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United Nations

Mali

Analysis of conflicts over natural resources

Summary



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Introduction

This study, carried out in Mali, is part of the implementation of the regional project entitled “*Renforcer la résilience des populations pastorales et agropastorales transfrontalières dans les zones prioritaires du Sahel*” (“Strengthening the resilience of cross-border pastoral and agropastoral populations in priority areas of the Sahel”).¹ Initiated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), it aims to contribute to the resilience of cross-border pastoral and agropastoral populations in priority areas in the Sahel (defined by the G5 Sahel) to prevent and mitigate the impact of agro-climate and security risks on food security through innovative and structuring activities.²

In general, the research carried out by the team at the local level aimed to highlight the issues that would allow to understand the dynamics of the conflicts over natural resources and to assess the legitimacy and effectiveness of the different types of mechanisms for managing these conflicts in Mali, mainly in the three regions of the project intervention area (Mopti, Gao and Menaka).

Mali is one of the poorest countries in West Africa. Its gross national product per capita is estimated at USD 671, ranking 182nd on the 2018 Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme. In 2015, its population was estimated at 18.14 million, with a density of 12.8 inhabitants per km². Its population is young, with a large percentage (54.9 percent) living in rural areas. The agriculture sector is the main employer of the active population, at 72.9 percent.

Due to the economic dominance of the primary sector, Mali is extremely dependent on natural resources and also vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. In addition, the deterioration of ecosystems has strongly affected rural populations, resulting in a very poor performance in environmental governance. Gender inequalities are present at all social levels and help create or exacerbate tensions between different social groups. In addition to the marked social tensions, the security situation in Mali is precarious due to the presence of non-state armed groups, which, since 2012, have paralyzed economic activities in the north of the country. It should also be noted that insecurity has gained ground in the Inner Delta (Mopti region).

Based on this complex situation, the study made it possible to take stock of the current situation regarding conflicts over natural resources in the project intervention area. It also carried out an accurate analysis of the conflict situation, which made it possible to establish a framework of action. This framework incorporates proposals to improve the effectiveness of conflict prevention mechanisms, recommendations for

¹ This project is implemented as part of the FAO-European Union Partnership Programme, Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC).

² Project titled “*Renforcer la résilience des populations pastorales et agropastorales transfrontalières dans les zones prioritaires du Sahel*” implemented by FAO with the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger.

the design and implementation of projects integrating this issue, as well as proposals related to the structure and content of a training and learning module on conflict prevention.

This report summarizes the main findings of the study conducted in Mali. After a recapitulation of the methodological guidelines for the research approach, this summary emphasizes the salient elements of the analysis. These include the current conflict situation, the typology, causes and drivers of conflicts, the mapping of stakeholders, and the impacts and strategies of conflict management. Finally, the recommendations that emerged from the study will be presented as well as those aimed to better take into account conflict situations in the project results framework.

