have highlighted potential contradictions between peace-building imperatives and structural adjustment. Trade-offs between reconstruction priorities and macro-economic constraints represent highly sensitive, yet crucial decisions. Structural adjustment programmes call for a drastic reduction of public expenditures to restore budgetary balance. This may prevent the state from performing essential tasks necessary to build peace or rebuild the economy.'

The NCA has been by and large silent on the issue, and certainly none of the NCA executives we talked to (except Kâre Lode) indicated any concerns about the nature of the problem, i.e. of the potentially destabilising consequences of economic liberalisation and adjustment for some of the work they have been doing. But in Mali the reactions received from three of our respondents – Mohammed, of OXFAM Mali, Paul Howard, the UNDP-seconded officer in charge of PAREM and Bakary Diarra, Coordinator of ACORD, Gao⁸⁴ – suggest that such a problem does exist.

7.9 The Land Question

Though the last on our nine-point list of major issues impinging on NCA work, the land question is by no means the least. It is fundamental to the organisation of economy, society, and politics – the cornerstone of all the previous eight key issues in Mali's transition process. Ecological and demographic factors have combined with the effects of recent armed conflicts to create problems of landlessness, joblessness, and poverty for the majority particularly in the North, as well as a badly skewed people-to-land ratio in favour of the tiny minor-

ity, and acute struggles for the control/share of the scant land available for cultivation and/or grazing.

The land question is an issue in which the current NCA Resident Representative, Mons Sydness, is particularly interested, perhaps not surprisingly since his own background is in agronomy. No, there had been no follow-up to those intercommunity talks and meetings, he said, but added that he saw the peace issue as part of the larger question of access to land and its resolution. 'Land problems are the crux of the peace problem', he declared; and if any NCA follow-up was being planned on the intercommunity meetings, there was a necessity for making the land question the basis for such a follow-up. Unfortunately, many of the old people who are the repository of knowledge about land issues are dying off. It is urgent to begin meetings for following up on the peace question that would make discussions and resolution of land rights and ownership the next agenda for action in the domain. Given the necessary mandate and support, this was the direction he thought he would like to go. His top priorities for now, though, were that local NGOs must be empowered to take up challenges like these; efforts must be directed to improve the management of investments so that the structures could be sustained.

Sydness – who like his predecessors doubles as the Norwegian Honorary Consul in Bamako – elaborated on ways of approaching the land question. At present, all land belongs to the state; it is only the management that people can have access to in terms of rights and ownership. The land question as it relates to the post-conflict North, then, is about two issues: who owns the land originally? who are the current managers? A French body with considerable experience has agreed to organise some training courses for Malians. Such efforts can prove extremely useful for a long-term resolution of some of the problems of ownership and rights. Currently under preparation are maps for different soil types, areas of cultivation, routes for nomads, etc., a step which should also contribute to policy and action in the domain. Meanwhile, what the NCA programme is trying to do is connect the people particularly in the Bourem area (where mapping is almost completed) to this immense conflict-resolution resource and encourage them to use these maps. However, the NCA has tended to steer clear of land-related disputes; people must agree to the right to land use and resolve their conflict before they could expect NCA assistance. This still remains the policy, which seems both prudent and

understandable, given past allegations levelled against the organisation's impartiality.

Again we see that the problems of nomads versus sedentarists are but an extension of the larger land question, and vice-versa.

8. Sustainability

The key issues in the Malian transition process all touch on the ultimate question of this Report – *sustainability*. This question is now accepted as an necessary issue to be addressed in any Evaluation exercise.⁸⁵ Moreover, it is basic to the rationale for operating with a concept like ‘peace-building’ – and ‘peace-building’, as we have seen, is considered a logically necessary follow-up to ‘peace-making’, in much the same way that ‘peace-making’ is seen as one stage beyond ‘humanitarian intervention’ (or ‘peace-keeping’). Third, the sustainability question arises from the NCA’s own work in the area under study. We will approach the question under four separate, albeit interrelated, categories: *partnership, peace and security, democracy, development*.

8.1 Partnership

The NCA as an organisation is passing through a process of transition whose ultimate goal is withdrawal from responsibilities in Mali, with Malian nationals assuming such responsibilities. That, in a nutshell, is what ‘partnership’ means – or is it? Partnership does *not* mean an end to emergency aid; it does *not* (and hopefully cannot) mean that, since the conditions of drought and famine which had given rise to the need for such aid in the region have anything but disappeared. Neither does partnership necessarily mean an end to the NCA’s concept of integrated development work: in theory, partnership is not supposed to mean that, at least. In practice, however, because of recent declining budgetary allocations from NCA headquarters for the agency’s work in Mali, partnership could harbour the danger of putting an end to integrated development work – of becoming a rationale for ‘aid fatigue’.

