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SELF-PORTRAIT OF MALI

on the Obstacles to Peace

March 2015

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Cover photo : A young adult expressing his point of view during a heterogeneous focus group in Gao town in June 2014.

Back cover : From top to bottom: (i) Focus group in the Ségou region, in January 2014, (ii) Focus group of women at the Mberra refugee camp in Mauritania in September 2014, (iii) Individual interview in Sikasso region in March 2014.

ISBN: 9 789 9661 6667 8

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Published in March 2015

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Acknowledgements

It is an honour and a great pleasure for the Executive Management of IMRAP and Interpeace, our technical partner, to express our sincere gratitude to all the resource persons who supported this participatory and inclusive research initiative on the obstacles to and opportunities for peace in Mali. The outcome of this research is an essential basis for the formulation of an agenda for peace, reconciliation and social cohesion in our country.

These acknowledgements are first and foremost dedicated to Malians themselves. We particularly wish to thank the people for making themselves available, including the national administrative and elected authorities, the traditional and religious authorities as well as all persons and entities who were met in the field during the various missions for fact finding, consultation, feedback (restitution), and deepening of the analysis of the outcomes. This participatory, inclusive and constructive nationwide dynamic dialogue, would not have been possible without the participation and constant availability of the various segments of the Malian community who spared no effort nor minced words, to express what they thought were the obstacles to and opportunities for peace in Mali. We express our sincere acknowledgement and gratitude to the members of the Board of Directors of IMRAP for their advice as well as moral and material support which enhanced the effectiveness of our activities.

The Board of Directors and the Executive Management of IMRAP wish to express their deep gratitude to the entire Interpeace team for its constant commitment and advice with regard to the methodological approach to the support for this initiative. This commitment ensured the constant mobilization of strategic and financial partners as well as partners of similar Interpeace programmes in Africa and at the international level with whom rich and practical experiences were shared. These interactions were effective sources of inspiration for the Mali programme. We say thank you to the collaborators of the Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Rwanda programmes for their support and kindness.

We particularly thank Dr. Severin Kouamé, Director of INDIGO Côte d'Ivoire, for his valuable and constant support which enabled us to understand that Côte d'Ivoire and Mali are not only united by a land border, but that they are also united in the quest for sustainable peace.

We wish to thank all those who contributed to the drafting and proofreading of this report. Undoubtedly, their efforts and expertise helped to improve its quality.

IMRAP and Interpeace sincerely thank their financial partners, i.e. the European Union (EU) and the Danish Development Agency (DANIDA) for their financial support towards the establishment of this participatory and inclusive national dialogue process aimed at formulating a consensual agenda owned by the Malian people for the strengthening of social cohesion and sustainable peace in Mali. Our gratitude also goes to the governments of Norway and the Netherlands for their institutional support.

As Scott M. Weber, the Director-General of Interpeace said in his opening address at the National Conference in January 2015 in Bamako, “We are at the end of the beginning, but not at the end of the process.” This is, therefore, the opportunity to once again thank all the participants of the National Conference on the validation and prioritization of the entry points in the quest for sustainable solutions. Your enthusiasm and perceptiveness in the choice of priorities to be tackled in the second phase of the participatory consultation on sustainable solutions, are a testimony of your support for this noble initiative.

We now invite you to assist and guide us in the participatory process in the quest for consensual solutions relating to the priorities identified for peace in Mali.

On behalf of the IMRAP Team,
Traoré Nènè Konaté,
Executive Director

Table of contents

Acknowledgements **3**
Table of contents **5**
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms **7**
Introduction **9**
Methodology **13**

CHAPTER 1: Socio-political diversity and cultural values **19**
1.1 Mali, the land of diversity **19**
1.1.1 Mali, land of mythical kingdoms and empires 19
1.1.2 Ethnocultural mosaic 22
1.1.3 Political diversity 27
1.1.4 Religious diversity: peaceful coexistence between the religions 29
1.1.5 Foundations of the social contract 31
1.2 Destabilizing dynamics linked to socio-political diversity **35**
1.2.1 Collapse of traditional socialization frameworks 35
1.3 Dynamics of exploiting the diversity **46**
1.3.1 The religious dimension 46
1.3.2 The political dimension 53
1.3.3 The socio-ethnic dimension 57
1.3.4 Independent radio stations as vehicles of exploitation and manipulation 62
CHAPTER 2: Regulation of the access to economic resources and opportunities **67**
2.1 Increased competition around economic resources and opportunities .. **68**
2.1.1 Natural resources 69
2.1.2 Other disputed economic opportunities 76
2.2 Perceived regulatory deficiencies: the case of agreements **79**
2.3 Perceived impact on socio-political cohesion **84**
2.3.1 Tensing of cohabitation relations at local level 84
2.3.2. Declining trust in institutions 88

CHAPTER 3: Governance of access to public services 99
3.1 Structural imbalances and deficiencies in the provision of public services 99
3.1.1 Education 100
3.1.2 Health 104
3.1.3 Security 105
3.1.4 Justice 108
3.2 Crumbling service delivery: corruption and lack of civic responsibility 112
3.2.1 Shared corruption 113
3.3 Decentralization: a solution and its challenges 118
3.3.1 Context, objectives and achievements of the decentralization policy 118
3.2.2 Perceived limitations of the process: decentralization, a 'problematic' solution? 124
3.4 Social perceptions of imbalances and deficiencies in providing public services 134
3.4.1 Disparities between the advantaged centre and the marginalized periphery 134
3.4.2 From the perception of favoritism to the seeds of the North/South narrative 135
CHAPTER 4: Mechanisms for local conflict and armed rebellion management and resolution 143
4.1 Mali, a land of conflicts 144
4.2 Conflict management and resolution mechanisms 148
4.2.1 Use of force 148
4.2.2 The path of negotiation 152
4.3 Impact of management mechanisms on society 158
4.3.1 Crumbling of social cohesion and trust 158
4.3.2 Between a feeling of abandonment, ethnic polarization and socio-political radicalization 161

Conclusion 167
Annexes 175
1. Criteria for selecting Actors/Stakeholders in consultations 175
2. Participants at consultation sessions 177
3. Diagram on the participatory process 178

Bibliography 185

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFD	French Development Agency
ALG	Liptako Gourma Authority
AMJM	Malian Association of Muslim Youths
AMO	Compulsory Health Insurance
AMUPI	Malian Association for the Unity and Progress of Islam
AOF	French West Africa
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
BOAD	West African Development Bank
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
CNID	National Democratic Initiative Congress
CHCs	Community Health Centres
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DNCT	National Local Authority Directorate
FBSA	Belgian Food Security Fund
FCFA	African Financial Community Franc
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
GATIA	Imghad and Allied Tuareg Self-Defence Group
HCCT	Local Authority High Council
HCI	Islamic High Council
IMRAP	Malian Institute of Action Research for Peace
MNLA	National Azawad Liberation Movement
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
PCF	French Communist Party
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
PMT	Malian Labour Party
PNIR	National Rural Infrastructure Programme
PSP	Sudanese Progressive Party
TFPs	Technical and Financial Partners
RDA	African Democratic Rally
UDPM	Democratic Union of the Malian People
UNAFEM	National Union of Women Muslims
US-RDA	Sudanese Union-African Democratic Rally

Introduction

Since it attained independence in 1960, Mali has witnessed several rebellions and periods of instability.[1] The first rebellion, which started in 1963 as a result of a territorial, identity and socio-economic marginalization dispute and the rejection of the political system, was brutally crushed, thereby setting the tone for difficult cohabitation between certain communities of the North, which was itself plagued by its own cleavages (ethnic, political, social and economic). Since then, the rebellions, which have almost become cyclical (1990, 2006 and 2012), have heightened the mistrust between the central authorities in Bamako and certain communities in the North in particular.[2] However, the analysis of the conflicts tends to give too much weight to these rebellions, thereby obscuring the latent conflicts which exist throughout the country as well as the various governance-related difficulties which also constitute a huge risk for peace and social cohesion in Mali.

In spite of the complex relations between its various communities, the country was able to use its history to find the necessary motive to maintain its unity within the framework of a certain cultural diversity to guarantee its integrity.[3] However, the attacks of January 2012, the constitutional disruption of 22 March 2012 as well as the attempted coup d'état of 30 April 2012 and its attendant violence, plunged Mali into an unprecedented, serious and multi-dimensional crisis. While many see it as a continuation of the history of rebellions which Mali has witnessed in the past, others emphasize its peculiarity by putting together several aggravating circumstances at both the internal and external levels and by stating its incomparable nature in terms of its impact on social cohesion. Indeed, the extent of the crisis and the speed at which the Malian State collapsed, have brought to the fore the State's fragility and the serious societal and structural problems facing the Malian society. Thus the views expressed in the countrywide consultations depart from those of many observers who instead reduce the crisis to separatist inclinations or schemes pitting the North against the South.

1 Since it attained independence in 1960, Mali has undergone four major rebellions (1963, 1990, 2006 and 2012), preceded by armed revolts during the colonial era.

2 OXFAM (2013), *Reconstruire la mosaïque*.

3 With the exception of the first rebellion, which started in 1963, the subsequent rebellions (1990, 2006, and, to a lesser extent, 2012) were sanctioned by peace accords : (i) 11/08/92 – National Treaty ; (ii) 4/07/2006 –Algiers Accord ; (iii) 18/06/2013 –Ouagadougou Preliminary Accord. See among others: POULTON, Robin-Edward and Ibrahim Ag Youssouf (1999). *La paix de Timbuktu*, UNIDIR, 424pp.