Methodology of the study

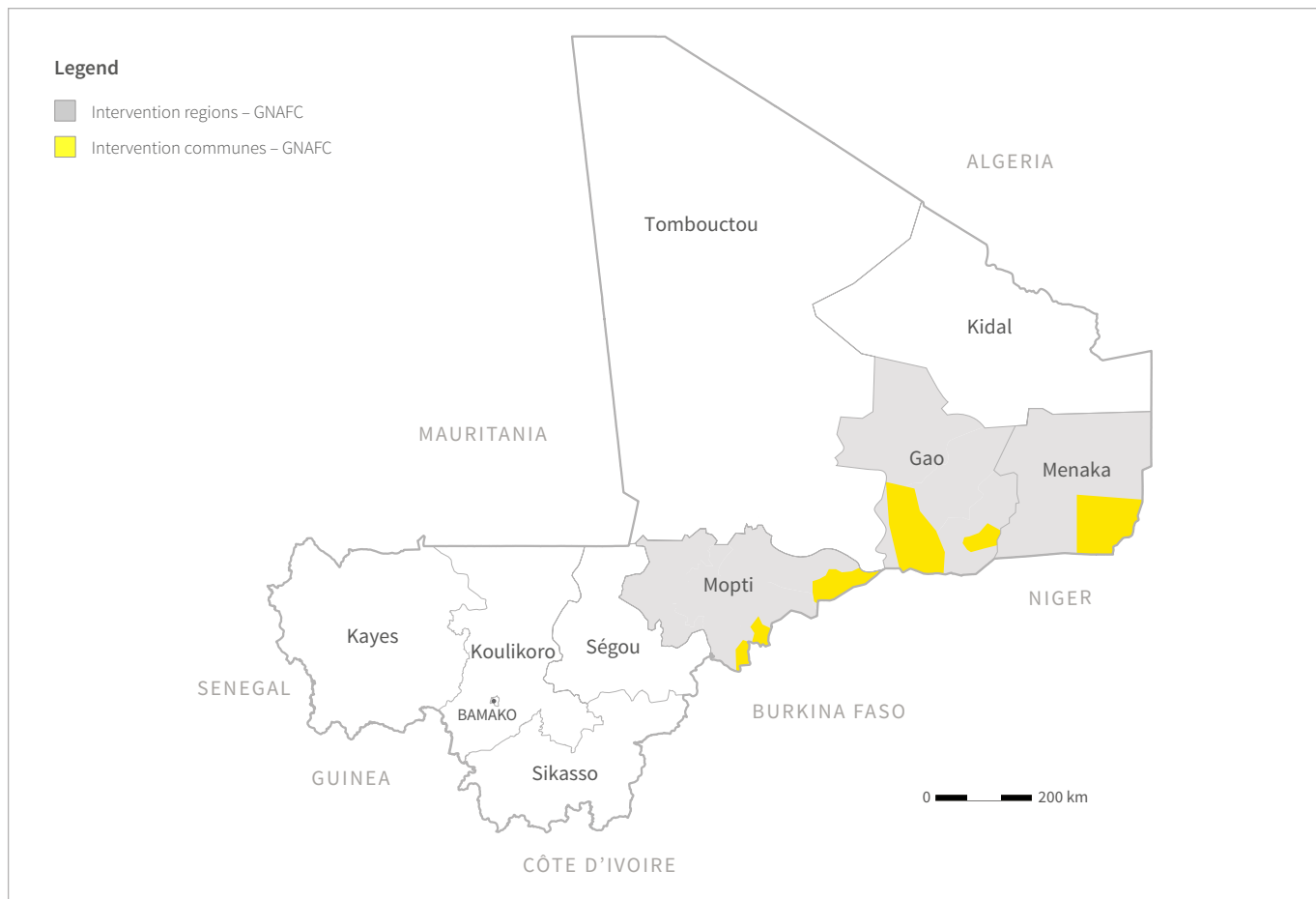
The specific objectives of the research were to: (i) take stock of the available knowledge on conflicts over natural resources (typology, structural causes, drivers, consequences, frequency linked to underlying conflict dynamics, mapping of stakeholders, and typology and effectiveness of conflict prevention and management mechanisms); (ii) set up focus groups with key informants in the project intervention area in order to have a contextualized understanding of conflicts, both related or not related to natural resources, as well as collect useful information and data to support, adjust or finetune the findings and analyses that emerged from the documentary review; and (iii) facilitate knowledge sharing within the small working group in order to better understand what is known about conflicts, both related and not related to natural resources.

Taking these objectives into consideration, the implementation of the study relied on the coordination of the project team under the auspices of the ministry responsible for the livestock sector. A national consultant was recruited to support the small working group set up for the needs of the mission.

Regarding representativeness, the study focused on a sample of nine communes spread over three regions: Baye, Mondoro and Koro for Mopti region; Tessit, N'Tillit and Tin-Hamma for Gao region; and Alata, Tamalet and Inchinanane for Menaka region.

Regarding the research, the approach adopted was based on a participatory, analytical, retrospective and prospective approach, organized into seven stages: (i) a review of the literature relating to practices of managing conflicts over natural resources and the security crisis; (ii) the organization of focus groups with key informants in the project intervention area; (iii) the preparation of a report presenting available knowledge on conflicts, aimed to inform the discussions and feedback of the small working group; (iv) facilitation of knowledge sharing within the small working group; (v) formulation of the results of the working group's discussions and the preparation of the consolidated conflict analysis report, in particular integrating the elements from the documentary analysis and the results of the limited surveys; (vi) set-up of a national workshop to present the results and draft a meeting report; and (vii) finalization of the national conflict analysis report.

Figure 1. “Strengthening the resilience of cross-border pastoral and agropastoral populations in priority areas of the Sahel” project intervention areas



Source: FAO. 2020. Internal project document.

The conflict situation

Historically, there have always been various conflicts in Mali. Indeed, disputes as well as social and political tension that degenerated into open conflicts are part of the challenge of living together in a social universe marked by its complexity and by the diversity of its actors.

However, research carried out in the communes concerned reveals that there are three major types of conflicts: conflicts over natural resources; conflicts over state control and governance; and conflicts arising from the prevailing situation of insecurity in the country.

The natural resources are extremely diverse and include renewable and non-renewable resources, such as minerals, oil and gas, land, forests, marine resources, water, and many others. This study mainly examines the conflicts over the agrosilvopastoral resources.