On the positive side, it could be argued that the partnership plan can be good for encouraging responsibility, empowering the people, breaking out of the ‘aid-dependency’ complex. Let us take an illustration from the field to show how development aid can end up creating dependency complex.

On a visit to PAREM projects outside Timbuktu, we spoke with a woman who had just returned together with her children from Mauritania; as a refugee there, she had acquired skills in knitting and sewing. Now that she was back, she complained, she had no way of apply-

ing that skill. Another ex-refugee pleaded that we help get the village some wells sunk for drinking water; she pointed at the near-by pool which she said was too polluted to use – but when asked by one of the Evaluation Team where she had lived before, and whether the village to which she was repatriated was different, she admitted it was the same. The next logical question (which was not asked) would have been: living so close to an area that obviously had a potential water resource only waiting to be tapped, would that village in the past not have gone ahead through community efforts to try to sink its own wells, rather than wait for help from outside?

However, weaning people from such a dependency complex cannot be done overnight.

Here we may recall the words with which a village chief addressed us. Referring to the cut-backs on NCA development work in the region, he concluded by saying: ‘I know when I was once thirsty, you gave me water. I know there has been a trend towards reducing the budget for NCA activities here, and that is what is preventing the organisation from functioning the way it used to. I know the NCA here no longer has the means for carrying on. But a man who is thirsty will continue to demand water to drink, even if he knows you cannot give.’

Because Mali has just gone through an agonising war from whose effects the people are yet to recover fully, it might be wise to consider deferring implementation of the NCA partnership plan for a few years, if one does not want to see the NCA achievements in the area unravelled. Northern Mali today needs at least the same level of external assistance as before the onset of the rebellion. Or, if it is decided that the transfer of responsibilities and authority should proceed as planned, that process should not be accompanied by a continuing reduction in the level of funding to the NCA’s local partner organisation. If the agency’s achievement in humanitarian and peace-making work is to be sustained, then all that should be considered at present is the format of partnership, not a scheme of complete withdrawal of Norwegian staff combined with declining financial support.

8.2 Peace and Security

The Evaluation Team returned from its fieldwork convinced that, while the task of peace-making has successfully ended, building the necessary support for sustaining that peace has scarcely begun. This is a vital task of great urgency: unless the success record on the peace-making front is followed by performance in the *peace-building* area, there is a very real potential that Mali may soon return to war.

That the peace in Mali is fragile is a reality which many of our respondents underlined repeatedly. Here let us turn to one of our series of unstructured interviewing sessions, with a village chief, at a meeting with other villagers on 1 March 1997. All were Tamashek, though a composite of 'light' and 'dark' skin, and men, women, and children. They were told to speak very freely about how their community might contribute to the consolidation of peace and security. We found the village chief's exposition particularly interesting because of its bearing on the NCA's past and present work as well as future project role. The village chief:

'Peace is good, security is desirable. But you cannot sustain peace and security if the necessary supports are not there. For example, many who fled the village during the war have just returned from Burkina. Their return was celebrated by the village, with the village chief himself donating four cows for the feast. But the refugees returned to discover that they have no work to perform, having lost everything they possessed. This, in our view, does not help the cause of peace. Returning refugees can easily turn into thieves and robbers. Why does the NCA decide to begin cut-backs in their support programme, at the very time they are badly needed – to distribute seeds, help with agriculture, loans, and so on? In my view, that decision is counter-productive to the cause of consolidating the peace. Maybe even more important, it could lead to some of the very good work the NCA has carried out being washed away over night.'

From that perspective, the sustainability question as applied to peace very much depends – even more so now than before – on the sustainability of the kind of humanitarian and developmental work that the NCA and other agencies have been carrying out.

8.3 Democracy

The Report has mentioned some of the recent activities of the Norwegian authorities in the peace-building area.

These include projects in support of democratisation and training for decentralisation, as well as contributions to the electoral assistance fund. There also exist possibilities for support to newly emergent civil society groups.

Support for the democratisation process is not simply for its own ends: it may also be a useful way of achieving the goals of development and even partnership. Successful decentralisation can serve as an important aid to development. It is now realised, for instance, that people at the grassroots best know what their developmental needs and priorities are, and how to work for them. Unfortunately because of the top-down approach of the past, the people have tended not to be involved in the formulation of projects ostensibly meant to address those developmental priorities and needs. Involvement in the peace-building tasks of democratisation and decentralisation is directed in part at changing this, by making a bottom-up approach to development and helping to prepare Malians towards accepting responsibility. For the NCA, this could also help foster the realisation of its objectives on 'partnership'.