At the height of the crisis, the humanitarian and security situation led to more than 300,000 internally-displaced people and nearly 165,000 Malian refugees in neighbouring countries, particularly women and children.[4]

It is against this background that the Malian Institute of Action Research for Peace (IMRAP) was established as an association on 31 October 2013, in order to contribute to the revival of the desire to live together in harmony and to the deepening of dialogue as a mechanism to jointly face challenges and to capitalize on opportunities for the consolidation of peace, reconciliation and social cohesion. IMRAP is made up of a core team, which also relies on a network of researchers and mobilizers in the regions in order to ensure that its activities have a wider scope and representativeness at the national level.

From November 2013 to December 2014, IMRAP, in partnership with Interpeace,[5] travelled across Mali[6] and to refugee camps in order for Malians to develop their self-portrait on the obstacles to peace. The cross-cutting analysis of the issues emerging from the dialogue between Malians highlights four key factors which are considered obstacles to peace. These are: i) management of socio-political diversity and the crisis of societal values; ii) regulation of competition for natural resources and economic opportunities; iii) governance of access to public services, and iv) mechanisms for the management/resolution of local conflicts and rebellions.

The order of these factors does not indicate a prioritization of the identified obstacles. Additional challenges, which are interrelated and overlapping, include: the security of the country and protection of the people, reintegration of displaced persons and refugees, governance, access to resources and employment, justice, political dialogue and the restoration of trust.

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4 Statistical data from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), available online at http://data.unhcr.org/SahelSituation/country.php?id=501. According to the UNHCR figures, as at December 2014, Mali still had 143,195 refugees in neighbouring countries, in addition to 86,026 internally-displaced persons, against 14,356 returnee refugees : OCHA, *Mali: Aperçu humanitaire*, 4 December 2014. For the latest figures and distribution details, see: http://reliefweb.int/country/mali

5 Interpeace is an independent international organization working to consolidate peace and recognized throughout the world for its proven approach aimed at helping societies to build sustainable peace. Interpeace was established by the United Nations in 1994 to develop innovative ways of resolving conflicts.It remains a strategic partner of the UN. Its Board of Directors is chaired by the former President of Ghana, John A. Kufuor. For further information, see: www.interpeace.org

6 Kidal is the only region which has not been the subject of wide field consultations for security reasons and/or volatility of the political situation. However, since the IMRAP team has a local researcher and mobilizers in the Kidal Region, individual meetings were held with key stakeholders.Representatives of the Kidal region were also able to travel to Bamako for the National Conference. Additionally, they were consulted in Bamako as well as in the refugee camps.

This report is not in any way exhaustive. It is intended as an overview of the major challenges and to serve as a basis for a quest for concrete solutions and actions aimed at making an active contribution to the return to sustainable peace in Mali.

Methodology

This work is premised on the observation that peacebuilding cannot be achieved without the active participation of all stakeholders at all levels of the Malian society. The approach of the Interpeace and IMRAP programme is based on the participation of the people and their leaders in the quest for solutions to the main challenges relating to peace and social cohesion. The programme methodology therefore, aims to make an effective contribution to the identification of the fundamental issues relating to peacebuilding. It also aims to strengthen participation as a fundamental aspect of the democratic process and the management of public affairs. This methodology, referred to as Participatory Action Research, offers a framework for collective research in which Malians participate in the research on the obstacles to sustainable peace and on the solutions to be provided, while the IMRAP researchers focus on the facilitation of discussions and the direction of ideas to ensure that the process is constructive. In addition to putting Malians at the centre of the process, this methodology ensures the creation of neutral spaces for dialogue in which Malian stakeholders can meet, listen to one another and draw more closely together. Such an approach requires time in order to build trust among the concerned stakeholders and to create conditions for constructive, secure and inclusive dialogue.

This report and the accompanying documentary on the obstacles to peace in Mali are the culmination of the first phase of the IMRAP and Interpeace programme[7] of consultations throughout the country and in refugee camps. It is a work of qualitative research in which the outcomes of the consultations are to be used as a mechanism for dialogue and future-oriented reflection. It should be understood that the ideas in this document come from groups formed on the basis of diversity and representativeness. They reflect the current image of Mali, as perceived by the various groups of Malians consulted.

7 The second Participatory Action Research phase will aim at assisting Malians in the identification and implementation of consensual and sustainable solutions.

In order to achieve representativeness, and, for that matter objectivity and quality, the identification of participants for the consultations was based on a mapping of the various stakeholders of the area, with the help of local researchers and mobilizers and a series of previously established criteria mindful of ethnic, religious, political, generational, gender and other sensitivities (see Annexes). Special attention was paid to reducing the vertical space, which often separates the authorities and the elite from the rest of the population, and to creating spaces for open and constructive dialogue between them.

The methodology gave preference to the collection of untampered testimonies that were representative of the opinions of the entire Malian society. Facilitation was done openly and without pre-established questions (with the exception of the initial question: "What are the obstacles to sustainable peace?"), so as to avoid controling or leading the discussions. The role of the facilitation team was to bring out the opinions expressed, reformulate them where necessary in order to reach a common understanding and to reintroduce them into the debate. This technique assigns the lead role to the participants and helps to ensure the emergence of a consensus among the group or, as the case may be, helps to bring out contradictory positions. Given IMRAP's ability to provide translation into the various local languages (on account of the diversity within the team itself and through a network of local researchers and mobilizers), the team encouraged participants to express themselves in the language in which they felt most comfortable. It was a delicate but essential exercise to ensure that participants' words were conveyed with the full meaning with which they were intended.

Between November 2013 and March 2015, the IMRAP team travelled to the eight regions of Mali, the District of Bamako and to refugee camps in Mauritania and Niger (see Map 1 below) where focus groups and individual meetings with key stakeholders were organized (see Appendices). Moreover, homogeneous focus groups were sometimes organized for certain social groups in Mali such as women (more than 25% of those consulted), youth (35%), minorities and the marginalized. The aim was to enable them express themselves freely and, by so doing, to ensure that the voices of all segments of the society were reflected in the research.[8]

8 Of the 4,700 persons consulted during the consultations at least 1,125 were women (25%) and 1,650 young people aged less than 35 (35%).

This important work ensured that about 4,700 persons were consulted. A three-phase approach was followed (see appendices):

(ii) **Consultations at the county level** through 123 focus groups and about 60 individual and group meetings (see details in the Appendices);
(ii) **Regional Restitutions**, or conferences, aimed at validating and deepening the preliminary analysis of Malians emerging from the initial consultations, and
(iii) **A National Restitution (National Conference)** aimed at presenting and **validating the Self-Portrait of Mali on the obstacles to peace and prioritizing the entry points for the quest for solutions appropriate to the Malian context.**

The empirical data collected from the population was complemented and enriched by analyses by Malian resource persons with proven expertise in the various thematic areas. Desk research further clarified and enriched the understanding of the issues at stake.

Audiovisual tools were used to complement the research. The documentary film ensures the authenticity of reported statements by faithfully retaining the opinions expressed during the discussions and capturing the mood in which the consultations were conducted. In a country as vast as Mali, the use of audiovisual equipment proved to be a key tool for stimulating debate. Showing focus groups pictures of debates from other groups, helped to create links and stimulate mutual understanding between social groups that would not ordinarily enter into dialogue with each other due to geographic, cultural, ethnic, generational and, even, psychological distances.

During the **National Conference** at the Bamako International Conference Centre (CICB) from 27 to 29 January 2015, the outcomes of the participatory research were presented. The conference, known in French as a *restitution*, brought together a total of 180 persons, of which 34% were youth and 32% women (see Appendices), from all the regions of Mali and from refugee camps of Malians. The conference, which was officially opened by the Malian Minister for National Reconciliation and the European Union Ambassador to Mali, in the presence of the Malian Minister for Religious Affairs, was attended by participants representing the state, founding families of Bamako, distinguished religious and customary leaders, political parties and civil society as well as youth, women, displaced persons and refugees. The presence of international observers, particularly representatives of cooperation agencies, international organizations and United Nations agencies, allowed for international

recognition of the first stage of interactions between Malians on the issues relating to peace in their country. These issues are being given priority attention by Mali's technical and financial partners.

For three days, participants debated the Self-Portrait of Mali on the Obstacles to Peace, adding important nuances which have been incorporated into this document. The open, frank, informed and often emotional debates were translated into four local languages – Bambara, Tamasheq, Songhai and Peulh – and into French. Once a consensus on the obstacles to peace had been reached, the National Conference determined that key solutions were not readily available, thus acknowledging that the identified obstacles are complex, interconnected and often divergent in terms of opinions. This observation led the Conference to observe that additional participatory, inclusive and change-oriented approaches are necessary in order to develop operational, consensual and sustainable solutions. It is in this regard that Mali's representatives mandated IMRAP to initiate a participatory process to seek solutions with regard to the identified priorities for peace, in close collaboration with a steering committee tasked with assisting IMRAP in the identification, analysis and support of solutions that will bring about real change.