Most conflicts over natural resources are part of the dialectic of interactions between: the individual and his/her environment; communities, populations and mode of governance; and the authorities and citizens. It is precisely for this reason that conflicts over natural resources involve stakeholders, at numerous times, characterized by their difference in sensitivity and perception of the issues.

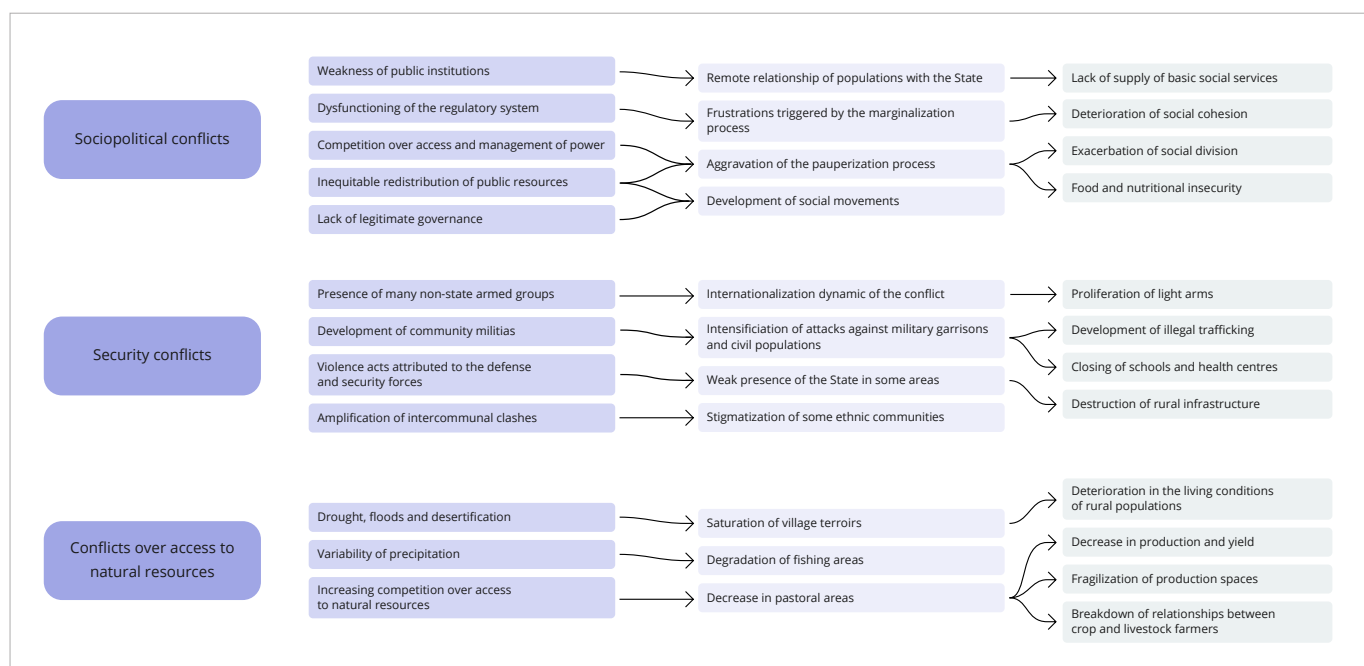
With respect to security, Mali was the focus of the attention of the international community in 2012, with the armed insurgency led by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad. The rise of non-state armed groups in the north, such as Ansar Dine, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, has helped exacerbate instability. The conflict escalated to such an extent that the Government and ECOWAS demanded a foreign military intervention ("Operation Serval").

This crisis is the result of the combination of internal factors (Tuareg irredentism and internal problems within state public institutions) and external factors (the regional environment). This created a feeling of reciprocal mistrust between the communities and the Malian Defence and Security Forces, reinforced identity politics, and led to the escalation of inter-community conflicts in the northern and central areas of the country. Moreover, this crisis has led to the closure of hundreds of schools and health centres, and the almost complete absence of the public administration outside the regional capitals.

Typology, causes and drivers of conflicts

The classification of conflicts proposed by the study distinguishes three main categories: (i) conflicts related to production systems and the exploitation of natural resources; (ii) conflicts related to socio-political factors and governance; and (iii) conflicts related to the national security situation. However, irrespective of the type chosen, these interrelated conflicts are characterized by their frequency, intensity, location, geographic distribution, and by the social groups involved. These conflicts can be implicit or explicit, structural or cyclical, and transferable or not transferable from conflict to non-conflict areas. Finally, they can become mitigated, aggravated or stabilized.

