

# Mapping the views, interests and expectations of the population in Mali

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## ■ Executive summary

This report is based on interviews with Malians during the current crisis in that country.

Malians were astonished that the capacity of the Malian government and army could collapse to zero overnight. Many interviewees were worried about the problems of drug, weapons and people trafficking, and the kidnapping of foreigners for ransom.

The northern population has suffered violence from various groups, many of which imposed a harsh interpretation of *sharia* law that had been rejected by the local population and Mali's Muslim leaders. Women have been harassed, while the amputation of hands for theft seems to be an attempt to intimidate the population.

Most people who fled the north want to return as soon as basic security and health systems and schools are functioning again. People expressed the need to organise intra- and intercommunity talks among representatives of different ethnic groups to prevent those who suffered various kinds of injustices from taking revenge.

Since the decentralisation process started in 1990 there has been more organised local co-operation and several women have been elected to municipal councils. These women are organised into a group to support one another and are ready to discuss peaceful solutions.

An often-mentioned problem is that of impunity. In the past rebels have been given government posts and no-one has been punished.

## Introduction

Over the last few years Mali has been confronted with the turbulence caused by various groups in the Sahel-Sahara area. Salafists have settled in the area since 1980 and over the years many have formed terrorist groups. Other groups have advocated for more independence for the Tuaregs or the northern part of Mali. Over the last two decades Mali has been considered as a model for the democratisation process in Africa. At the same time, however, the country seems to be embedded in a paradox where the state has been the instrument not only of the deterioration of its own authority, but also of its lack of vision in designing clear

security and governance policies. This state lethargy has suddenly changed the future of the subregion. For many years the image of the Malian state has been degenerating through the activities of illicit trafficking and pervasive terrorist networks that dangerously have compromised the peace and security of the people, mainly in the north, but also in the south of the country.

The current crisis can be said to have started with the resurgence of the Tuareg rebellion in the north of the country on January 17th 2012. The situation was exacerbated by the collapse of the security system due to the

attacks of the rebels supported by terrorists and drug traffickers, and by heavily armed Tuaregs of Malian origin who left Libya after the death of Muammar Qaddafi and the fall of his regime.

The result is well known: a coup d'état occurred in Bamako on March 22nd 2012 in which the regime was overthrown by a military junta that was outraged by the military's lack of the training and equipment needed to fight the rebels. In response to the political and institutional rupture that occurred, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) imposed political, diplomatic, economic and financial sanctions on Mali. These measures forced the junta-led Comité National de Redressement de la Démocratie et de la Restauration de l'Etat (CNRDRE) to make a solemn commitment to a return to civilian rule. Following this commitment, a framework agreement was reached on April 6th 2012 between the CNRDRE and ECOWAS that, while ensuring the implementation of Article 36 of the constitution of February 25th 1992, brought about a return to the normal constitutional order. An interim president was appointed and a transitional government established.

Despite this agreement there have been ongoing problems within the national army, with internal conflicts between different sections of it, while the former junta has been accused of continuing to exercise power via the transitional government, recently by sequestering the prime minister. Several people we interviewed expressed the need to remove the junta leaders completely from the political scene.

In January 2013, following the attacks organised by the terrorist groups against southern Mali, the intervention of French and ECOWAS troops helped to repel these attacks, free the cities in the north and engage the rebels in the mountains in the Kidal region.

In January 2013 a Road Map was adopted by the transitional authorities that had two key priorities: the restoration of the territorial integrity of the country by the reconquest of the north and the organisation of transparent and credible general elections by July 2013.

## Northern Mali's "Tuareg problem"

Beyond its transnational aspect, the northern Mali "Tuareg problem" had always posed a challenge to the integration of this ethnic and cultural entity within the French colonial empire in West Africa, as well as to the present Republic of Mali, formerly called French Sudan.