Conceptual Framework

With regard to conflict

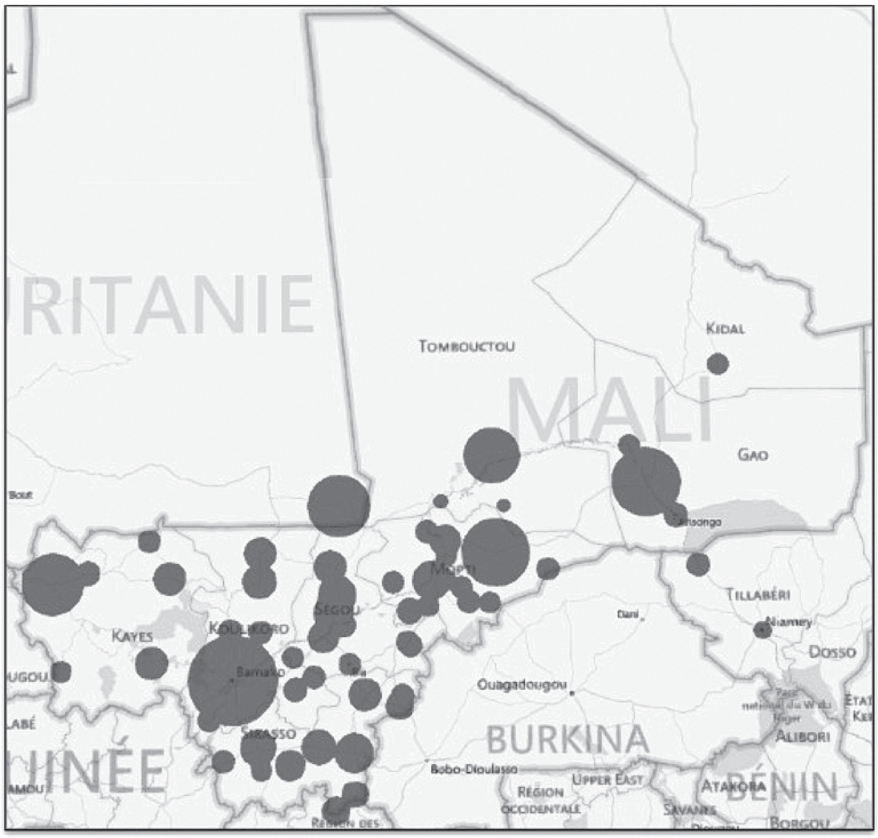
Conflicts are a natural phenomenon in a society. Here, the notion of conflict is understood as the confrontation of various interests, ideas and intentions, a situation which is intrinsic to social and political life. If managed effectively, a conflict can have a positive impact on social dynamics insofar as it results in innovation and positive change. On the other hand, conflict can be disruptive and, indeed, destructive, when social groups or individuals believe that violence is the best or only way to defend their interests.

With regard to peace

Here, peace is understood not only as the absence of violence, but as the prevalence of a framework of social and political relations that are free from coercion or violence, thereby enabling individuals or groups to pursue their needs and aspirations (economic, identity, political, religious, or others) without fear and in an environment of justice and security. Peace is always perfectible: individuals and groups (men and women) in society are constantly looking for the best means of meeting their needs and aspirations within a context of divergent interests and disagreements. Peace is therefore a long-term process, not an event. Peace requires true commitment: a social contract between the various social partners, which determines the conditions in which the pursuit of needs and aspirations can take place without resorting to violence or coercion, and with full respect of human rights.

This report is structured around the main issues, or outcomes, that emerged from the debates. The priorities for peace – as defined by the National Conference which was representative of the Malian society – are highlighted at the end of the report by way of conclusion, but also as an opening. These issues will be subjected to a nationwide debate in order to identify consensual solutions to sustainable peace.

Map 1 | Geographical Coverage of the Consultations – Persons consulted by County
Between November 2013 and March 2015



CHAPTER 1
Socio-political diversity and cultural values

Through its history and geographical situation, Mali has, over the centuries, become a land of convergence where a multitude of ethnic groups, socio-political organizations and religions cohabitate. This ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, which has, for a long time been a particular characteristic and asset for Mali, came up during the consultations as having been seriously weakened by various endogenous and exogenous factors. According to the participants in the consultations, these differences are also exploited for economic or political purposes by certain stakeholders. This exploitation leads to numerous situations of conflict: categorization of people by status, ethnocentrism, stereotyping vision of others and stigmatization of certain segments of society, thereby undermining their trust, social cohesion and ability to peacefully cohabitate.

1.1 Mali, land of diversity

In order to have a true understanding of the meaning of the outcomes of the dialogue on the issues of diversity in Mali, it is essential to grasp the history in which the vision or outlook of the people is founded. This first section will therefore, endeavour to provide an overview of Mali's history: its great empires and how they structured cohabitation and coexistence; the structuring of the religious space since the advent of Islam; as well as developments in the forming of the political landscape.

1.1.1 Mali, land of mythical kingdoms and empires

Present-day Mali, situated in the Western Sudan in the Sahel-Sahara zone, was the cradle of several kingdoms and empires. The area was continuously occupied from the 5th to the 19th centuries by political formations from the most elementary to the most sophisticated. A wide variety of peoples and cultures lived together in peace. Several ethnic groups were each, at one time or another, behind a political system which governed several others at the same time: the Soninké ruled the Ghana Empire, the Malinké the Mali Empire, the Songhai the Songhai Empire, the Bamanan the Bamanan Kingdom of Ségou, the Peuls the Peul Empire of Macina, the Sénoufo the

Kénédougou Kingdom, etc. The advantage of this change of power or succession of dominant ethnic groups was that, by dominating others, each ethnic group had the sense of enjoying a period of glory in its history. And as the wheels of history have turned, each ethnic group has been able to accept its current situation without much resentment. Although the Tuaregs and the Moors have generally remained on the periphery of these great empires, they have always had important interactions and a certain independence vis-à-vis these empires.

In Western Sudan, three empires earned particular attention due to their size, the duration of their existence and the inter-relations between their various peoples. These are the Ghana, Mali and Songhai empires.

The Ghana Empire: It is the first of the great empires of the Middle Ages in Africa. Founded in the 4th century by the Soninkés, it reached the height of its glory in the 10th century, stretching from the boundaries of the Sahara in the north to the edge of the forest in the south. Its gold-rich provinces of Bambouck, Bourré and Galam are responsible for its prosperity and reputation. Its sovereign bore the title Kaya-Maghan, king of gold, and lived in the capital at Kumbi-Saleh, served by Muslim and non-Muslim advisers. Kumbi-Saleh also had a Muslim district. Gold, salt and the trans-Saharan trade accounted for the wealth of the empire. The simple landmark oases of Sidjilmassa and Oualata became famous and prosperous cities where traders from the Muslim world and elsewhere traded with each other. In the 11th century, the Ghana Empire was destroyed by the Almoravids who conquered Sidjilmassa in 1054 and Aoudaghost in 1055. None of the vassal provinces of the empire, including Sosso of Sumanguru Kante, were able to rebuild it. It was from these ruins that the Mali Empire emerged.

The Mali Empire: Following the fall of the Ghana Empire, and after three centuries of the kingdoms breaking up, the Mali Empire was founded in the 13th Century by Sundiata Keita, who conquered the powerful King of Sosso, Sumanguru Kante, at the battle of Krina. Sundiata extended the boundaries of his State and gave it the Mandé Charter at Kouroukan Fouga. Today, the Mandé Charter is considered the first-ever constitution of Africa, south of the Sahara. At the height of its glory in the 14th century, the Mali empire extended from the Atlantic Ocean to the loop of the Niger, and included Guinea, Senegal, The Gambia, Sierra-Leone, Mali and the south of modern-day Mauritania. The sovereign bore the title Mansa and lived in the capital at Niani. The most known and most famous sovereign of the Mali Empire was Kankan Musa, who reigned from 1312 to 1327. He embarked on a lavish pilgrimage

to Mecca in 1324, which made the Mali Empire known to the whole world. He was a benefactor and great builder. He had mosques built, including that of Timbuktu, and got scholars to come to Mali. The Mali Empire started to decline in the 15th century. Weakened by succession disputes, it succumbed to attacks from the Mossi Kingdom and the Songhai Empire.

The Songhai Empire: The Songhai Empire is the third and last of the great African empires of the Middle Ages. Its founder, Sonni Ali Ber, the great conqueror, built from the Gao Kingdom a vast state out of the ruins of the Mali Empire over which he ruled from 1464 to 1492. At the height of its glory, the empire stretched from Téghazza to Mossi land and from Agadez to Tékrour. The most famous sovereign of the Songhai Empire was Askia Mohamed, the founder of the Askia Dynasty, who ruled from 1493 to 1529, and who is known in African history as the pious sovereign under whom the Muslim religion became deeply entrenched throughout the region. Many foreign scholars and ulamas came to study and even settle in Timbuktu, Djenné and Gao, and in all the trading cities of the empire. The Trans-Saharan trade in mining, gold and salt was the foundation of the empire's economic prosperity. The empire's decline started in the 16th century, before it succumbed to the Moroccan invasion at the Battle of Tomdibi in 1591.

The fall of the Songhai Empire pitted its former vassal kingdoms against one another, with each wanting to establish its hegemony over its neighbours and to extend its domination to other horizons. Thus, new kingdoms like the following emerged: the Bambara Kingdom of Segou and the Massassi Kingdom of Kaarta, the Peulh Kingdom of Macina, the Toucouleur Empire, the Wassoulou Kingdom, the Senoufo Kingdom of Kénédougou, etc.

Colonial French penetration finally ended the existence of the kingdoms and wars waged regularly by the various kings. It marked the commencement of colonial French domination, which established its authority and control of the occupied territories through various management strategies. Like the other former French colonies, the current borders of Sudanwere the product of this occupation. What was then Sudan became Mali on the attainment of independence, retaining the borders demarcated by the colonialists who did not take account of the geographic, cultural and ethnic specificities or willingly exploited them in order to further weaken any remnants of indigenous authority still in existence.

The history of these empires is rich in lessons, and provides us with the keys to understand our current history. The administrative organization of these empires is a good lesson in decentralization. The sovereign was at the centre of the central authority in his capital. He was represented in the provinces either by direct representatives appointed by him or by conquered chiefs who remained at the helm of their provinces, in exchange for the payment of atribute.