8.4 Development

Throughout this Report we have emphasised the functionally *interdependent* nature of relationships among the key variables – particularly between poverty and conflict, and between peace and development. Not only a sizeable literature but also all the Malians whom we had the privilege of interviewing bear out the same: *poverty and conflict are linked*.

Any development strategy that aims at achieving sustainable peace, security and democracy must, therefore, focus on breaking the 'poverty-marginalisation-conflict' syndrome that has long plagued Mali. Is any progress being made by the Malian authorities here? What have been the effects of the current development strategy?

Asking such questions goes far beyond the scope of our mandate. We would suggest that the impact of adjustment should be a subject of future study, especially a detailed examination of the 'costs' and 'benefits' of adjustment. Until then, we remain sceptical about its benefits for the Malian peace-building project.

We conclude with the words of a village leader with whom we spoke one market-day in Gossi: '*Après la paix, c'est le développement*'.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

9.1 Conclusions and Lessons Learnt

This study has concerned the NCA as a non-governmental organisation with long experience of humanitarian relief and development aid work in Mali, and how the organisation could convert that experience into a resource for use in a new peace-making role. The process of *converting experience in humanitarian relief work and development assistance into a resource for conflict resolution work* did not come easy. It was attended with disagreements and conflicts in the organisation. It also had had its own risks and costs. But the Evaluation also showed that once the decision was taken for the organisation to be involved in conflict resolution work, the NCA was able to bring both the traditional humanitarian cum development work and the initiatives in the peace-making field into new harmony. That is our first major conclusion.

The second major conclusion follows from the first, and concerns *the reasons for the success of the NCA's peace-making role*. Basic here was *its unique and advantageous place in Malian society*. Malians perceived the NCA as a caring organisation: it stayed behind in Gourma when the others left and was unwavering in its commitment towards helping the poor and the needy, even in the most trying times and circumstances, long after other Western NGOs had pulled out. That the agency was based in the North where much of the intercommunity 'peace action' was, and where it could draw on clientele, networks, contacts, and support groups, was also crucial. Finally, there was the genuinely motivated thrust of NCA's humanitarian and development work, informed by such core values as compassion, justice and peace, as well as the sterling qualities of its top leadership.

Next comes the *ethnic* variable. It was clear that the major combatant formations involved in the Malian conflict were sufficiently differentiated in terms of ethno-regional base, recruitment, organisation, and leadership to warrant description as 'armed ethnic movements'. None of our respondents denied the existing differences among the major groups in terms of phenotype, territory, language, and cultural life-styles, if not also language. However, the 'ethnic' variable operated in ways more complex than those characterisations would suggest. Important issues might be described as

'ethnic', but they definitely also involved major political and economic considerations as well. We also noted how class elements, segmentalised economic functions or specialisations and different cultural life-styles were interlinked with 'a purely ethnic problem'. Above all, we must stress the manipulative uses to which ethnicity was subject in the hands of the elites on all sides of the conflict – including the alleged involvement of various governments in sponsoring the creation of counter-ethnic movements of their own, with a view to dividing the opposition forces. All of this points to a *system of complex and dynamic interrelationships of politics, economy, ethnicity, and class* involved in the Malian conflict.

The Evaluation's conclusion about the *role of religion* is among the most important, considering its place within our mandate. Religion was not a factor in the initial outbreak of the conflict, although it came to be significant in later efforts made by conflict parties to achieve peace and reconciliation. On the other hand, religion combined with humanitarianism was an important consideration for the initial intervention of the more evangelical and missionary NGOs with which NCA had a network of links. Yet it is contrary to the NCA mandate to mix evangelical activities with either humanitarian, development or peace-making work. How can we explain these apparent contradictions? How did religion become both a non-issue and an issue in the Malian case?

Mali is predominantly (90%) Muslim, while in the North all the dominant groups are Muslim. As we have noted, this cannot explain why Islam was not used by any of the dominant groups either in their war against the central government, or in their violence against one another, particularly that of the *Ganda Koi* against the Tuaregs and Arabs. Elsewhere – Afghanistan is one example – intra-Muslim sectarian conflicts have proven as catastrophic in their effects as those normally associated with the violence between, say, Islam and Christianity. In Mali, there were no such intra-Muslim conflicts – why?

We feel this has to do with the *unique configuration of Malian society regarding the factor of religion*, as described in some detail in section 5.3. above. This configuration fosters moderation in the attitudes of the gen-

eral population and works against religious fundamentalism. As noted, it has also meant that conflict group-leaders from local to national level could unite on religious issues, welcoming a Christian peace-maker like Kåre Lode, and even reciting together passages from both the Bible and the Koran.