Northern Mali is characterised by its spatial immensity, its ethnic and linguistic diversity, and its low population density. The three regions of the north account for 75% of

the national territory: 937,742 km<sup>2</sup> of a total of 1,241,238 km<sup>2</sup>. The region is populated mainly by four ethnic and linguistic groups: the Songray, Tuaregs, Fulani and Arabs, although the main part of the Fulani belongs to the neighbouring region of Mopti. Other groups in the northern region are the Boso, Bambara, Dogon and Mossi. The northern region contains less than 7% of the Malian population: 928,324 inhabitants of the country's total population of 14,250,400. With regard to the distribution of the different socioethnic groups in the northern regions, the Songray, the local sedentary group, represent 35% of the population; the nomadic Tuaregs, Arabs and Fulani represent 32%; and the Boso, Bambara, Dogon and Mossi represent 33%. The Tuaregs form about 11% of the total population of the northern region of Mali.<sup>1</sup>

Of the three regions (provinces) in the north, Kidal is the smallest and home to most of the Tuaregs, who are divided into several subgroups. In Kidal there have been internal struggles for power among different Tuareg clans. Some Tuaregs do not want an independent Tuareg regime in the north because they say this will return them to a feudal system. Some leading Tuaregs have recently written a letter to the government of Mali and the international community underlining that they do not support the National Movement for the Liberation on Azawad (MNLA), do not want a separate Tuareg state in the north or a division of Mali, and want a unified Mali with equal opportunities for people in the north and south.

Many of the inhabitants of Timbuktu say that the Timbuktu region has the most social intermingling of the three regions. This seems to be more pronounced in the Niger river valley. This sociology has led to a relationship of dependence and common belonging based on natural resources and sociocultural ties. The Niger valley continues into the Gao region, which is the largest region and has the highest number of ethnic groups. However, some of the people we met wondered whether less intermingling and sociocultural ties in the Gao region have also led to more violent clashes. The cutting off of hands for theft as a result of the imposition of *sharia* law in Gao seems to have been used to intimidate people and keep the rebels in power. The context is different in the Kidal region where there is a common exploitation of natural resources surrounding the wadis (i.e. grazing areas and water points). Social leadership has always been dominated by the Ifoghas group, one of the Tuareg groups, which is mainly settled in Kidal. This group has remained opposed to the Malian central government since independence in 1960 and this is often seen as the main cause of the conflicts in the northern provinces.

Traditionally the three nomadic groups – the Tuaregs, Arabs and Fulani – have ruled over tribes in their areas, and from time to time have fought each other over internal borders and interests, cattle rustling, and other issues. The

<sup>1</sup> These statistics are from the general census of population and housing (2009) and the Planning and Statistics Unit of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government (2006).

Tuaregs and Fulani have been cattle herders, while the Arabs have been mostly involved in trade. The Songray have been mostly cultivators. Over the years there have been severe periods of drought that have also influenced the power balance in the area. There has also been a population boom to which little attention is paid. In addition, the democratisation process has also changed the power distribution among different groups in the area. These effects of climate change, security problems, population growth, and economic and social insecurity create consequences such as poverty, misery, marginalisation and lack of prospects, especially for unemployed youth.

## Islamic practices: evolution, influences and new dynamics

Following recent developments, the question of the place of Islam in the political field has led to the development of many theories. More than 90% of Malians are Muslims. The type of Islam practised in Mali for many years is called “Sufi Islam” and is known in Mali to be very tolerant and peaceful. Over the centuries Timbuktu has been a famous religious centre with well-known teachers. Over the past few years the influence has increased of practitioners of “Salafi Islam” advocated by the refugees who crossed the border from Algeria after having been forced out of that country. These groups first settled in the extreme northern mountainous area of Mali, from where they wanted to continue the fight for political power in Algeria. Simultaneously, some claimed that they wanted to purify Islam in northern Mali. Increasingly they turned into partners in illicit trafficking, the kidnapping of foreigners, drug dealing, etc. Recently there has been much talk about Islamist groups, a title that is claimed by several groups. Several of those interviewed see this as an attempt by these groups to legitimise their existence, while the interviewees see them as extremists with their jihad teaching and terrorist attitudes that have put the country in jeopardy. These interviewed do not want to call them Islamists and accuse them of simply being terrorists and a danger to everyone.

Another feature that has been noticed over the last few decades is an increase in the building of new mosques, with marabouts (religious teachers) who have been studying in Saudi Arabia or other Arab countries returning with money to construct a mosque and start teaching the Sunni Islam they have learned about in their studies. This has not been seen as a problem until now. But during the recent Islamist occupation of northern Mali some of these marabouts suddenly presented themselves as new religious leaders and were even said to have taken part in the fighting. This has created a good deal of suspicion about their position and role in Mali.