The fact that the states were very vast and made up of several geographic, cultural and ethnic areas, all of which were subjected to the same rules and carried out various economic activities (agriculture, fishing, stockbreeding, trade, etc.), proves that living together is possible because it existed in our history for centuries.

The history of these centuries is also one of a lesson in religious tolerance. Muslim advisers were seen in the courts of non-Muslim sovereigns. Muslim foreigners and traders have lived among non-Muslim populations without the least problem, and have even had their own settlements in certain towns.

The diversity of the Malian population, therefore, draws its origin from historic encounters which have characterized its history. In spite of the interactions between the peoples, each community has retained its specificities. These have been perpetuated through social interactions which have made present-day Mali a land of socio-cultural and ethnic diversity.

1.1.2 Ethnocultural mosaic

The borders of present-day Mali do not correspond to the boundaries of the great empires and kingdoms on whose ruins its history is built. However, history teaches us that the peoples of the diverse empires and kingdoms whose descendants inhabit present-day Mali have collectively gone through periods of bloody wars and peaceful trade and social interactions. Thus, a multitude of ethnic groups are found today on Malian territory. The diversity of the Malian population thus draws its origin from the encounters which have characterized its history. In spite of the interactions between the peoples, each community has retained elements of its culture and traditions, which have been perpetuated over time to eventually make present-day Mali a land of socio-cultural, ethnic and even political diversity. This diversity also stems from both the geography and history of the country, which is a product of the convergence of the plains and the mountains; the Sahel and the Sahara; the savanna and the forest; and

the rivers and the desert. Its population, which is estimated at 14,517,176 inhabitants,[9] is spread across some 20 ethnic groups living in the District of Bamako and in the eight administrative regions of the country.

It is important to note that none of the Malian ethnic groups mentioned below singly occupies a particular portion of the national territory. Multi-ethnic is what characterizes the entire Malian population. Thus, it is difficult if not impossible to draw an ethnic map of Mali on which significant "autonomous" cultural areas are marked out; cultural areas overlap each other as a result of numerous inter-relations between the populations since pre-historic times. Although belonging to an ethno-cultural community (often recognized by the surname) constitutes an important identity marker in Mali, it is difficult to objectively define ethnic groups. The surname is often times used to distinguish between communities, but because it is not the practice in all the ethnic groups, it is not in itself, enough to determine the ethnic belonging of an individual, let alone his phenotype or physical appearance. Thus, identity in Mali is characterized by a certain flexibility, a phenomenon of osmosis in which individuals or entire groups have been known to move from one ethnic group to another. This phenomenon has been known to happen in the past and continues to date.

In light of this, the numbers assigned to the various groups are purely for information purposes. Owing to the fact that census in Mali has not been done on the basis of ethnicity since independence,[10] the figures are therefore estimates.[11]

The Bambaras or Ban-Manas, also associated with the Mandinka group, speak the Bamanankan language known as Bambara and are the majority ethnic group of the country, with nearly 36% of the population. They are mainly found in the Segou and Koulikoro regions at the centre of the country, in the Sikasso region in the south and in Kaarta, between Kita and Nioro in eastern Kayes. They bear the surnames of Diarra, Coulibaly, Traoré and Samaké among others. Traditionally, the Bambaras practise traditional religions. They are predominantly farmers. Bambaras are the descendants of the founders of the Bambara of Segou Kingdom and the Massassi of Kaarta Kingdom.

9 4th General Population and Housing Census (RGPH) - Mali 2009.

10 This policy specifically aims at backing the efforts towards the consolidation of national unity by avoiding the strengthening of ethnic and religious cleavages. Individual meeting, historian, Bamako, January 2015.

11 It is therefore possible even probable that certain groups are under-assessed.

The Peulhs or Foulbés account for about 13.9% of the population of Mali. Their main activity is stockbreeding. They are found almost everywhere in the country, but are mainly concentrated in the Nioro area of the Kayes region and in the counties of Mopti, Djenné and Macina at the heart of the Niger belt. Other large settlements are found in the Bandiagara, Ségou and San counties and in the Gao region. Although they no longer speak the language, the Ouassoulou Foulas in the Koulikoro, Kita, Bafoulabé and Sikasso regions claim to belong to the larger Peulh family. Peulhs are mainly Muslims. Some Peulh surnames are, Diallo, Diakité, Sidibé, Sangaré, Barry, Sow, and Bah, among others.

The Sénoufos and Miniankas are two ethnic sub-groups affiliated with the Voltaic group, but differ in language and certain traditional practices. They account for about 10% of the Malian population, and are said to descend from the same ancestor. The Miniankas have settled in the San, Koutiala and Sikasso regions. The Sénoufos live in the Sikasso region near the Côte-d'Ivoire-Burkina Faso border. Both are originally animists, and the Sénoufos, for example, worship their ancestors and numerous spirits who they claim live in the surrounding world. The Ouattaras, Konés, Berthés, Sanogos, etc. are among Sénoufo surnames, while the Goitas, Daos, Dembélés and Sogobas are Minyankas.

The Sarakollés or Soninkés or Markas account for nearly 9% of the Malian population. They originate from the Sahel zone, more specifically from the Yélimané, Nioro and Nara counties of the Kayes region which shares a border with Mauritania and Senegal. The Sarakollés are traditionally traders and have been practising Islam for a long time. On account of their specific history, they appear to be dispersed throughout the country. The Sarakollés bear the following surnames; Sacko, Cissé, Sylla, Diawara, Camara, Doucouré, etc.

The Malinkés, who constitute about 7% of the Malian population, are descendants of the founders of the Mali Empire. They are found in the Kangaba County of the Koulikoro region and in the Kita County of the Kayes region. These people have strong links with the history of Mali which is told by the Djélis (Griots). The Hunters or "Donzos" continue to play an important role in the management of society. They still practise traditional religion through the worship of their ancestors. The Malinkés are engaged in agriculture, hunting and, especially, traditional gold mining. Some Malinké surnames are: Camara, Keïta, Cissé, and Bérété.

The Songhaïs today, represent about 6% of the Malian population. These are the descendants of the founders of the Songhai Empire. They are found in the area of the Niger belt in the Gao region, around Lake Debo in the Mopti and Timbuktu regions and towards the border of the Republic of Niger. The Songhais are mainly Muslims and are engaged in agriculture and fishing. They bear the following surnames: Maïga, Touré, Traoré, etc.

The Dogons or Hambés account for about 5% of the Malian population. They are found on the Bandiagara cliffs and in the valleys of the Douentza area of the south-east of Mopti and along the border with Burkina Faso. The Dogon people are made up of several sub-groups, each of which has its own dialect and practices. For communication among the sub-groups, they use the Peulh language. Dogons are well known for their houses, built on the edges of cliffs, and for their traditional religion rich in unique cosmogony and belief in the immortality of the soul and in a multitude of secondary deities. Thanks to the works of the anthropologist Marcel Griaule, the Dogons remain one of the most known ethnic groups in Mali. They are engaged in agriculture and increasingly in tourism. Kassambara, Ouologuem, Ongoiba, Dieptilé, Togo, etc., are Dogon surnames.

The Bwas or Bobos, who are estimated at about 2% of the Malian population, and occupy the area along the Burkina Faso border in the Tominian and San counties of the Ségou region. Most of them practise traditional religions and are increasingly embracing Christianity and Islam. Bobo names include; Kamaté, Koné, Diarra, Théra, and Dakouo.

The Bozo, who account for less than 2% of the Malian population, have settled in Macina in the Upper Niger area and in Ségou and Mopti regions. Their main activity is fishing and are engaged in a form of nomadism, depending on the rise or drop in water levels of surrounding lakes and the Niger River. They are increasingly engaged in agriculture. Bozo surnames are Minta, Niantao, Kaniantao, Kampo, Karambenta, among others.

The Tuaregs, who are estimated to account for 1.7% of the population, speak the Tamasheq language. Tuaregs occupy the northern regions of Mali, i.e. Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal. They are stockbreeders and lead a nomadic life and are also engaged in the craft industry. The Tuareg society is matriarchal and very hierarchical. They have no surnames like the Bambaras or Sarakollés. Their names are made up

of the first name followed by Ag (son of) for men, Walet (daughter of) for women, followed by that of the father.

The Moors or Berbers or Arabs, account for about 1.2% of the Malian population. They occupy the north of Kayes region, the west of Gao region and the north-west of Timbuktu region. They remain attached to an "Arab" identity, but are, indeed, a highly mixed people. Just like the Tuaregs, the surnames of some are made up of the first name of the father preceded by Ould or Ben for men and Mint for women. Nevertheless, some also bear surnames such as Kounta, Haïdara, etc.

In Mali, in addition to these larger ethnic groups, there are other groups which are less important on account of their size, but which stand out as a result of their distinctive characteristics. Among these are the Diawaras who live in the Nioro and Nara counties near the Mauritanian border. They speak the same language as the Sarakollés, but differ from them with regard to certain customary practices. We also have the Kasshonkés who have settled in the east of Kayes and in the Bafoulabé region. There are also the Somonos who are found along the major waterways. They are like the Bozos as a result of their engagement in fishing.

In spite of their linguistic, cultural and religious differences, the peoples of Mali have been able to forge strong social links which enable them to live together. From the perspective of those consulted, this coexistence was made possible because each community was able to create for itself – and between one another – mechanisms for managing communal life. This coexistence was developed on the basis of pacts and norms which served as the foundation of the social contract.[12] As illustrated by a participant in the Gao consultations, these pacts and norms have acted as instruments for the regulation of relations within and between the communities for centuries: "*Each nomad had his sedentary counterpart and each sedentary person had his nomadic counterpart, for whom he provided shelter and protection during his movements; and exchanges existed between them.*"[13] Thus, Mali *"draws its strength from its socio-cultural diversity,"*[14] a fact that makes it a country with a huge socio-political and socio-cultural potential.