Our fifth conclusion concerns the *personal qualities of the key person* in charge of the NCA Malian peace project. Kåre Lode was seen as symbolising the best qualities of the NCA and its leadership: respondents stressed his abilities in generating confidence, trust, and friendship; his humility, commitment, moral integrity, and empathy, and above all his belief in the innate goodness of man and woman. But they also emphasised that the reason it was easy to work with him lay in the convergence between the nature of NCA as a value organisation, with its core ethical values, and the qualities of its leadership, as exemplified by Kåre Lode. In turn, that raised for us an interesting theoretical question about the relationship between key actor and organisational base, between individual predispositions of the NCA leadership from past to present and the organisational imperatives cum inputs. Our conclusion is that the *right combination* of individual leadership attributes with an appropriate organisational milieu or support base was required to be able to produce the NCA's successful intervention in the Malian process.

Sixth, Lode's contributions (and behind him, the NCA's) were not made in isolation but as *part of an on-going process, involving many local actors and other external agencies*. Lode has characterised his own role as merely that of lubricating 'oil in the machinery' of the intercommunity peace meetings. The NCA itself was part of a complex of international development partnerships as well as networks, including inter-governmental, governmental, and non-governmental, implicated in the Malian peace process. Links forged with these organisations, agencies, and bodies generally proved beneficial to the NCA's work in Mali.

One of our Malian interviewees, the head of a major national NGO, said that the Malian conflict was 'ripe for resolution'. He spoke of 'war-weariness' and 'the will to peace on the part of Malians themselves' being the deciding factor in 'the breaking out of peace'. On this we agree, although we would add that more than sheer 'war-weariness' or the original 'will to peace' will be needed to sustain that peace.

This ties in with another conclusion: peace was made possible by *the role played by Malians themselves*, in initiating the various intercommunity meetings, many of which took place before Kåre Lode came on the scene. We could also document the strong and decisive participation of Malians in various humanitarian and peace-making activities. Placing the NCA's contributions within this wider context is important not only for resolving the issue about 'ownership of the peace process and product', but also for addressing the vital question of the *sustainability* of that peace.

Our next conclusion concerns *transitions*. The transition from war to peace, from authoritarian breakdowns to democratic openings, and from conflict to the post-conflict phase tends to produce social factors and forces which, unless promptly addressed, could prove destabilising to the nascent political order. We have noted the exacerbating problems associated with the land question and conflict between nomads and sedentaries, though both of these substantially carried over from the pre-war period. The tensions between democratisation, deconcentration and decentralisation have arisen from the changes associated with the recent transition from military-authoritarian breakdowns to new democratic openings, and along with those changes the demands for regional autonomy and local self-governance. The conflict between structural adjustment and peace-building is a consequence of both the change from a 'command' to a more liberal market-oriented economy, and the fact that the Malian post-conflict government is under pressure to undertake IMF/World Bank-imposed adjustment-style reforms even as it attends to the programmes of post-war reconstruction. The other key issues in the Malian transition process are a consequence of the transition from war to peace: problems of disarmament, demobilisation, and reinsertion of ex-combatants; repatriation and resettlement of ex-refugees, the issue of abandoned properties and compensation; surplus weapons and banditry; and the transitional inter-elite schemes of power-sharing versus the demands for a more inclusionary system of participations. These could prove crucial issues for the stability, reconciliation, and sustainable development of Mali.

Finally, there is the question of *sustainability of the peace* in Mali. Peace is still fragile; there is need to build up supports to sustain it. Peace-building is as serious a challenge as was peace-making. NCA plans for withdrawal and 'partnership', antedating the recent war, deserve reconsideration, not least with respect to

timing. If Northern Mali is to break out of the 'poverty-marginalisation-conflict syndrome', more assistance is needed – not less.

9.2 Recommendations

Minimising the organisational risks of involvement

Risks are an inevitable part of any transition from humanitarian and development work to conflict resolution, although they may vary in terms of scale and intensity. The NCA experienced this in Mali. Here our only recommendation is that, once the decision has been taken to be involved, every effort must be made to minimise the possible negative consequences of involvement in peace and reconciliation work for such an aid agency.

Religion remains a sensitive matter

That the NCA's religious foundation has proved helpful for, rather than impeded, the agency's humanitarian and peace-making efforts in Mali does not mean that one may expect similarly favourable effects in other conflict-ridden Muslim societies. It is the unique combination of factors in the configuration of Malian society regarding religion, ethnopolitical make-up, and history that largely explains that positive contribution of religion to NCA work here. In most places, religion remains a highly sensitive issue; religious differences in deeply divided society, including sectarian differences, can be a source of acute conflicts. For these reasons, we consider it important that the 'cross-religious' mandate of NCA be adhered to; and for the agency's humanitarian, development or peace-making role not to be mixed with evangelical activities.