A serious difference recently arose between the Malian government and the religious leaders of the country. The problem started with the adoption of the Code of Family and Persons in 2010. The wording of various articles

dealing with marriage settlements, matrimonial property, inheritance, filiation, and equality between men and women in matters of inheritance and household management has resulted in many interpretations. The text was adopted by the National Assembly, but strongly contested by a strong mobilisation of religious leaders. This brought about a second reading of the code and a stormy debate on various amendments previously adopted by consensus. Some religious actors even threatened the lives of people who had worked with the new code. This is said to be something completely new in Mali and the strong polarisation that arose around different tendencies was experienced as frightening by the population.

There have been differences among religious groups in Mali over how to react to the government and take part in the political life of the country. Some refuse to take part in public debates and intend to remain outside the political sphere. Others publicly admit that they want to take part in the political debate and must take into account social concerns and provide practical solutions to socioeconomic problems. For them, the aim of Islam is to provide guidance that ensures the proper functioning of society by improving human behaviour through moral values.

Throughout the occupation of the northern regions the influence of armed groups through the application of a “muscular *sharia*” became apparent. There is a growing fear of possible connivance between armed, self-proclaimed Islamist groups and Malian religious leaders because of their shared values related to a common Islam. This is said to be more evident because of the growing profusion of religious schools in the country in recent years. In these schools political issues are scarcely discussed. In addition, students of Islam are often not well informed about the modern world, political institutions, science and the economy. Despite the atrocities committed by terrorists and Salafists through the application of their interpretation of *sharia*, the *ulemas* (religious leaders) and the leading imams of the northern regions were able to remain faithful to the traditional understanding of Islam and support the local population, refusing to adhere to the extremists’ ideology, despite intimidation in Gao and Timbuktu.

The organising of a conference of *ulemas* in September 2012 by religious leaders who were members of the High Council of Islam resulted in the issuing of a clarification document in the form of a “memorandum” calling on Muslims in Mali to follow a tolerant and peaceful Islam anchored in the social values of the country. The High Council of Islam also presented its position regarding the French intervention in Mali on national television, stating that the intervention is not directed against Islam, but rather aims to defend Mali’s territorial integrity and stop the progress of allied terrorist groups into the south of the country. This action was said to calm parts of the population who were afraid of the religious developments taking place in the country.

Given the situation, it appears that there is not yet a Malian political Islam, but rather multiple influences, due to the weakening of the authority of the state and antagonism among religious groupings.

### **Deficit in governance; weakness of the various negotiation processes and mechanisms for crisis resolution**

From its independence in 1960 to the present day Mali has experienced three republics, three military coups and four armed rebellions in its northern part. When the fourth armed rebellion began on January 17th 2012 the state appeared to be powerless to deal with it. The country, it is said, suddenly discovered its lack of institutions capable of anticipating and reacting to such a crisis, despite all the available management tools and the modalities of control provided in the constitution. This crisis also revealed that the country had no armed forces capable of securing the borders, the people and their property, and especially capable of stopping the threat of a partition of the country.

For 50 years the factors that hindered the country's development and hampered the well-being of the population have been, among others, the difficulty of promoting the status of the state/nation inherited from the colonial system – a state that is struggling to accept and manage human and territorial diversity that characterises the nation and the territory. The political systems (the one-party system from 1979 to 1991 and representative democracy from 1991 to 2012) that legitimated the institutions and leaders who run the country have crumbled. It is said that public administration is dominated by practices such as authoritarianism, clientelism and seeing a job in the administration as a form of personal business. The army and security forces have been weakened by lack of equipment and leaders, and senior officers have used their position for their private benefit rather than building up an efficient army.

With the democratisation process mainly characterised by a decentralisation process, which began in 1991 after one of the rebellions, local elections have created an engagement in politics at the local level. Many women have also been elected to office in this process. This has created challenges in the northern provinces in that traditionally wealthy groups are losing power to their former subordinates or slaves, which is an issue that is most clearly talked about in Kidal.