12 The texts on the Kouroukan Fouga meeting under the reign of Sundiata Keita have eloquently covered this issue: see Box 1.1.

13 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Timbuktu, Timbuktu Region, June 2014.

14 President Ibrahim Boubakar Keita (IBK) quoted in: Le Prétoire, "Assises pour la paix, la réconciliation et le développement des régions du Nord", 4 November 2013, http://maliactu.net/assises-nationales-sur-le-nord-pour-un-nouveau-contrat-social/#sthash.WGAdpome.dpuf.

1.1.3 Political diversity

Inasmuch as Mali is a land of ethnic diversity, it is also very much a land of political diversity. Its political multiplicity derives from its history in that each of the great empires and kingdoms it inherited had its modes of political organization. The mode of conquest of power, its management and succession, varied between the different empires and kingdoms. Today, Mali's democratic dispensation has more than 100 political parties. This multiplicity is an expression of the multiparty system, which is a principle of the fundamental law of the 3rd Republic. This law is the fruit of years of democratic struggle.

Like other African countries, Mali's political history was characterized by a transition from a one-party state to a multiparty system. Political parties and their participation in the democratic process can be viewed from three angles. From its attainment of international sovereignty in 1960 todate, the country has had three republics: Modibo Keita's socialist regime (1960-1968), Moussa Traoré's military regime (1968-1991) and the democratic era since the 26 of March 1991 revolution and the election of Alpha Oumar Konaré, following the first democratic and multiparty elections to date.

Before independence, the first political parties dated back to 1946. At the time, the country was known as the French Sudan. The Sudanese Democratic Party (PDS), which is close to the French Communist Party (PCF), was founded on 6 January 1946. On 26 January 1946, the Sudanese Democratic Bloc (BDS), which is officially close to the French Branch of Workers' International (SFIO), was formed. It is, however, linked to the PCF. The Sudanese Progressive Party (PSP) was founded on 13 February 1946. These three parties participated in the political struggle for the independence of the French Sudan, which later became Mali.

The second major period, which ran from 1960 to 1991, was characterized by a succession of one-party dispensations. First, President Modibo Keita, as the leader of the Sudanese Union-African Democratic Rally (US-RDA), introduced a one-party regime. This socialist party remained the country's only political dispensation until 19 November 1968. On that day, the socialist regime was overthrown by Lieutenant Moussa Traoré, who led 32 officers to form the Military Committee for National Liberation (CMNL), which proscribed political parties until 1979. During this period, the CMNL was the only ruling organ in Mali. On 30 March 1979, the Democratic Union of the Malian People (UDPM) had its baptism by fire. It was the only political party until its demise in 1991. Although this regime prohibited all conducive conditions for

the diversification of the political system, some parties such as, the Malian Labour Party (PMT)[15] were clandestinely formed. It should be noted that under the Moussa Traoré regime (1968-1991), the ban on political parties forced opposition members to form associations. Since then, the Malian civil society has been particularly active.

With the advent of democracy following the popular uprisings which led to the fall of the Moussa Traoré regime on 26 March 1991, and after Mali had opted for a fully-fledged multiparty system, democratic associations were converted into political parties in order to quickly fill up the political landscape. Such is the case of the Alliance for Democracy in Mali – African Party for Solidarity and Justice (ADEMA-PASJ) and the National Democratic Initiative Congress (CNID). Since the multiparty system was considered on the same level as the principles of secularism and the republican form of the state, it is thus irreversible. Calling it into question constitutes the deprivation of a right. During this period, therefore, the political scene was characterized by the formation of many new political parties: 48 of them participated in the first free legislative elections held in 1992. However, only 10 had candidates elected to the 1992 Parliament and 15 to that of 2007. For each election campaign, coalitions of convenience and breakaway groups were formed. Such is the case of parties such as the Miria, RPM and URD, all three of which emerged from the ADEMA, or even the SADI and PARENA which emerged from the CNID. Political parties continued to be formed, to the extent that it is even difficult to give their exact number. This multiplicity of political parties is indeed meant to introduce a political system capable of representing the social interests, achieving unity and diversity and subjecting this unity to diversity. The multiparty system, therefore, aims at using parliamentary representation and partisan representation to limit power and to administer the balance of power existing at the level of civil society. "*This political plurality is materialized in actual discussion and debates on constructive ideas between parties representing the main social groups of the country, proposes structured societal projects and explicit government programmes, effectively expresses the diverse shades of opinion and embodies the main values and conceptions of the common good shared by society*."[16] It is mainly characterized by partisan competition that does not frustrate or marginalize minorities.

15 CAMARA, Moussa, Kadiatou Yacouba KEITA and Alou DIAWARA (2011), *L'évolution des partis politiques et leurs apports à la démocratie au Mali*", in. Partis et idéologies politiques, élections et bonne gouvernance en Afrique.

16 DIETH, Alexis (2013), *L'effondrement malien: quelles leçons pour la démocratie en Afrique?*, Afrik.com, January 2013, available at : http://www.afrik.com/l-effondrement-malien-quelles-lecons-pour-la-democratie-en-afrique

In spite of their high number, political parties in Mali have continually opted for peaceful ways of resolving disputes between them. Thus for some 20 years (from 1992 to 2012), democracy in Mali has been the pride of Malians and has often been cited as a model for Africa.

1.1.4 Religious diversity: peaceful coexistence between the religions

The constitution[17] of Mali establishes the secular nature of the nation. Nevertheless, the country has three main religions, Islam, Christianity and animism. According to data from the recent administrative census (2009), there are 90% Muslims, 2% Christians and 8% animists.[18]

> "Here, religions respect one another, religions have regard for one another. In Mali, we are brothers and sisters, we are descendants of the same ancestors and we can only respect and love one another."[19]

Although Islam is the dominant religion in Mali, such has not always been the case. Islam and Christianity are imported religions which came and found traditional religious practices (animism). The original system of belief of Malians, be they Bambara, Peulh or Sonrhaï, is animism. Depending on the ethnic group (Komo for the Bambaras, Kanaga for the Dogons, Nya for the Sénoufos or Holé for the Sonrhaïs), this worship-based belief system is practised today by a very small percentage of the Malian population. There are approximately 8% of animists from the south to the central region of the country practise traditional rituals.[20]

Islam, the religion practised by 90% of the population, was introduced in Mali in the 11th century by Arab traders. It is said that around 1050, Baramandama Keïta became the first king of Mali to convert to Islam.[21] The pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324 by Moussa, the Emperor of Mali, struck his Arab contemporaries as a result of its splendour. The following century, the Songhai Empire declared itself a Muslim state. Thus, Islam, just like the great cultural centres of Timbuktu, Djenné and Gao, became an integral part of Malian identity.[22] There is also the memory of this long period of

17 Art. 26 of the 1992 Constitution.
18 General Population and Housing Census (RGPH) (2009), Mali.
19 Individual meeting, Bishops' representative, Kayes, April 2014.
20 RGPH (2009), op.cit.
21 According to Djibril T. NIANE quoted on the website http://lemali.org/fr/art-et-culture-du-mali/religion.
22 Patrice GOURDI (2012), Géopolitique du Mali : un Etat failli, Diploweb, 23 September.

peaceful cohabitation between certain pockets of Islam and vast regions which continued to practise traditional religion. The result of this cohabitation is the strong penetration of Islam within the various communities, on the one hand, and great tolerance and acceptance of diversity at the religious level, on the other hand.[23] Under the great Empires (see section 1.1.1), where only the chiefs and the learned were truly Islamized, the Arabic language and culture became prestigious. To date, those who are well read in Arabic, often called marabouts, remain highly regarded personalities in Malian society. With the great universities of Timbuktu and Djenné, Mali witnessed the beginnings of a true Islamo-African civilization.[24] It is the more tolerant Malekite faction of Islam that is predominately practised in Mali to the present day.[25] As is generally the case in sub-Saharan Africa, brotherhoods play an important role, particularly the *Tidjania* (for the Tuaregs, the Moors, the Peulhs of Macina and the Songhais) and the *Qadriya*, which particularly thrived in the west of the country, just like in neighbouring Senegal. In recent decades, the country has witnessed the growth of new Islamic factions which came from the Middle East in particular, a situation which has led to the diversification of "religious options" and given rise to competition between the various factions available.

Christianity accounts for only about 2% of Malians (of which more than 80% are Catholic). It was introduced towards the end of the 19th century at the same time as colonization. Christian missions are particularly present in the south, central region and west of the country. The town of Kita in the Kayes region, where the "*Notre Dame de Kita*" cathedral is located, is one of the most famous places in Mali and also where the annual Catholic pilgrimage takes place.

In Mali, religion, which has historically shaped society, remains one of the most important binding factors structuring social order, particularly in the face of the weakening of other institutions of socialization (family, community, school, etc. – see section 1.2.1). Thus, with its geographic position and rich historic past, Mali represents

23 STAMER, Joseph (2003), *Quel dialogue islamo-chrétien au Mali? Chemins de dialogue*, no.22, p.119-129.

24 STAMER (2003), *op.cit.*

25 "As one of the four schools of jurisprudence (madhhab) of Sunni Islam, formerly called the School of Medina, the Malekite tradition is centred on the teaching of Imam Malik ibn Anas (about. 715-795), who spent most of his life in Medina. Having attracted a large number of students and getting involved in local politics, he wrote the first essay on Muslim law, Al-Muwarly called the School of Medina, the Malekite tradition is centred on the teaching of Imam Malik ibn Anas (about. 715-795), who spent most opinion (ra'y) and reasoning by analogy (qiyas), rather than the hadith as the basis of Muslim jurisprudence. However, these continued […] to be invoked in [certain] judgments. Many Malekites are found throughout North and West Africa, Sudan and certain parts of the Arab-Persian Gulf" from Encyclopeadia Universalis.

the crossroads of civilizations in which Christians, Muslims and animists live closely together, a situation which makes the Mali case, unique.