Role of key actor

The Malian case has highlighted the difference and contributions a key and devoted actor could make to a given humanitarian turned peace-making venture. Herein lies a problem, since one individual's particular style and attributes may not necessarily be replicable. Neither are conditions elsewhere in the future going to be the same as those of Northern Mali that had proved so suitable for Kåre Lode's operations. This was what the study meant when it talked about the *right combination* of individual leadership attributes, an appropriate operational milieu and organisational support being required for producing the kind of successful intervention NCA mounted in the Malian peace process.

Root causes and pressures of conflict

The distinction between preconditions and precipitants of conflicts, and between structural-cum-predispositional factors defining that conflict situation and its set of accelerators or triggers, carries important implications for the *strategy of conflict management, resolution or even prevention*. One is that working to counteract sources of conflict at the structural-cum-predispositional level as defined in the Report is a more difficult, much slower, and less easily attainable task, at least in the short run. Moreover, structural background variables can at best indicate that violent conflict is possible, but cannot explain its actual occurrence. Explanation for the latter must be sought in the more dynamic factors and forces, in those precipitants and accelerators, particularly the stresses of environmental cum demographic insecurity, growing impoverishment from the debt and adjustment burden, and demands for empowerment, analysed in the study. By extension, policy and action aimed at conflict prevention, management, and resolution will benefit from concentrating efforts at the precipitant level. Moreover, most of the urgent danger-signals or triggering factors and forces broadly defined lie in this area. Our respondents were right in seeing the root of the Malian conflict in terms of *development* – including the conditions of rising poverty, conflict over fast-diminishing public resources, and inadequacy/inequality of opportunity and access to state power and the control over developmental and budgetary resources. We therefore recommend that emphasis be placed on meeting basic *human security* needs such as jobs, education, income, food, health and personal safety for all groups if long-term stability is to be achieved.

Follow-up action on peace

The intercommunity peace meetings will need to be reactivated, and new attention and energy must be directed towards solving the many outstanding issues still plaguing intercommunity relations particularly in the North. The land question could be one area for concentrating such follow-up action. The land question has undoubted salience. However, it has also come to be entangled with two other related issues: *revendication*, and the nomads versus sedentaries conflict. The three are now inseparably linked and are best taken up together, again relying on the strengths of Mali's indigenous conflict-resolution capacity.

Massive public investments versus 'conditionality'

The situation of Northern Mali calls for massive rather than reduced state investment assisted by the international community. The international community in general, and the two leading international lending agencies the IMF and World Bank in particular, need to reconsider the logic of the macro-economic prescriptions in their application to this and other war-torn societies. Such countries' circumstances and the very fragility of their stability, peace and security warrant the cases being considered 'beyond the conditionality mode'. The Norwegian authorities, along with other major donor countries, should actively champion the Malian case for *relief from undue international monetarist pressures*. We have in mind the kind of help recently rendered to Mozambique by donor countries along with the World Bank and against suffocating monetarist strictures, forcing the IMF to give way on its insistence on cut-backs in spending for war-damage repair in that country. The Norwegian authorities could go a step further by championing the Malian case for sizeable *debt relief*. Mali, in addition to being a war-torn society with acute reconstruction needs, also numbers among sub-Saharan Africa's most severely indebted low-income group of countries, with a debt burden that is clearly 'unsustainable'.

Reconciliation as a slow process

Unlike peace-keeping and peace-making operations, peace-building includes the slower processes of psycho-social reconstruction and preparation of ex-warring individuals and groups for reconstruction and forgiveness. Reconciliation cannot be accomplished within a span of, say, five years. Here there is a need for decisive government action to (1) address the initial root causes of conflicts, (2) undertake war-damage repair, and (3) redress or compensate for the sense of deprivation, injustice, injury or loss suffered in the war. Still, the major point concerns the necessarily slow nature of the process, and this leads naturally to our next recommendation.

Dangers of over-hasty external withdrawal

The most recent developments in Cambodia are a lesson about what may result from over-hasty external withdrawal from a fragile post-conflict transition scene. This is not an auspicious time for implementing the partnership plan. We would suggest a format similar to the relationship said to exist between ACORD Mali and ACORD International. As noted, the NCA is currently re-evaluating this issue.

Training for peace-building

If peace-building is to become a serious part of the development strategy, Malians will need to be trained in techniques for dealing with their own local intercommunity disputes. There is now a 30-year international tradition of experience, research, and training in this area. In view of the increased roles and responsibilities that the NCA has come to assume in helping with peace and reconciliation work in war-torn societies, it would be natural for the Norwegian authorities to support training for peace-building, as a logically necessary and inevitable consequence of the rising interests and cases about involvement in war-to-peace transitions and processes.