In terms of national elections, analyses show that citizens have gradually turned away from the democratic process: the participation rate in various elections is below 38%. To this should be added an endemic corruption that plagues the administration. Thus, the general interest in elections has gradually diminished.

Our interviewees talked about this situation, but they had difficulty in seeing how change could come about, because of a complete lack of confidence in politicians. This seems to be the same for people in both the northern regions and the south. Mali is said to have about 150 political parties, but few are working properly. Most of them are formed by family members who have created a political party to obtain the official funding given to parties by the state. The few nationwide political parties are not really organised in terms of local groups taking part in the preparation of candidate lists and election campaigns. Such a weak political base allows wealthy people to compete for the presidency and obtain more power. After elections, many try to join the winning party to obtain possible advancement. Some interviewees said that at the moment there is a need for the election of a special government for a two-to-three-year period that can restore the system and regain the confidence of the population.

### **The development of terror in northern Mali**

Since the first Salafists entered Mali after losing their political fight in Algeria and settled in the mountainous area close to the Algerian border, the movement has gradually become more and more violent. This group has established close links to some of the Tuaregs in Kidal, some of the Arabs in Timbuktu (especially for commercial reasons) and government agents. Over the last few years northern Mali has been turned into a sanctuary for terrorist extremists and traffickers of all kinds of weapons and drugs, illegal migration, the kidnapping of foreigners for ransom, etc. This situation has gradually been aggravated and constitutes a serious threat to Mali and its immediate neighbourhood. These historical factors can be linked to more recent collaboration with armed groups from Libya who entered Mali as a result of the Arab Spring. These effects are various and include the presence of heavily armed and well-trained soldiers and the availability of sophisticated weapons.

Earlier crises have mainly been a fight over power between the north and "the establishment" or government in the south. In 1990 a rebellion started as a periphery uprising against the central government.

The present Malian crisis evolved after the creation of the MNLA in 2010-11. Its outspoken goal was the creation of a new state not only on Malian soil, but also including parts of neighbouring countries and mainly to be led by Tuaregs. The MNLA is said to have been created by some leaders from Kidal together with returning soldiers from Libya. In the internal struggle over leadership of the MNLA, Ansar ed-Din (Movement of the Defenders of the Faith) was created, which was also led by Tuaregs from Kidal. They joined forces with al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) to invade the northern regions of Mali. Finally a new group came into the arena, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). People in the area

fear that the connection between terrorists in the Sahel and those of the West African subregion (e.g. Boko Haram in Nigeria) has increased the danger to the Malian population.

The Malian government made a very weak attempt to stabilise the situation caused by the presence of the many heavily armed fighters from Libya in the Kidal region by sending a delegation from the Malian National Assembly to convince them to negotiate with the government. These MNLA and Ansar ed-Din elements categorically refused to do so. Consequently, despite the explanations and assurances given by deputies on the immense possibilities offered by Mali's constitution and the Law on Decentralization to meet the economic, political, social and cultural demands of northerners, clashes with the Malian army could not be avoided in January 2012. Several of our informants said that since then the security situation in the whole country has changed, with a general growth in crime in all areas. Following the evolution of the dangers faced by Mali and the risk of contagion in the neighbourhood, the international community eventually showed solidarity with the country and decided to support the transitional authorities in their efforts to restore state institutions and strengthen their capacity to fulfil their sovereign mission. The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2085 with the aim of supporting the unity and territorial integrity of Mali and, where appropriate, authorising an African military intervention to fight against terrorists located in the north of the country and free the occupied territories. Interviewees expressed great gratitude for these actions.

## Neglect of the northern regions

The lack of integration of the northern regions into the political and economic life of Mali and the lack of development in the region are given by the leaders of the various rebellions as the main reasons for the rebellions. However, several of our informants were astonished to see many MNLA and Ansar ed-Din leaders were among the most important representatives of the state at the national level and in the occupied regions as deputies, former ministers, mayors, councillors, army officers, state officials, customs officers, police officers, governors, etc. The National Pact signed in 1992 between the Malian government and the armed movements should therefore have restored peace. But differences in enforcement did not permit the fulfilment of the expected results either in terms of the development plans for the northern regions or other activities. Other agreements, such as the Alger Agreement in 2006, favoured the rebel leaders and their supporters. In addition, no-one was persecuted for the criminal acts committed by some leaders of the former rebellions. This impunity, together with the offering of key posts in the Malian government, army, police and customs to rebel leaders, is seen as having brought new actors into the most recent rebellion, with people leaving Bamako and other places in the south to join the groups occupying the north, where they hoped to be rewarded with positions etc. after the

fighting. Informants often said that impunity for rebel leaders must never again be a solution.