> "They live in the same town houses, the same villages, work or study side by side, pay neighbourly visits to one another and share their pains and joys with one another. Members of the same family sometimes claim to belong to 'different paths', but that does not affect family solidarity. The social interaction so described is a deeply rooted value in African tradition in general and Malian tradition in particular. Basically, there is this conception that everyone is part of one same community, a community which has the same origin and the same destiny, and that differences in worship or 'path' should not damage or threaten these realities." [26]

This conception of religion ensured that a climate of peace is maintained and freedom is guaranteed for all, hence the consolidation of the bedrock on which rest the foundations of the Malian social contract.

1.1.5 Foundations of the social contract

Shared principles and norms have encouraged people to live together in an atmosphere of political, social, economic and cultural interdependence which has been developed for centuries.[27] Practices such as the *Sinangouya* or "friendly banter kinship" [28] in English, likewise with inter-community marriages, have contributed to the forging of solid social relations between Malian communities, in spite of their differences. All these values have allowed the diverse expression of the Malian personality through various institutions – charters, pacts, etc. – which to a certain extent, could be considered the bedrock of the Malian social contract.

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26 STAMER (2003), *op.cit*.

27 For example, the text of the Kouroukan Fouga (see Box 1.1).

28 "Friendly banter kinship is a social group phenomenon in Mali. The terminologies symbolizing this established fact vary from town to town, but the foundations remain the same when it comes to practice. Far from being a law consigned to the archives and set forth in the articles asserting the management policy of the Malian State, it is a reality which stands out at all levels of the socio-economic and cultural life of the country. […] [It] enables cross cousins to assert themselves and to condemn the mistakes and faults of others in a climate of joy and peace". As an ancestral link between communities sharing the same space, "[this] blood pact also symbolizes solidarity and cohesion in the division of the resource area, solidarity in the protection of the individual from his invading neighbour, as well as cohesion with regard to the participation of his fellow man in the work necessary for the time of harvest. This blood pact then guarantees the peace and tranquility of all because no one will dare violate a sacred provision whose consequences would be disastrous." For a more detailed study on the history of friendly banter kinship in Mali, see SACKO, Youssouf, "*Le fleuve Niger comme source du rapport de cousinage, fondement de la culture et de la paix des communes de Mopti et Konna*."

Box 1.1 | Preamble of the Kouroukan Fouga Charter

"The Manden was founded on love and expectation, freedom and brotherhood. This means that there can be neither ethnic nor racial discrimination against the Manden. Such was the meaning of our struggle. Therefore, the children of Sanené and Kontron declare as follows to the twelve parts of the world and on behalf of the entire Manden community:

1. **The hunters declare:** Every (human) life is life. It is true that one life comes into existence before another. However, a life is neither 'older', nor more respectable than another life. Similarly, a life is not superior to another.
2. **The hunters declare:** Since every life is life, any harm against a life demands redress. Therefore:
   - No one should attack his neighbour gratuitously,
   - No one should wrong his neighbour,
   - No one should torture his fellow man.
3. **The hunters declare:** That everyone should be his neighbour's keeper, that everyone should revere his parents, that everyone should raise his children as he should, that everyone should 'maintain', provide the needs of the members of his family.
4. **The hunters declare:** That everyone should watch over the land of his fathers. Land or fatherland or faso should also and above all mean people. This is because 'every country or land from whose surface men disappear, would immediately become nostalgic.'
5. **The hunters declare:** Hunger is not a good thing, neither is slavery a good thing. There is no calamity worse than these things. As long as we have the bow and quiver, hunger will no longer kill anyone in the Manden. Should hunger strike; war will no longer destroy any village in order to take slaves from it. That is to say that, no one will ever again put a muzzle on the mouth of his neighbour so as to go sell him. No one shall be beaten up, let alone put to death, because he is the son of a slave.
6. **The hunters declare:** The essence of slavery is done away with this day, 'From one wall to another'; from one Manden border the other; Raids in Manden are prohibited as from this day forward. The turmoils from these horrors are over, as of this day in the Manden. What ordeal, what turmoil! Particularly when the oppressed have no redress. A slave enjoys no esteem; nowhere in this world.

7. The elders tell us: Man as an individual, made of bone and flesh, of marrow and nerves, of skin covered with hair, feeds himself on food and drinks. But his 'soul', his spirit lives on three things:

- to see what he desires to see,
- to say what he desires to say, and
- to do what he desires to do;

If the human soul happens to lack any one of these things, it will suffer from it, and will surely languish for it. Therefore, the hunters declare:

- Everyone has henceforth control over their own being,
- Everyone is free to make their own decisions,
- Everyone has henceforth control over the fruits of his labour;

This is the oath of the Manden.
This is for the attention of the whole world."

1.1.5.1 Charters: the example of the Kouroukan Fouga constitution

The adoption of the Kouroukan Fouga constitution (1235), following the enthronement of Sundiata as the Emperor of Mali, is mentioned as one of the most elaborate of the time. One of its distinguishing features is the fact that it not only introduced principles to govern relations within the Mandinka society through the codification of relations between the various segments of society, but that it also defined standards for governing interactions between the Mandinka and other societies, be they under their domination or otherwise.

1.1.5.2 Values and pacts structuring socio-political cohesion:

Overall, Mali inherited highly hierarchical communities. This hierarchical organization dates far back into history, since the era of the great empires. This division of society into classes enabled the authorities to determine the role of each social class within it. In a very general sense, there are three main social classes, which were in themselves sub-divided into several sub-classes. At the top were the aristocrats, those who possessed power. It is from this class that the ruling families and other chiefs, like the military chiefs, are named. At the centre is the class of caste men, the *Niamakalas*: these are the griots, blacksmiths, cobblers, etc. who were also vested with the role

of custodians of tradition.[29] In this regard, they enjoy special attention from the ruling class. At the very bottom of the ladder are the slaves. These are the slaves and their descendants, who were bought or captured on the war front. They are subjected to all types of labour and are entirely subject to the will of their masters.

In the same way divisions within social classes were subjected to strict regulations, where everyone had obligations towards another, so were relations between elders and the younger population regulated. As such, the young were expected to respect and submit to their elders, while the latter were to act as teachers and role models to the younger ones, through their exemplary lives and by passing on wisdom and peaceful coexistence, as established by society. Relations between women and men were also governed by codes which specified the duties of each one of them. These relations were particularly characterized by a division of tasks within society based on gender. That was part of the education from a tender age. Thus, depending on one's sex, children received training that prepared them for their future lives as husbands or wives, and which enabled them to internalize their roles in the wider society. In a very general sense, even though women enjoyed great respect from men, the role of the head was the preserve of the latter. In many cases, women did not participate directly in meetings in which major decisions were taken. Although it was women who often advised men, they were to remain discreet.

Beyond relations between social classes, the old and the young, and between men and women, relations between communities were strictly governed by conventions and pacts which regulated social, political and economic relations amongst them. Most often, each community strove to have good neighbourly relations with the others in order to prevent conflicts.

Malians who were consulted agree that certain cardinal values have for a long time been shared in a consensual manner, independent of their origin or socio-cultural belonging. Yet, from the standpoint of certain persons consulted, these key elements, which are the foundations of the social contract, have been weakened, particularly due to the perceived inadequacies in the handing down of these values.

29 The term Niamakala literally means initiated, or initiator, or "those who hand down knowledge", but was translated by French anthropologists as "caste men", an expression which is still used today, but whose connotation is derogatory and simplistic: POULTON and AG YOUSSOUF (1999), *La paix de Timbuktu, Gestion démocratique, développement et construction africaine de la paix.*

1.2 Destabilizing dynamics linked to socio-political diversity

During the consultations, people strongly expressed concern over what they perceive as the erosion of ancestral values within the Malian society. Participants recalled that since the era of kingdoms and empires, and regardless of wars and rivalries, consensual ancestral values were the acceptance and respect of the ethnic and cultural diversity of one's neighbour, respect of intergenerational hierarchy, solidarity and hospitality,[30] and the handing down of societal values of the community. The latter is perceived by people and social elders, particularly, as having been severely weakened. Institutions of socialization are increasingly less able to play their role for a number of reasons; the collapse of socialization frameworks, weakening of the extended family structure, inability of the educational system to play its instructional role, abandonment of civic development practices as well as other exogenous factors such as the influence of western cultures through information and communications technology (ICT).

1.2.1 Collapse of traditional socialization frameworks

Within the Malian society, a number of processes and procedures enriched the life of a child, to ensure the handing down of values and practices. This was done through institutions of socialization, i.e. frameworks through which social, practical and behavioural norms are inculcated into a child by society. This process was colourfully described by a young female participant at the National Conference: *"Citizenship is sown: it is like a grain which is sown, right from infancy, in the heart of a child. And when we grow up without being taught citizenship, we grow up just like that, like someone who lives, an animal, because we have not been trained."*[31] The long socialization process of a child has been historically anchored on a community standpoint – first at the level of the family "in its extended sense," then the community level (village, area, etc.). This community orientation is fundamental to the Malian notion of living together as it inculcates in a child concepts such as, the respect of elders, age sets, and community solidarity. Yet, both at the family and community levels, social changes, and particularly the tendency to make the nuclear family prevail, are affecting the handing down of these values. These problems weaken the social consensus on

30 The "Djatiguiya" during the African Cup of Nations (ACN) 2002 is, in fact, one of the illustrations of this greatness which has been assessed by the international community and credited to Mali. As the host of the competition, Mali assigned a commune or area to each team. These communes or areas welcomed and supported their teams throughout the tournament, even when they were playing against Mali.