Building up knowledge in the area

Finally, all this points towards the need to encourage *more research* work on the topics of peace and reconciliation processes in conflict-torn societies, the role of NGOs in facilitating such processes, and their utility for projecting what has come to be called the 'Norwegian model'. The need is there – the question is the will to finance more work on a pro-active basis. Also the issue of partnership and planned withdrawal needs to be studied and thought through, and any contradictions resolved, so as to allow the benefits of Norwegian involvement in humanitarian and peace-making work around the globe to be fully realised.

NOTES

- 1 UNDP *Human Development Report* 1996; Economic Intelligence Unit 1995. See *the Courier* September/October 1996, p.21.
- 2 It is ranked as No. 172 of 174 on UNDP's Human development index (HDI).
- 3 In 1992, GNP per capita was stated as USD 310.
- 4 Cotton created 40% of the export income in 1993.
- 5 The export of gold amounted to USD 59 mill. in 1994
- 6 See List of Acronyms for this and other names and titles.
- 7 In 1997 what used to be Mali's 7th region was split in two, carving out the new region of Kidal from Gao. These, plus Timbuktu brought the number of regions now making up the North to three. The decentralisation was partly in accordance with one of the negotiated agreements in the National Pact between the rebel movements and Malian authorities. The five remaining other regions are Mopi, Segon, Sikasso, Koulikoro and Kaynes with Bamako given the status of a semi federal region. These are all in the South.
- 8 The Malian Airforce is equipped with 16 Soviet-built MiG-fighter planes.
- 9 In Mali, Tuaregs are often referred to by the term they use to refer to themselves: Kel-Tamasheq – those who speak Tamasheq.
- 10 *Echinochola stagnina*, a water plant that also grows without being cultivated. Rights to this resource has been among the most contested between groups depending in part on the Niger river, such as nomads and cultivators. Such conflicts come out again when the power balance between groups changes, as it did during the last part of the Tuareg rebellion in the area (1994–95).
- 11 In the *cercle* of Gourma Rharous, the migration rate around 1990 was about 30%.
- 12 Such a view is also expressed in written texts, among others in Goutier (1996, p. 15) and Poulton and Ag Yousouf 1997, chapter 1.
- 13 *World Factbook* 1996, p. 266.
- 14 Work on transforming these oral African languages into written languages, and on teaching children how to read and write in their own language, has started in Mali.
- 15 Slavery was abolished in Mali by the French in 1905, but a social organisation based on a caste-like division of labour, as well as a stigma attached to belonging to low strata, persists.
- 16 Coulibaly, Cheibane & Robin Poulton (1997), 'Mobilization de la Sociwété Civile', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Supplément Mali 1997.
- 17 At OXFAM Mali, Bamako; interview on 27 February 1997.
- 18 Much of the information here is summarised from Gunnvor Berge, 1993, p. 15; Alassance ag Mohamed, Cheibane Coulibaly & Gaoussou Drabo, 1995, pp. 65 ff.
- 19 Fatoumata Cisse, NCA Chef du Bureau, Bamako, interviewed 26 February 1997.
- 20 From the introduction to an IDS Discussion Paper 'Linking Relief and Development', p.2 in Buchanan-Smith & Maxell, 1994.
- 21 Hence the emphasis in the PRIO-based research project 'disarming ethnic guerrillas' on Africa.
- 22 It is important not to equate *all* of the NCA's peace-making activities with those of Kâre Lode. During the initial period, the Norwegian NCA headquarters participated in several international meetings who put the rebellion in Mali on the agenda. They contacted both the EU and MFA for funding to do more peace-related work. In Mali, the Norwegian director, together with representatives from NCA headquarters, had talks with the network which their aid programmes had allowed them to establish on both sides of the conflict: Zahaby (FIAA), ZELDAN (FPLA) and Ag Erlaf (Minister in the government, former MPA).
- 23 NCA Global Long Term Plan 1995–1999, p.5
- 24 NCA Global Long Term Plan 1995–1999, p.4
- 25 NCA: Toward the Year 2000, p.16.
- 26 NCA Global Long Term Plan 1995–1999, p.8
- 27 This list is from the NCA application for further funding 1995–1997 to NORAD.
- 28 These paragraphs are based on information from Senior Programme Officer at NCA, Riborg Knutsen, 03.06.1997.
- 29 This list is from NCA's application for funding for 1997 from NORAD
- 30 Both incidents caused formal reactions by Norwegian authorities to their Malian counterparts.
- 31 We owe this distinction to Njell Lofthus, Regional Director for West Africa Programmes, NCA Headquarters, in an interview, of 5 February 1997 in Oslo.
- 32 Kâre Lode has written an informative booklet in which he presents and analyses the process and the Intercommunity meetings which he helped to organise: *Synthèse des Rencontres Intercommunautaires du Nord du Mali (d'Août 1995 à Mars 1996)* Stavanger: Misjonshøgskolens Forlag, 1996 (here at p.12). Much of the following is built on this booklet. See also his extended report, *Civil Society Takes Responsibility: Popular Involvement in the Peace Process in Mali*. PRIO Report 5/97, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, October 1997, as well as his forthcoming article, 'The Peace Process in Mali', *Security Dialogue*, vol. 28, no. 4, December 1997.
- 33 One EMA was organised in each of the three northern regions from 17 August 1993, to function as local administrative and technical support units instead of the departed governmental representatives. Among their central tasks was to organise temporary transitional bodies, CTAs (*Collèges Transitoires d'Arrondissements*) to take care of the transition from the old administrative organisation to elected municipal bodies).
- 34 His position parallels that of a minister, and the Commissariate reports directly to the Malian President.
- 35 According to *World Refugee Survey 1995*, Washington, DC: The US Committee for Refugees, 1995, p. 66.
- 36 Interview in Timbuktu, 8 March 1997.
- 37 Interview, with Fraction Ifoghas, with some 27 men and 5 women present, in a village meeting at Tin Tahadtin, near Gossi, 1 March 1997.
- 38 Interview at a village meeting, with Head of the Village Mahamar Alhanafi also present, Gourma Rharous, 5 March 1997