It was often stated that the worst mistake made by the Malian government in the last peace agreements was to have accepted agreements that led to the demilitarisation of the north, because this brought about a gradual withdrawal of the army from some garrisons in the north and the positioning of soldiers from northern regions in their home areas. This option contributed to the further reinforcement of AQIM in the region; the development of all kinds of trafficking, such as in drugs, weapons, humans and migrants to Europe; and hostage-taking for ransom.

It was often stated that the northern regions are not well developed and much more could and should have been done to remedy this. This is clear to anyone who knows the area. But there are also large areas in the south-west and around Mopti that are at about the same level of development. In these areas people are said to be discussing what to do if this last rebellion results in the government giving new opportunities to the leaders of the rebellion.

The occupation of the northern regions of Mali and the fall of the regime has revealed the differences in the "agendas" of the four armed groups: AQIM, the MNLA, Ansar ed-Din and MUJAO. These differences in visions, strategies, and ideological and political options have become clearly evident. Ansar ed-Din is supported by AQIM, and they are together with MUJAO considered as terrorist movements. The idea of expanding the Salafist ideology in the north and the rest of the country came about with the invasion of the north, while the aims of the MNLA were limited to its separatist claim against the Malian state. Subsequently Ansar ed-Din, AQIM and MUJAO defeated and expelled the MNLA. This shows the "unnatural alliance" between these armed movements who initially shared the desire to drive the army from the northern regions. The MNLA, with its separatist and independence vision, could not obtain support from international bodies (ECOWAS, the African Union and the UN), which instead advocated the restoration of the territorial integrity and national unity of Mali. Several Tuareg, Arab, Fulani and Songray community leaders from the northern regions distanced themselves from the independence ideas advocated by the separatist MNLA. They are much more in favour of the deepening of decentralisation, with the population being given much more say in the management of local affairs.

It is also extremely difficult for the population to see that the aggressors wanted a separate state in the north or more independence for the north as they claimed, since the rebels first attacked schools, health centres and official buildings, and destroyed furniture, equipment, etc. All this would have been needed by a future administration in the area. Several informants said that the aim of the rebellion was to return northern Mali to the Middle Ages and turn it into an area free from control by an organised state.



## Justice, human rights and national reconciliation

In northern Mali in particular, following the occupation of the regions of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu, rebels and other terrorist armed groups resorted to violence and atrocities against the civilian population, with incidents of torture, rape, killing, amputation of hands and feet, whipping, etc. Cultural heritage sites were also attacked, shrines were demolished and graves of famous religious figures desecrated. Various national and international human rights organisations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Association Malien des Droits de l'Homme, Union International des Droits de l'Homme, and Fédération International des Droits de l'Homme have investigated the massacre of Malian soldiers in Aguel Hoc in January 2012 and other acts that can be considered war crimes, crimes of aggression and crimes against humanity. The protection of human rights and the fight against impunity were major concerns of the people we met and civil society actors we spoke to, both during the occupation of the north and the coup d'état and during further fighting within the army in the south. After the reconquest of the northern regions, accusations are now being laid against the national army of the excessive use of power against civilians blamed for being aggressors in the north.

The establishment of transitional justice as an alternative to fresh violence against the former rebels is a concern of Malian citizens. There is a need for justice that will eradicate the memory of serious abuses in order to prevent a re-emergence of conflicts, prevent impunity, and support the restoration of state authority and national reconciliation. In light of the conflict in northern Mali, clashes between soldiers supporting different government factions in the south, profound differences in many areas of society and institutional locking, there is now a strong need for justice in Mali, although the country's ability to dispense justice is very low, due to lack of financial resources, administrative and legal obstacles, the number of victims of the crisis, and the need to urgently reconcile past and present for the reconstruction of the country. Solving these problems requires resorting to transitional justice, i.e. a series of measures to find the truth, punish the guilty by appropriate courts, compensate victims for the losses they suffered, and institute measures to promote sustainable peace. People have heard about transitional justice as an effective tool in some African countries that have experienced the hardships of conflicts that have shaken national unity and cohesion, and they want the same for Mali. The International Criminal Court (ICC) organised a mission to Mali in August 2012 in order to be informed about the actors in the crisis, and this may lead to some form of transitional justice.