31 National Conference, Bamako, January 2015.

traditional values, a phenomenon generally illustrated by the uneasiness expressed by the majority of participants when they condemn some behavioural patterns adopted by the young generation, and which are perceived as a challenge to traditional values.

1.2.1.1 Weakening of the extended family structure

The traditional family model in Mali is the very first institution in the socialization process of an individual. This process is based on the cohabitation of all persons from the same patriarchal lineage within the same compound. All of them live and act in the interest and for the wellbeing of all members under the authority of the head of family. Under this well-structured and solidly hierarchical system, each member plays a specific role. In the Malian context, the concept of the family goes way beyond the patriarchal lineage and also affects kinship. However, the structuring of the family unit tends to gradually disaggregate under the dual effect of what the participants in the research work identified as a tendency to make the nuclear family prevail, on the one hand, and a weakening of the authority of the heads of the family, on the other. According to a participant, it is easy to observe that families no longer have control over their members, particularly the younger ones:

> "I have observed today that none of us here has control over his family. In the past, everything our elders said in our halls was applied to the letter.[32]

From the point of view of a female participant from Kita, one of the key factors of the weakening of the extended family structure is the decrease in the joint financial resources formerly managed by the family head. The family head's difficulty to *"ensure the comfort of all members of the family is pushing young couples to withdraw from the joint management structure in order to empower themselves,"*[33] a situation that contributes to the increasingly frequent break up of big families.

In the opinion of many participants, this tendency of empowerment by opting for a small family unit is perceived by the population as *"individualism or even wickedness and a lack of solidarity and ingratitude to those who have given you everything. This violates the traditional rules of the concept of family."*[34]

32 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Ganadougou, Sikasso Region, March 2014.
33 Heterogeneous Women's Focus Group of Kita, Kayes Region, May 2014.
34 Heterogeneous Focus Group of Kita, Kayes Region, May 2014.

Education today seems to be involved in this to the extent that the vast majority of young people recognize each other only through their biological parents. As one participant noted, "*The child looked to all people of his father's age as his parents because he was educated to think in that manner but nowadays he recognizes himself only through the biological parents*."[35]

From the point of view of Malians consulted, this state of affairs is leading to a weakening of community ties and therefore it constitutes a risk capable of undermining the social fabric. "*Our society in the past and now are different. The child belonged to all; you could spank your neighbour's child and put him on the right path, but nowadays that is not possible*." [36]

In this context where the quality of education imparted to the youth is at the center-stage of values being called into question, the youth and elders are blaming each other for being responsible for the state of affairs. In the opinion of an elderly person, the youth do not listen to their elders.

> "Today, children have no other advisors other than themselves. They have more confidence in TV, and in their Internet than in their parents. How then do you impart the right values to them? This will require that they take time to listen to us."[37]

These remarks are challenged mainly by the youth, as evidenced by this young person from Kati, highlighting the role of social elders in this situation:

> "We always say children of today, children of today; whose children are they? They are the children of parents of today. It is the parents who have shied away from their responsibility; there is a need to first of all solve the problem at the family level."[38]

These trends toward nuclearization and individualism experienced within the family also affect community dynamics which are considered as an essential framework for the Malian socialization process.

35 Focus Group, Ambidedi, Kayes, March 2014.
36 Focus Group, Rive Gauche Bamako, Bamako District, July 2014.
37 Regional Restitution, Koulikoro Region, October 2014.
38 Homogeneous Youth Focus Group, Kati, Koulikoro Region, August 2014.

1.2.1.2 Erosion of community socialization institutions

At the community level, handing down social norms was done in the past through various structures such as the age groups,[39] village associations,[40] traditional communicators (or griots).[41] For example, one of the key passages in the socialization of young Malians is related to age sets, and especially the processes that aim at bringing them together around circumcision and excision. These processes are designed to develop solidarity and cohesion within the same age group. The age set is a real institution which addresses three needs. Firstly, it organizes the population into hierarchical groups, secondly, it provides leadership, education and training for the youth, and, thirdly, it creates and maintains a permanent emulation in all areas of social life within the age groups. The training they receive focuses on the whole human being to make them responsible for themselves and their environment. It generates a spirit of equality, mutual commitment and solidarity between "counterparts", resulting from the experience they have had together through the initiation rites and which will be translated into day-to-day life by way of attitudes of mutual trust and moral obligation to give each other assistance in times of need.[42] As one participant from Keniéba explains, "*Increasingly, the age group concept tends to disappear, leaving a vacuum that is not filled by any succession structure; circumcision is done individually right from the birth of the boy, and excision of girls is being increasingly abandoned or carried out secretly.*"[43] Consequently, young people subject themselves less to the hierarchy of age sets and social control:

> "Today, everything that the elders decide, if the children are not in agreement, they do what is in their mind; because the children are not educated to have respect for elders. This is the situation we are facing in this country [...] we need to go back to education; if the education issue is not resolved this situation will only get worse."[44]

39 The youth of the same village who have grown together, been circumcised or excised in the same year form part of the same age group.

40 "Ton villageois" means Village Association.

41 Traditional Communicators or griots who form part of the big family of men from the castes of custodians of traditions.

42 DOUMBIA, Tamba (with the collaboration of Pierre ERNY) (2001), *Groupes d'âge et éducation chez les Malinké du sud du Mali.*

43 Homogeneous Focus Group, Keniéba, Kayes Region, April 2014.

44 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Sikasso, Sikasso Region, March 2014.

In this chain of socialization, schools are playing an important role and usually take over from community structures. This is because, in addition to the family and community settings, the school prepares them for adult life. But far from effectively meeting this expectation, school education in Mali is now seen as contributing to the weakening of traditional values.

1.2.1.3 A segmented and inconsistent education system

On account of the weakening of the various family and community structures, the training of future citizens is now based largely on the school education system. And yet, in the eyes of the population, the Malian education system itself is beset by many shortcomings. Indeed, the malaise of education in Mali goes beyond family and community settings. All over the country, many people have expressed their concerns about the school system. On the one hand, there is the state system, referred to as "formal", through which large sections of the population do not find their place and way, and on the other hand, there are various faith-based education systems with little or no regulation. In addition to the system-specific problems, this segmentation and its attendant inconsistencies greatly affect the future offered to the new generations at the end of their school curriculum.

In the opinion of a participant in the San focus group:

> "Education is something, if you become its embodiment, you can understand something and get along with people. It is education that enables us to work; it is education that makes us respect people. Today, it is not only the children; everything has taken a turn for the worse everywhere. We are worried about this state of affairs. This is because it is the children of today who will become the elders of tomorrow; in social life, if you do unto others what you should not do, it is normal that you will be at odds with everyone."[45]

A Disoriented State Education

Many participants said that if there was one thing Mali could be proud of, it was its public school system and the quality of education that it used to give. In this regard, many echoed this participant who thought that "*Mali has provided for the sub-region and the entire continent of Africa qualified executives who were in demand and who*

45 Homogeneous Focus Group, San, Ségou Region, January 2014.

were all trained by our system, and they all have honoured the country through their behaviour."[46] Therefore, school is perceived, in the words of another participant, as "*an essential link in the socialization process of a child, the role assigned to it should be intensified to overcome the shortcomings of other community settings in our fast-growing world*."[47]

With regard to the French-based education, the formal education system today is facing many structural problems related to the issue of providing education as a public service – curriculum content, teacher training, inadequate teaching materials, infrastructural problems, human resource allocation, etc. (see Chapter 3). But, for a greater part of the population, what is even more important and the main source of concern is what is being taught.

> "School is not just the beautiful buildings some people talk about; it is not the nice colours of textbooks, it is rather what the teacher imparts as education to the learners. In our time, we did not have so many textbooks and there were no classrooms. We took our lessons under trees or in huts, but we came out with a good level of both training and education. The school reinforced what the family and the community taught us."[48]

Indeed, for many of the people consulted, youth education is carried out on the basis of curricula that are not in line with what they consider as Malian societal values. Consequently, the mainstream education does not succeed in complementing the family and community education structures that are severely weakened by the societal changes mentioned above. And some people are of the opinion that school plays a more direct role by teaching values that often go against those inculcated in them at home.

> "In the past, they taught civics and moral education at school to complement the education that we received in the family, so the child was taught the principles of respect for elders and others; considering that these aspects are weak, the children no longer respect anything nowadays."[49]

46 Homogeneous Focus Group, Koutiala, Sikasso Region, March 2014.
47 Homogeneous Focus Group, Timbuktu, Timbuktu Region, June 2014.
48 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kenieba, Kayes Region, April 2014.
49 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bougouni, Sikasso Region, March 2014.

Even though the undermining of the status of subjects such as civic and moral education (CME) has been strongly criticized at grassroots level, it also appears to be increasingly a subject of concern for the highest authorities. Indeed, one of the main recommendations of the National Forum on Education held in 2008[50] was the reintroduction and improvement of the status of civic and moral education in schools. According to one teacher, the regulatory provisions and school curriculum content can no longer enable us to train the citizens of tomorrow by instilling in them a sense of responsibility and duty consciousness that the country needs.[51]

Multiple and segmented religious education systems

In addition to the formal education system which is struggling to provide proper training in Mali, there are other types of educational structures that focus on teaching Arabic language and religion, and whose legal status and learning objectives differ a great deal from what pertains in formal educational establishments. These include the *madrasas*, the French-Arabic schools and Koranic schools. These significant differences in curricula offered are such that the youth of the same age who complete their education in different systems have an extremely unequal level of training and skills and it appears that there are no common minimum standards for them.

