Self-portrait on Obstacles to Peace in Mali

According to Malians, what are the obstacles to peace?

Challenges related to the management of socio-political diversity and the crisis in societal values

Mali's wealth comes from its diversity. However, when this diversity is instrumentalized – whether at a religious, communal or political level – it destroys national identity, thereby weakening social cohesion. The risks associated with this fragmentation are great in the case of Malian society, which has experienced a weakening of its social institutions (family, school, etc.). While these institutions usually structured society, they now seem incapable of properly conveying traditional values in the face of an ever-widening inter-generational gap.

Challenges related to the regulation of competition over natural resources and economic opportunities

Malian society displays high levels of competition over natural resources and economic opportunities. Such competition exists independently of the scarcity or wealth of resources, thus demonstrating the central role played by their regulation. The regulatory practice is seen by populations as inequitable, due in part to corruption, contradictions between laws and/or institutions, and noncompliance with conventions and decrees.

4700 **Malians** have discussed the question

"What are the obstacles to peace in Mali?"

through **123** **focus groups** and **70** **interviews** in the

8 **regions of Mali** and **3** **refugee camps**

Challenges related to governance of access to public services

Structural failings in the delivery of public services are interpreted as unequal treatment and injustices on the part of the state, and sometimes equally on the part of technical and financial partners. They contribute to the divide between "favoured" and "excluded", North and South, city and countryside, Bamako and the rest of the country. Seen as a possible solution to these problems, decentralisation has yet to provide adequate answers, given that such divides are still being exploited by the various actors and authorities involved.

Challenges related to conflict and armed rebellion management and resolution mechanisms

The history of Mali from the pre-colonial period to modern times is marked by unresolved conflicts which tend to erupt cyclically. In the eyes of the Malian population, it is the recurrence of conflict, rather than the conflicts themselves, that constitutes the main obstacle to peace. The recurrence of conflict is explained in large part by the limits and failings of the conflict management and resolution mechanisms deployed.

What is the Self-portrait's added value?

A Self-portrait of Mali by Malians – While some of the building blocks for this report have been the subject of past research, the importance of the Self-portrait resides in its demonstration of Malians' capacity to conduct a diagnosis of their own situation. It offers a reading of obstacles to peace that is anchored in Malian realities, enriched at the same time by their nuances and their interconnections.

Process and trust are key – Beyond the report's research dimension, particular attention was paid to ensuring inclusivity, constructive dialogue and consensus. Sustainable peacebuilding takes time and requires profound transformations over the long term; in view of this, a strong focus was put on trustbuilding and the creation of channels of dialogue between social groups that are not used to interacting, either for social, geographical, cultural, ethnic or generational reasons.

A Self-portrait preceding the search for consensual solutions – The shared, in-depth comprehension of obstacles to peace is necessary to pave the way towards the search for solutions. Participants in the National Conference have identified challenges to be addressed in priority:

o *the crisis of societal values,*
o *youth unemployment,*
o *failures in the governance of public affairs,*
o *chronic insecurity* (lack of trust between the population and the security system, and the creation of militias).

A Self-portrait to…

Better understand the diversity of perspectives on peace – To understand how Malians from all regions and all social groups perceive obstacles to peace, we invite you to read the attached report and to watch the documentary film accessible on the following websites www.imrap-mali.org and www.interpeace.org.

Foster reflection – This reading of obstacles to peace and main challenges by Malians can provide a basis for reflection on the development and implementation of initiatives in Mali.

Encourage greater collaboration and real inclusivity – The obstacles to peace and priorities for peace identified by Malians illustrate the need for more inclusive, integrated and collaborative forms of involvement on behalf of all actors in the search for and implementation of consensual and sustainable solutions to peace.

For more information - IMRAP and Interpeace remain at your disposal for further reflection on the main findings of the Self-portrait, its interpretations and its implications in the current context in Mali