Figure 2. Overlapping factors of conflict



Conflicts over natural resources affect production systems and the management and exploitation of the natural resources. These conflicts, which are cyclical and the most numerous, include, *inter alia*: land conflicts over the control, management and use of agricultural areas; conflicts over pastoral land (e.g. exploitation of bourgou pastures and pastures in the Delta) and conflicts over fisheries management.

Conflicts linked to socio-cultural development are caused by problems related to leadership or chieftaincy, modalities of cohabitation in society, religious beliefs, youth unemployment and other forms of frustration. At the socio-cultural level, the development of certain conflicts could be approached from the perspective of generational conflict or of the breaking of the social contract between the social cadets (referring to young single men and women) and the elders.

Finally, conflicts related to the country's security situation take place during a security crisis or in the post-crisis period. Essentially, they are due to various causes: clashes between regular forces and non-state armed

groups, residual banditry, inter-communal clashes, clashes between armed groups and terrorism. Indeed, there are many reasons for people to become involved in conflicts, for example, land use (mentioned by 25.2 percent of household respondents of the survey), access to water (22.6 percent), and other causes linked to terrorism, religious extremism, intra- and inter-community conflicts and common crimes (20.4 percent).

However, in general, the analysis of the causes of conflicts shows that they are essentially structural. They are also correlated with a number of factors, the most important of which are as follows:

- **The configuration of the Malian territory and ecological fragility.** Mali's physical environment is very heterogeneous. The study notes the juxtaposition of Saharan, Sahelian and Sudanese areas with different climates and ecosystems. Mali is a vast territory, much of which in the north is desert, which makes the populations of these areas highly vulnerable to poverty. In the south, the concentration of the populations and the diversification of activities in response to economic shocks and the effects of climate change significantly reduce the production and exploitation areas, which are highly dependent on the natural resources. This results in an ecological fragility of the Malian territory characterized by cycles of drought and a drastic reduction in grazing areas due to the expansion of cultivated areas, which leads to an escalation of conflicts between crop and livestock farmers.
- **Climate change.** The regions concerned are constantly exposed to the effects of climate change such as droughts, floods, strong winds and strong variations in temperature, which weaken production systems and create conditions conducive to the proliferation of diseases and epizootics. In addition, there are crop predators that make populations more vulnerable to recurrent food and nutrition crises while increasing their level of poverty.
- **The poor land governance system.** In the project intervention area, land management is based on the overlapping of customary law and substantive law. Inequity in access to natural resources gives rise to conflict over the mode of land governance promoted by the State. This situation is worsened by imbalances related to poor development, international geostrategic issues, the coveting of natural and mineral resources, as well as cross-border threats arising from terrorism and drug trafficking³.
- **Price volatility.** This stems from poor inventory management, and fluctuating and soaring prices leading to reduced food consumption. Faced with this situation, vulnerable households adopt a strategy of indebtedness and decapitalization (sale of goods such as livestock and cereals), whose impacts are aggravated by the destabilization of traditional mechanisms of mutual aid and solidarity.

³ Data from the *United Nations Capital Development Fund and the Government of Mali Cooperation Framework Report* (2014).

- **Food insecurity and poverty.** The populations' vulnerability to agro-climate crises is aggravated by food insecurity, which is one of the main manifestations of poverty in these regions. Indeed, in 2010, the incidence of poverty,⁴ both the cause and consequence of conflicts, affected on average 43.6 percent of the population (51 percent in rural areas and 31 percent in urban areas). In monetary terms, and by socio-economic group, farmers are the most indigent (a 57 percent poverty rate) and contribute to the country's poverty, with an incidence of poverty of 81 percent, a depth of poverty of 85 percent, and a severity of poverty of 86 percent.⁵
- **Social and gender inequalities.** These inequalities arise from the failure to take into account the needs of women, youth and the socially handicapped in the mechanisms for exploiting the natural resources and for preventing and managing conflicts. The challenges faced by these social categories in terms of ownership of productive assets, particularly in access to land, are aggravated by their weak consideration in conflict management and prevention mechanisms.
- **The negative externalities of mining.** Mining is known as one of the causes of environmental degradation, resulting in massive pollution that destroys the livelihoods of local people. This pollution is one of the factors of pauperization and partly feeds the grievances of certain armed movements. The difficult living conditions of most of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta region have been among the determining factors that have contributed to recurring tensions since the end of the 1990s.
- **Frustrations arising from the lack of social integration.** The populations of the northern areas feel that they have been abandoned to their fate, believing that the state cares little about the development of their territory, which has little potential. These feelings of frustration are also aroused by socio-cultural constraints arising from social hierarchies, as well as by the marginalization of certain classes and categories of the population. The social order is increasingly challenged by the aspirations of youth and women to free themselves from traditional, oppressive values and by a desire to promote a more equitable sharing of the natural resources. This situation is reflected in increased tensions between the oldest and the youngest, prominent families and socially dominated groups, and local actors and the national state, etc.
- **Challenges in monitoring the territory and managing post-crisis situations.** Since the end of the occupation of northern Mali by non-state armed groups in 2012, the circulation of weapons has intensified, thus increasing residual banditry as well as intercommunal clashes.