The Malian authorities have officially asked the ICC to prosecute perpetrators of these crimes during the crisis. The recent issuing of warrants of arrest by Malian and international courts against AQIM, MNL, Ansar ed-Din and

MUJAO leaders, as well as drug traffickers, is a starting point for the fight against impunity in the north. It is important to avoid impunity, while justice should also be done in an exemplary manner to facilitate peaceful coexistence among the various Malian communities.

Several of the people we interviewed pointed to the need for an early start to dialogue meetings at all levels of society. They believed that atrocities such as torture, rape and whipping can be forgiven if the perpetrators openly ask for pardon. Such dialogue meetings have already started in Bamako among people from different regions in the north. Some elected women leaders have been part of the conflict and others have been facilitators. It is stressed that intra- and intercommunity talks must start as soon as possible to avoid new conflicts

## Differences related to the perceptions of development and socioeconomic weaknesses

One of the challenges faced by the Malian government and the various northern and southern communities is the need to reconcile development exigencies and traditional values in a modernising context. Large amounts of money were mobilised with the support of development partners to aid the north of the country, but no great achievements resulted from this initiative. Real antagonism emerged in interviews concerning choices and priorities in the planning process, implementation and assessment of projects initiated since 1992. For many observers the resources devoted to the development of the northern regions of Mali were limited and mismanaged. Consequently, the communities that were supposed to be the main beneficiaries of this funding did not benefit from it. The failure to respect commitments by all sides has weakened the state and the peacebuilding process and has assisted some local leaders to keep their peoples dependent on them. Benefits consisted of favours given to specific groups and community leaders outside the normative frameworks defined in peace agreements and decentralisation programmes. The insecurity prevailing in the north has made the execution of projects and programmes initiated by development agencies in the region extremely difficult.

In terms of the strengthening of peace, several negotiations and agreement frameworks have been established since 1992. Some northern politicians and intellectuals have given the impression that they were not interested in durably solving the problems besetting the region, but rather in using them for their own political and economic advantage. The position of leaders and decision-makers in the south with respect to their involvement in the search for solutions to the development of the north have also been perceived with great suspicion by some leaders from the north.

Thus, social divisions and conflicts have increased, as well as insecurity and armed violence in the northern regions of

the country. This explains the extent of looting and the excessive destruction of public and private property by armed groups and militias mainly in Gao and Timbuktu.

## Victims

Following the occupation of the main cities of the north, part of the population, mainly women and children, fled to the south of the country and the neighboring countries of Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger and Algeria.

Among those who joined the armed groups in the occupied towns, a large number were unemployed young men who were in desperate need of jobs. Many of them joined the Islamists to protect themselves or simply to obtain food. Of those who were killed in the confrontations between rebels and the Malian army and French and ECOWAS troops, it is said that the victims were mainly young local men without armed experience. It is also said that lists have been found containing the names of people who received a monthly payment to take part in fighting. Students from Islamic schools who were not well monitored or supervised by their teachers and were often idle were also said to be among the fighters. Such students seem to have been an easy target for terrorists and violent Salafists.

Many of the women living in the south of Mali or in refugee camps have been forced to leave their sources of income due to their displacement. They now find themselves completely dependent on family members or donations from national and international aid organisations, which increases their vulnerability.

People of northern origin, especially Tuaregs, have also fled from Bamako out of fear that they could be targeted by people who have lost family members serving in the army in the north. The same thing happened in the northern regions, where Tuaregs, Arabs and Fulanis are said to have fled out of fear of the Malian army and its ECOWAS partners.

However, the largest group of victims seems to be those who have not fled, but tried to continue their lives in their villages, without functional markets, schools, health clinics and normal means of support. Especially women have been forced to follow excessive jihadist rules and have endured many kinds of harassment. Those we interviewed who had left the area had not forgotten these women and mentioned them several times.