- 39 It is, however, unclear in the budget from 1996 whether this programme is financed separately from the peace and reconciliation program.
- 40 His report from 19.04.1996.
- 41 Letter to the MFA 23.10.1995.
- 42 See papers from Kjell Harald Dalen, Regional Adviser on Africa in MFA.
- 43 See NCA's regional year-plan for West Africa 1996, p.4.
- 44 Interview with Kjell Harald Dalen in the MFA.
- 45 This overview is from the NCA application to MFA 13.06.1995, and corresponds to what they actually were granted.
- 46 For details, see NCA's Long-Term Plan for West Africa (LTPWA) 1995–99, on which the following presentation is based.
- 47 See Kåre Lode's report of 29.04. 1996, p.2.
- 48 For further details see: *Mali Repatriation: Update for 1997 Appeal*. Prepared by BO Bamako, February 1997.
- 49 This is information from Riborg Knutsen 18.02.1997.
- 50 All the information in this paragraph is from Tore Rose (1997) *West Africa Workshop: The Role of the United Nations and the International Community in Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building: The Case of the 'Tuareg Rebellion' in Mali*. Paper presented at the European Conference on Conflict Prevention, Amsterdam, 27–28 February, 1997.
- 51 This is information from the interview with Harald Dalen in the Foreign Ministry, 21.02.1997.
- 52 NCA: *Towards the Year 2000*, November 1991, p.3.
- 53 Regional long-term plan for West-Africa 1995–1999, p.8
- 54 See NCA Region year-plan for West Africa 1996, pp.6–7.
- 55 See NCA Region year-plan for West Africa 1996, p.11.
- 56 This is information from Riborg Knutsen 18.02.1997.
- 57 See *Kirken's Nødhjelp 1995*, p.5.
- 58 Goutier, 'Mali: An Omnipresent sense of History', 1996
- 59 Information obtained from Stephane Rostiaux, *chef d'équipe*, PAREM Timbuktu, in an interview, 7 March 1997.
- 60 This brief section on the National Pact draws on insights of Zeidane ag Sidalamine, now Councillor with the Com-misariat of the North, was a former leading member of FPLA. Zeidan was also the rapporteur in the final peace-making meeting that resulted in the signing of the National Pact. He bared out his thoughts on the peace-settlement and conditions for sustaining it in the interview granted us on 26 February 1996 in the office of *I. adjoint au Commissaire au Nord*, Aghatan ag Alhassane, who also sat in.
- 61 Interview in Oslo, 5 February 1997.
- 62 Interview at NCA Headquarters, Oslo, 5 February 1997.
- 63 Here we should add that these disagreements were not the reason why Kåre Lode sought other than Norwegian support for the peace-support project. It was decided not to hoist the Norwegian flag on the premises of the office he set up as base of operations, nor to use any of the NCA facilities, including the agency emblem or vehicles. This decision was apparently a mutual one, informed by the need not to jeopardise the project.
- 64 What Lode did point out – interviewed in Oslo on 10 February 1997 – was that he felt the basic differences centred on what to emphasise as a development strategy – whether people and development from below, or at the political elite level with a top-down approach.
- 65 In other words, the NCA was fortunate in having Lode to lead the initiative at the time he did, just as Lode was fortunate in carrying the NCA mantle. In the words of the present NCA Mali Resident Representative, Mons Sydness: 'Kåre Lode could not have done what he did without being the ex-Director of the NCA. He could not have done what he did if he had not received the support and organisational input from NCA. He could not have done what he did without being Kåre Lode himself.' (interview in Gossi, 3 March 1997)
- 66 As we were able to infer from some of the responses to our interview with the Malian NCA executive based in Gossi.
- 67 So admitted Anne Hege Simonsen, in our interview, Oslo, 13 February 1997.
- 68 Dr Hamada Maiga, interview at Gao, 4 March 1997.
- 69 Interview in Gossi, 3 March 1997.
- 70 Interview at PAREM, Gao, 3 March 1997.
- 71 The following analysis leans heavily on the insights of Judy Becher, the Head of the UNHCR sub-office covering Timbuktu, Mopti and Segou, whom we interviewed her Timbuktu office, 8 March 1997. Her previous UNHCR assignment was in Mozambique.
- 72 The Evaluation Team was in Mali on the bonfire's first anniversary.
- 73 Shortly before the Evaluation Team arrived in Mali, the central military munitions depot located not far from the capital was rocked by a huge explosion that led to evacuation of the people living in the area. The cause of the explosion has not yet been determined. At this same depot, in 1996 there had been an organised theft of arms by a band of ex-combatants after a break-in.
- 74 Interview at Timbuktu, 8 March 1997.
- 75 The Malian experience here bears out the findings from other comparative cases regarding the inherent inadequacy of inter-elite arrangements of power-sharing and accommodation for addressing problems of post-conflict states.
- 76 Dr Hamada Maiga, interview in Gao, 4 March 1997.
- 77 Interview, in the village of Rharous, with the village chief presiding, 5 March 1997.
- 78 *Africa Confidential* (London), 38(9), 25 April 1997, pp.6–7.
- 79 Interview, in Bamako, 26 February 1997.
- 80 We are grateful to Oumar Hamida Maiga, of *Equipe Mobile d'Appui*, Gao, for this insight, from interview conducted on 4 March 1997.
- 81 Interview with Anne Hege Simonsen, lecturer at the school of journalism, Oslo, 13 February 1997. She had visited Mali as a journalist a couple of times, she told us, but was not impressed with NCA's knowledge of the people and the area, and added that 'the position taken by the NCA-Gossi vis-a-vis NCA-Bamako made all the officials alike vulnerable since the NCA in Northern Mali was perceived as pro-Tuareg.'
- 82 According to the London-based Debt Crisis Network (DCN) sources.