⁴ *Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategic Framework 2012–2017*. The incidence of poverty is measured as a share of the population defined as poor.

⁵ This statistical data is from the *United Nations Capital Development Fund and the Government of Mali Cooperation Framework Report* (2014).

The growing insecurity is fueling tensions between citizens and the security forces. This situation calls into question the State's ability to ensure the safety of its citizens.

In addition, it should be noted that the violence that cyclically affects northern Mali is partly related to the fact that the country shares a vast Sahelian area with other countries without truly having the means to ensure the control and defence of its territory. The countries of the Sahelo-Saharan strip lacked coordinated intervention and defence mechanisms until the recent creation of the G5 Sahel. In addition, there are geostrategic challenges facing the Sahelian strip in general and Mali in particular, as well as political and economic weakness. For all of these reasons, the State is struggling to affirm its authority over the entire territory, to provide basic services, and to ensure the protection of the populations. In the Sahelo-Saharan area more particularly, several factors contribute to complicating the management of sovereignty: the vast expanse of the territories, traditions of nomadism, and cross-border population dynamics. The recurrence of episodes of political instability reveals the weakness of the institutional mechanisms for social regulation and redistribution of wealth. Nationally, the expansion of insecurity is of great concern. Since 2015, the centre of the country has become the main theatre of operations for non-state armed groups. In addition, there are growing inter-communal tensions leading to violent clashes and mass killings.

Mapping the stakeholders of conflicts

Studies and surveys reveal that, regardless of the project intervention commune, it is always the same parties that are in conflict. Accordingly, the categorization by the research team highlights two main groups of actors: (i) stakeholders in natural resources-related conflicts; and (ii) stakeholders in conflicts inherent to the security crisis.

The first group, the stakeholders related with conflicts over natural resources, have various profiles:

- grassroots actors (traditional chiefs, religious authorities and leaders, locally elected officials, as well as socio-professional organizations of livestock farmers, crop farmers, fishers, artisans and traders);
- land management institutions (land commissions, local water committees, fishing councils, supervisory committees);
- territorial administrations, decentralized state departments and non-governmental organizations.

The second group, consists of stakeholders related with the security crisis:

- Non-state armed groups and self-defence militias. The study found that the stakeholders involved in the conflicts over the security crisis are mainly ethnic groups. Indeed, more than four-fifths of households interviewed by the research team stated that it was the members of indigenous ethnic groups who were involved in these conflicts. In contrast, only a small minority of those interviewed blamed the conflicts on newcomers (migrants).
- Among other stakeholders, the study also identified non-state armed groups, members of other communities, as well as youth in particular.

When analysing the relationships between insecurity and conflict over natural resources, the study highlighted a number of important factors, the most critical of which are:

- The illiteracy of the populations (97.2 percent of the households surveyed cannot read or write), which largely explains the lack of knowledge of laws and regulations.
- Disparities in access to basic social infrastructure and equipment.
- The negative effects of climate change.
- The weakening of local institutions, which develops insecurity.
- Poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, as well as low income.
- Competition for natural resources, which is accentuated by the expansion of agriculture, the degradation of grazing areas, and the drying out of water points.
- Insufficient information and communication initiatives targeting communities (35.9 percent of households report being rarely informed, and over 42 percent are not or not very satisfied with the quality of the information).

- Insufficient capacity building and training programmes for stakeholders (only 0.8 percent of households in the region reported that one of their members received training to support agropastoral activities).
- Insufficient efforts made in investment and development of pastoral and agricultural infrastructure.
- The disintegration of traditional mechanisms of solidarity.

The impact of conflicts

Field research shows that more than one in four households witnessed a security incident or conflict in the past 12 months in the project intervention areas. Specifically, the study reports the intensity of the conflicts in these terms:

- 60 percent of households witnessed armed conflict or clashes between groups;
- 43.7 percent of households witnessed acts of banditry and/or criminal activity;
- 30 percent of households witnessed neighbouring or local conflicts;
- 63 percent of households report having been involved in armed conflict or fighting between groups;
- 41.5 percent of households were involved in acts of banditry and/or criminal activity; and
- 36.2 percent of households have participated in neighbouring or local conflicts.