There seems to be a common wish among the displaced to return to their homes as soon as possible, but only if certain conditions are met. Firstly, they must be certain that the terrorists who were responsible for most of the atrocities have been arrested or chased from the area. Secondly, the health centres, schools and basic administrative structures in the north need to be reopened. Many mention the need of food assistance for some time, before they can start growing their own food again. In general they are very eager to return home as soon as possible.

## Women as a resource

In the peace negotiations in 1992 women were hardly included directly in any negotiation. Several older women, however, were active partners at the private level and were consulted by their husbands and sons before decisions were taken. This is because women in the area are often wealthy inside their households. During the democratisation and decentralisation process in the 1990s women were also elected as members of municipal councils, mayors and deputy-mayors, and to other responsible posts. It was interesting to hear how these women participated in the management of local affairs and conflicts. A special network of women in elected posts from the north has now been organised and several other women's networks have been created. Several women have benefited from the support and assistance of NGOs in social intermediation and development initiatives for the improvement of their living conditions.

## Conclusion

In the light of our discussions with various stakeholders it is clear that the concerns and expectations of people include Mali continuing as a unified state within known borders; Malians living together in peace; the return of displaced populations and refugees; the establishment of human security; holding the rebel and terrorist leaders responsible for their crimes; the return of local administration in the north; negotiations to establish peace and national cohesion; and broad work to re-establish democratic structure and elect national leaders in whom the people have confidence.

## Recommendations

### *Reconstruction of basic infrastructure and security in the north*

- For displaced people from the northern regions, this is the most central element.
- This is also mentioned as the most important point by those who continue to live in the area.

### *Human rights/justice*

- There is a need to fight against impunity and pursue the rebel and terrorist leaders.
- A transitional justice process should be initiated involving a search for the truth about abuses in both the north and south of the country.
- The security and defence sector should be reformed.

### *Inter-/intracommunity talks at the local level in the north and on the national level*

- There is an urgent need to start inter- and intracommunity talks to prevent revenge and start peaceful development via local structures. **Norway could valuably support this initiative, which, with intercommunity meetings and the reform of the security sector, constitutes the pillar of the post-crisis governance efforts.**

- A tripartite collegial management system (government, local authorities and civil society in the northern regions) should follow up on this process. This tripartite management must be supported by an organisational team comprising dedicated individuals able to formulate appropriate methods and efficient strategies in an inclusive approach. They should help to facilitate the transparent and efficient management of funds allocated to the intercommunity meetings.
- The role and representation of women who have a determinant role in the processes of family and community mediation should be strengthened.
- The capacity of cultural and religious organisations (the High Council of Islam, the Catholic and Protestant churches, the media) to contribute to dialogue and social appeasement should be reinforced.

#### *Development with a social focus*

- There is an urgent need for the establishment of development projects in the northern regions focused on social development. **Norway is already heavily involved in Goundam and it is important to strengthen this project.**
- Agreement should be reached on how to assess progress and the measuring tools to be used, together with appropriate, modest and manageable indicators.

#### *Rebuilding the state and trust in the state*

- Reconstructing the state should be a long-term process, probably involving a new republican pact.

- Political, economic and social actors should be supported to carry out a collective reflection on the revival of governance in Mali.
- New institutions should be established and leaders appointed who are not dominated by practices such as authoritarianism, clientelism and seeing a job in the administration as being for their personal benefit.
- The army and security forces should be rebuilt and enabled to fulfil their responsibility to protect the country and its citizens.

#### *Continuation of decentralisation*

- The transfer of real power and influence to decentralised structures should gradually be increased. Negotiations should follow a participatory approach that strongly involves local communities in the design and implementation of decentralisation initiatives.
- Multistakeholder spaces for social and cultural innovation should be promoted to educate citizens on the necessity of preventing the resurgence of conflict in Mali.

#### *Revitalising the Malian economy, with a special focus on women and youth*

- A basic economic system should be reconstructed in the northern regions.
- A financial system should be established that allows small operators and especially women and vulnerable youths to obtain bank credits.

## ■ THE AUTHOR

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