- 83 'Economic Rebuilding: What Role for the State', *WSP Update*, no. 4, March 1997, p.7.
- 84 Interviewed in Bamako, 27 February 1997; and [Diarra] in Gao, 4 March 1997.
- 85 See *Evaluation of Development Assistance: Handbook for Evaluators and Managers* (MFA, 1993).

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List of Acronyms

ACORD	Association de Coopération de Recherche pour le Développement	MFA	Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
ACT	Assemblée Chrétienne au Tchad	MFUA	Movements and United Fronts of Azwad
ADEMA	Alliance pour la Démocratie au Mali	MNFPUN	Movement National de Femmes pour la Sauvegarde de la Paix et de l'Unité National
ARLA	l'Armée Révolutionnaire de Libération de l'Azaouad	MPA	Mouvement Populaire de l'Azaouad
CEAO	Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest	MPMGK	Mouvement Patriotique Malien Gada-Koy
CENI	Commission Electoral Nationale de Indépendance	NCA	Norwegian Church Aid (Kirkens nødhjelp)
CILSS	Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
CLDE	Comité Locale de Développement	NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development and Cooperation
CNID	Comité National d'Initiative Démocratique	OXFAM	British-based development and relief agency
CNPSDS	Coordination Nationale du Programme de Solidarité pour le Développement au Sahel	PAREM	Programme d'Appui à la Réinsertion Socioéconomique des ex-Combatantes du Nord-Mali
CTA	Collège Transitoire d'Arrondissement	PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
ECOWAS	Communauté Economique des Etats de L'Afrique de L'Ouest.	PSDS	Programme de Solidarité pour le Développement au Sahel
EEMET	Network of Evangelical Churches in Chad	PURTS	Programme Urgent Repas
EFLT	Eglise Fraternelle Luthérienne au Tchad	SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
EMA	Mobile Support Teams	SSE	Sahel, Sudan, Ethiopia
EU	European Union	TOR	Terms of Reference
FAR-Nord	Fonds d'Aide pour la Réconciliation et la Consolidation de la Paix dans le Nord-Mali	UEMOA	Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine
FIAA	le Front Islamique Arab de Azaouad	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
FPLA	le Front Populaire pour la Libération de l'Azaouad	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
IMF	International Monetary Fund	UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
INADES	Institut African pour le Développement Economique et Social	WCC	World Council of Churches
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisations	WFP	World Food Programme
LWF	Lutheran World Foundation	WSP	War-Torn Societies Project

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