The impacts of conflict are clearly disastrous. Essentially, they relate to the management of natural resources, pastoral and agropastoral communities, as well as social relationships.

- **Impact of conflicts over the natural resources**

When examining the impacts of conflicts over the natural resources, analyses reveal that the main triggers are the scarcity and mismanagement of available resources. However, community conflicts or conflicts between different socio-professional categories also have a significant impact on the ecosystem. This situation mainly benefits actors from other communities who seize the opportunity to practise illegal felling and overexploit the natural resources. Conflicts can lead to the creation of new irrigation, grazing or farming areas. Huge areas of land can be cleared, and when the natural resources are subjected to uncontrolled overexploitation, the living environment becomes seriously threatened.

- **Impact of conflicts over the pastoral communities**

Regarding the impacts of conflicts on pastoral and agropastoral communities, the study identifies two types of issues: (i) the low level of education and training of children; and (ii) the crisis of trust between communities sharing the safety concerns of the population.

Clearly, armed conflict not only destroys educational infrastructure, but also undermines the hopes and ambitions of generations of children. More than 157 000 children are out of school in Mopti region out of a total of 260 000 children affected by school closure. The sharp deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the central region of Mopti, due to intercommunal violence and the presence of armed groups, increasingly affects the most vulnerable children (United Nations Children's Fund, 2019)⁶.

⁶ United Nations Children's Fund. 2019. *Protracted crisis in central Mali impacting all aspects of children's lives – Statement*. [online]. Bamako, Mali. [Cited 9 July 2021]. <https://www.unicef.org/mali/en/press-releases/protracted-crisis-central-mali-impacting-all-aspects-childrens-lives>

- **Impact of the conflicts on social cohesion**

The crisis of trust is fuelled by the security situation, which has seriously deteriorated in recent years in the centre of the country. Several attacks against civilian populations and targeted assassinations have been observed. This situation has led some communities to develop self-defence strategies, which have poisoned relations and provoked inter-community clashes. Community-based militias such as Dan Nan Ambassagou⁷ and Donso are on the front line of these clashes.

- **The inter-relationship between climate change and conflict.**

It is now widely accepted that the effects of climate change are already having, and will have, far-reaching consequences while involving security and development challenges of unprecedented magnitude. In Mali, where most of the population depends on the natural resources for their subsistence, many conflicts arise between crop and livestock farmers.

Among the causes of the structural scarcity of natural resources is the introduction of mechanized agriculture, which fuels conflicts through the expansion of cultivated areas to the detriment of rangelands and forest areas. In addition, public policies poorly adapted to the socio-economic context have weakened the traditional structures of land management, which have, nevertheless, demonstrated their capacity not only to regulate access to the natural resources, but also to mitigate conflicts linked to competition over access to these scarce resources.

In general, the impacts of conflicts on pastoral and agropastoral communities are:

- **The weakening of social cohesion:** (i) identity politics nurtured by prejudices between social groups, which have lived together for a long time; and (ii) the deterioration of the social climate among crop and livestock farmers.
- **Calling into question traditional conflict resolution mechanisms:** the deterioration of the security situation as well as the weakness of state and traditional institutions have generated mistrust between the communities. Indeed, the security, political and humanitarian crisis that Mali experienced from 2012 has rendered resolving conflicts over access to natural resources more complex.

Finally, with regard to social relations, the impacts of conflicts are also discernible. In general, natural resources management systems take very little heed of the need to promote equality between men and women. Women have difficulty accessing arable land. In addition, the harvested products (shea, néré, gum arabic, wood) from which they derive a large part of their income are threatened by abusive exploitation and the lack of peace.

⁷ This group brings together traditional Dozo hunters from the Dogon community.

Project interventions help reduce conflict and ensure better protection of target groups, which include vulnerable transhumant pastoralists and agropastoralists, populations displaced by insecurity, host communities, and youth and women living in different intervention areas. To this end, the main approaches used focus on: (i) strengthening food security and the resilience of vulnerable households; (ii) establishing inclusive access systems to infrastructure and pastoral resources; and (iii) improving the livelihoods and income of marginalized social classes and categories (women and youth).

Conflict management strategies

The research carried out has highlighted two main types of conflict management strategies at the national level. The first type of strategy deals with conflicts over natural resources, while the second deals with conflicts arising from the country's security situation.

Regardless of the type considered, the study shows that in preventing and managing conflict, dialogue is the most valuable tool to achieve reconciliation and agreement. Indeed, conflict prevention consists in taking actions to reduce tensions and avoid the outbreak or resurgence of violent confrontation. In addition to short-term actions, long-term stakeholder engagement is an important dimension. Accordingly, there are three types of prevention:

- Operational (or immediate) prevention, which concerns immediate measures that can be applied to deal with the crisis situation.
- Structural prevention, which concerns long-term preventive approaches and combines measures relating to development, human rights and security, and strengthening resilience.
- Transnational prevention, which consists in cooperation and coordination initiatives between two or more states, often with the support of regional or international organizations. It is particularly important to take into account the different components of human security in the programmes.

In order to prevent a conflict effectively, it is essential to understand its structural causes. For this reason, the analysis looked at the factors of fragility and of conflict. This analysis provided an understanding of the changing and complex context in which the GNAFC project intervention takes place.

In terms of prevention, the study reports on the presence of traditional mechanisms for resolving conflicts over natural. Traditionally, efforts towards peace are based on the principle of preventing conflicts through social regulation and through mediation or communication actions. This leads to adopting a dynamic, communitarian and humanist approach based on solidarity. The concept of "*kélenya*" ("we are one and indivisible") emphasizes the need for all human beings to consider "their neighbour as themselves".

Furthermore, the issue of governance must be understood within the true context of what has to be governed and of the available institutional, human and financial assets to do so. Traditional mechanisms of conflict prevention and management coexist with legal mechanisms. However, in current modes of governance, the local institutions do not always satisfy the aspirations of the populations. The local authorities are established and laws enacted without taking into account local realities. This situation leads to the coexistence of several legal norms that have ambiguous relations between them.

Regarding the management of conflicts over natural resources, the study identified two types of conflict management mechanisms: traditional mechanisms (still used by more than 64 percent of respondents) and legal mechanisms (used by 36 percent of respondents).

Traditional conflict management mechanisms are presented as alternatives to modern justice since they have long been effective in resolving local conflicts. The commonly used method of peaceful conflict resolution in these traditional mechanisms is based on different pillars: (i) seeking a consensus through dialogue, consultation, recourse to mediation and awareness raising; (ii) referencing history, and ancestral and customary values, and religious rules; and (iii) use of a piece of land by the actors involved in the conflict. In view of this approach, the importance of traditional justice mechanisms should not be ignored as a contribution to maintaining peace and coexistence in society. The recognition by the legal authorities of decisions issuing from these institutions, when these decisions are accepted by the different parties in conflict, is a factor in resolution and legal coexistence. However, in the absence of a legal framework providing for their status, the decisions of these traditional institutions are weak.

The analysis shows that the jurisdictional mechanisms of conflict management are characterized by a multitude of laws on natural resources management, in particular, on the regulation of fishing, and exploitation of forests and wood products. These laws serve as a basis for public departments and the courts to govern the exploitation of resources, sanction cases of infringement, and dispense justice in the case of referral to the courts by the conflicting parties.

With respect to the security situation in Mali, conflicts are among the greatest obstacles to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The complexity of these conflicts reflects the fact that they are connected to local issues, and also to multiple regional and international challenges. The management mechanisms identified by the study are summarized and presented in the box below.

Most rural Malian societies are based on clan organization. Alliances between clans are promising means for preventing conflicts and maintaining social harmony. They are a type of social contract for peace, such as:

- Marriages between clan members or alliances between entities, which reduces the risk of conflict.
- The *synankouya* or *cousinage à plaisanterie* (*alliance à plaisanterie* [joking relationships] or *fraternité à plaisanterie vexatoire* [“frivolous joking brotherhood”]). This allows the use of jokes or mockery between allies, often offensive and turning into ridicule in order to smoothen the relationship. In the event of conflict: the “joking brother”, using the pact that binds him to his brother, makes him listen to reason and calms him down. Thus, since the entities (villages, geographical areas, *terroirs*) are mainly composed of people with the same surname, the ‘joking fraternity’ can help prevent inter-community conflicts. During the recent conflicts in the northern regions, the political authorities used this mechanism to encourage negotiations between the Tuareg communities and the Sonsai.
- Sports and artistic competitions (musical competitions, traditional wrestling, horse and camel races, etc.) bring communities together and create alliances.
- Mediation: As a general rule, mediation is devolved to the *Ngnama kala* castes (griots, blacksmiths, shoemakers, etc.) and to the elders who play a crucial role in gerontocratic societies. Traditionally, the *Ngnama kala* enjoy immunity in times of peace or conflict, and are empowered to play a mediating role between communities in conflict.
- Recurring to modern law, which is used by public departments and courts to settle disputes.

Conclusions and recommendations

Clearly, due to the plurality of actors involved in the exploitation of natural resources (indigenous users of the rural areas, migrants, etc.), conflict resolution is more complex. Within the same community, the actors involved no longer speak with one voice and clearly often have contradictory objectives. The study also shows that there is a gap between the elites and the dominated classes and categories who are discriminated against in accessing the natural resources (women, youth, members of 'lower castes', etc.). The consequences are disastrous and contribute to undermine development efforts undertaken by the central state, the local authorities and their various strategic partners.

To meet the challenges arising from these conflicts, the study makes the following recommendations:

Institutional level

- Translate the main basic legislative and regulatory texts (the Pastoral Charter, the Agricultural Orientation Law, the Environmental Law, the State and Land Code, etc.) governing the management of the natural resources and conflict resolution mechanisms into the main local languages (Songhay, Tamashek, Fula, Arabic) in order to better understand, own and disseminate these texts.
- Strengthen the sovereign role of the State through deconcentration in order to bring it closer to the communities, and above all, and to increase visibility and representativeness, which would likely guarantee security and peace.
- Strengthen the role of the public contracting authority for development activities at the local level, taking into account their responsibilities in planning, implementation and oversight of local and community development in general.
- Set up an observatory for conflict prevention and management.

Organizational level

- Strengthen the technical capacities of the traditional and modern institutions in conflict prevention and management in order to mitigate the factors that trigger and exacerbate conflicts over agropastoral resources (inequalities, social injustices, diverging interests, etc.).
- Improve the accessibility of pastoralists, agropastoralists, fishers, agrofishers, foresters, youth and women to the rural resources and infrastructure in order to reduce competition, which is the source of conflicts over the agropastoral resources.
- Set up a national network involving members of the working group, traditional and modern institutions, socio-professional organizations, experts and resource persons. This national network will be responsible for developing a roadmap that takes into account the probabilities of conflict scenarios, the hypotheses likely to lead to each scenario and the potential impacts, with the aim of reducing the risks of conflicts flaring up, spiralling and stagnating.

Technical and operational level

- Develop and implement training modules on prevention, advocacy/ lobbying, mediation, negotiation, judgment and arbitration, as well as coercion, targeting all stakeholders in conflict management and resolution in the project intervention areas.
- Implement labour- and capital-intensive investment projects to promote economic and social development.
- Support professional organizations in their activities to reduce their vulnerability to poverty.

The training provided in the Sahel, which followed “Programme Clinic: Designing conflict-sensitive interventions” allowed to formulate project-specific recommendations that can be incorporated into the results framework. With regard to the project intervention in Mali, several fully valuable recommendations were made:

Regarding potential opposition from stakeholders (armed groups, marginalized social categories, households whose land rights are threatened, households not targeted by the project, dissatisfied beneficiaries, and local providers not taken into account):

- Strengthen collaboration with the implementing partners in order to identify the most effective access strategies in the intervention areas and the direction of the conflicts.⁸
- Develop and implement a communication plan targeting communities that are not satisfied with the activities and choices of the project, with an emphasis on community achievements that benefit all, including neighbouring communities (e.g. access of transhumants to animal feed and drinking water).

Regarding the evaluation of the impact of the intervention on peace and conflicts, emphasizing thematic areas regarding governance, the economy, social issues, the environment/natural resources and insecurity:

- Support the networking of new leaders who will emerge through the activities of Dimitra clubs and agropastoral field schools so that they may become effectively involved in the coordinated and peaceful management of pastoral resources and infrastructure.
- Define and provide information on conflict-sensitive monitoring indicators in order to identify any unintended negative consequences caused by the project interventions (the exclusion of certain actors, increased competition over access to pasture and water, inter-community tensions, etc.).

Regarding the drivers of peace and conflict (related to the thematic areas indicated above):

- Continue initiatives to support local agreements that aim to strengthen the dynamics of conflict prevention and management.
- Apply a context monitoring approach in order to adapt interventions to contextual changes.

⁸ If there are any access problems that could affect project interventions, and if they cannot be resolved through negotiations (mediation and awareness raising), consideration should be given to relocating the activities.

Saving livelihoods saves lives

The Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) was launched by the European Union, FAO and the World Food Programme at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit to step up joint efforts to address food crises along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and continue to raise global awareness and commitment from all relevant actors.

GNAFC offers a coherent coordination framework to promote collective efforts in analysis and strategic programming for a more efficient use of resources to prevent, prepare for and respond to food crises and, ultimately, support collective outcomes related to Sustainable Development Goal 2 for lasting solutions to food crises.



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