Madrasas and French-Arabic schools are considered to be modern types of school establishments that use particular teaching methods and official curricula,[52] with Arabic and French respectively as the medium of instruction, and the second language taught as a subject. This is, not the case in Koranic schools, which are reserved exclusively for teaching religion. They are subject to no official curriculum and are not considered to be private educational institutions like the madrasas and French-Arabic schools, and therefore do not receive any support from the government. Nonetheless, these various structures absorb a large proportion of children of school-going age in Mali. According to one participant, "*These children who are ultimately rejected by the state are counted by government departments in their statistics when it is convenient for them, while in actual fact they do not receive any attention from these government departments*."[53] (See *Box 1.2*)

50 National Forum on Education, from 30 October to 2 November 2008, Bamako International Conference Centre. The objective of this Forum, which brought together all active forces of the country, was to propose measures aimed at promoting the quality of education at the basic level in terms of school curricula and teaching methods/innovations. The Forum recommended the review of all curricula for 1st and 2nd cycle schools in order to improve the quality of learning in such areas as Physical Education, Hygiene, Drawing, Music, Home Economics and Civic and Moral Education, Technical Education.

51 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Kayes Region, April 2014.

52 *Law No. 94-032 of 25 July 1994 on the status of private educational institutions in Mali*, 25 July 1994.

53 Regional Restitution, Ségou Region, September 2014.

Box 1.2 | Overview of Types of Muslim Schools and their Regulations

1. Inventory of Koranic Schools in Mali

Today, over 100,000 learners of different ages attend Koranic schools in Mali. An estimated 3,658 of these schools are located in all regions throughout the national territory, and comprise 47% of schools in the first cycle of basic education (also called formal education). Because of their numbers, they are sometimes the first educational opportunities available for basic education in some regions. In some towns and villages, enrolment rates at Koranic schools either exceed or are close to those at basic schools, especially in the Mopti and Ségou regions, where the rates of enrolment are 116% and 70.4% respectively.

2. Typology of Schools Teaching in Arabic Language

There are four types of educational structures teaching in Arabic language, however, the educational objectives, curricula and status are different.

2.1 Formal or Traditional Koranic Schools

The formal or traditional Koranic schools refer to educational and training facilities commonly called “dougouma kalan” or “boulon kono kalan,” that is to say, informal religious educational institutions created mostly by the promoter without any obligation to administrative procedures. Because they are faith-based, these Koranic schools are placed under the authority of the Department in charge of Territorial Administration in accordance with Order No. 174/DI – of 2 December 1957 by the Head of the Territory of French Sudan.

2.2 The So-called Modern Koranic schools

Within traditional Koranic schools, some forms of Koranic and Islamic teaching emerged which were organized differently from traditional Koranic schools in terms of material conditions and teaching curricula and contents. Thus, due to the fact that they are essentially faith-based and autonomous, the so-called modern Koranic schools are not taken into account in the number of private educational institutions governed by Law No. 94-032 of 25 July 1994 on the

status of private education in Mali. Indeed, paragraph 3 of Article 3 of this law provides that: "Koranic schools and catechism classes or sunday schools, religious leaders' training schools, courses taught individually or collectively within a non institutional framework, are not under the purview of this law."

2.3 The Madrasas

Article 5 of the same Law No. 94-032 of 25 July 1994 stipulates in its last paragraph that: "the madrasas are private educational institutions where the medium of instruction is the Arabic language. The teaching of French is compulsory in these institutions."

The madrasas are therefore the modern type of private educational institutions using official teaching methods and school curricula in addition to their religious teachings. The Arabic language is at the same time a subject and a medium of instruction."

The madrasas are under the supervision of the Ministry of Basic Education as set forth by Decree No. 112/PG-RM of 30 April 1985.

2.4 French-Arabic Schools

French-Arabic schools are modern types of educational institutions that use official teaching methods and school curricula. The medium of instruction is French, whileArabic is taught as a subject.

Madrasas and French-Arabic schools are governed by the law regulating private educational institutions, and this law concerns all reforms in the education system and monitored accordingly by central, devolved and decentralized technical departments.

In this respect, the search for ways and means of structuring the Koranic schools in line with the official education system naturally forms part of the actions of reform and reorganization of teaching in the Arabic language.

For the youth graduating from educational institutions with Arabic as the medium of instruction and where quality training and education is provided, the challenge is different. These young people who are suitably equipped to be integrated into the Malian society, find themselves being lumped together with other young people from institutions of learning mentioned above. Indeed, due to the weak regulation and lack of hierarchical structure or official equivalence between different types of education systems, it becomes difficult to differentiate between the quality of certificates issued by the different institutions. As a result of the lack of clarity, both employers and Ministries tend to be suspicious of anyone who did not graduate from the formal educational system: thus being a graduate from the Arabic training system can be a handicap. This view is illustrated by the following remarks made by a director of a madrasa at the regional focus group of Kayes:

> "In my opinion, the problem of children in Koranic schools is an issue of social injustice. I think these children have the same rights as others, but they do not enjoy these rights. They are simply victims of social exclusion that must be corrected to enable them to aspire to a future like others so they do not fall into the traps we are talking about [recruitment by violent groups]."[54]

Some think that the religious education system, such as Koranic schools, generates youth who are partly vulnerable. But the problem according to a resource person we met during the consultations is also that:

> "Malians find it difficult to establish the difference between children who have broken social ties or have dropped out of school and are begging and sleeping on the streets, and pupils from Koranic schools who have teachers and get an education. This difficulty in making the distinction is so much that Koranic schools are perceived as breeding ground for delinquents."[55]

No matter the system from which they graduate, many Malian young people complete their training without being properly equipped and with no real prospects for the future; this leads them to develop and nurture a strong sense of inequality in terms of access to socio-economic opportunities (see Chapter 2). This lack of future prospects makes

54 Regional Restitution, Kita, Kayes Region, April 2014.
55 Individual Interview, Imam, Bamako, December 2014.

some of the youth easy to be mobilized or manipulated, especially by individuals with bad intentions (see Section 1.3.1.2 and 1.3.2).

1.2.1.4 Abandonment of citizenship development practices

In addition to the traditional and modern education facilities, some cultural activities were seen as stepping stones to continue training the youth in both our cultural values and citizenship. Among these activities that tend to disappear are local traditional festivals, youth camps and arts, cultural and sporting events. Even though the local celebrations are still continuing in some towns and villages, their nature and content have significantly shifted from the original objectives. Several participants discussed the disappearance of biennial arts, cultural and sporting events which, in their opinion, were a key element for the intercultural melting pot of the nation.

Since the attainment of national sovereignty in 1960, Mali, concerned with the preservation of the cultural identity of its people, has been working to promote culture in all its diversity. It is against this backdrop that the Youth Week was instituted, later becoming the Culture and Sports Biennial. The latter, led by the youth, was a popular event that, in addition to creating a framework for exchange, fostered competition between artistic and cultural groups from all regions of the country. These events promoted the intermingling and interpenetration of different groups of people and have contributed to the emergence of a culture of peace and citizenship. According to a participant in Kayes, "*these artistic, cultural and sports events were occasions for the intermingling of cultures and was an expression of Mali in its plurality*."[56] From the point of view of several participants in the focus group discussions, "*the abandoning of youth camps, weekly and biennial events caused a decline in our cultural values and contributed to the erosion of Malian cultures*."[57]

1.2.1.5 Exogenous factors

For many participants in the focus groups, Malian youth are influenced by external influences introduced, among others, by information and communication technology (ICT), such as TV, the Internet, telephone and social media networks. Although its contributions are undeniable in terms of exchanges, ICT conveys values that are perceived by some as contrary to those recognized in the Malian society. "*The*

56 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Kayes Region, April 2014.
57 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Kayes Region, May 2014.

television soap operas have spoiled our women and children."[58] Even though this phenomenon is nothing new, the speed at which these changes occur is, in itself, unique to our time. People have talked about it and have emphasized what they see as an institutional weakness, which in their opinion, should play their role as a filter and moderate the impact of these external influences. In addition to the negative influences of ICT, different forms of migration – migration from rural to urban areas, intra and international migration, national, regional and international immigration – also have significant impact on the development of new behaviours within the Malian society.

1.3 Dynamics of exploiting the diversity

Everyone recognizes the diversity in Mali, in its religious, political as well as ethnic dimensions. These diversities have coexisted peacefully and are the pride of our country, yet today they are perceived by many Malians as a risk to social cohesion.[59] On the one hand, the instruments that supported and perpetuated social cohesion, such as educational facilities, have become weak. On the other hand, this cohesion is strongly affected by stakeholders who are exploiting these diversities for their personal interests.

1.3.1 The religious dimension

Behind the unity in faith and despite the unifying and peaceful features of religion, a few religious leaders known to some as "religious entrepreneurs" are engaged in struggles for socio-economic influence and internal politics. They fuel competition between different religious factions and within religion – especially Islam. People present this phenomenon as one of the sources of the prevailing polarization of interpersonal and intercommunity relations.

1.3.1.1 Relations between different religions

Mali is a secular country where practitioners of Islam, Christianity and traditional religions cohabit peacefully. According to participants in the participatory research, even though cohabitation is considered peaceful between religions, in some aspects of social life, there is nonetheless, friction between Muslims and Christians or between Muslims and animists. These few points of friction find expression in social exchanges like marriage, usually in a marriage between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. Thus, some

58 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bougouni, Sikasso Region, March 2014.

59 SOW, Ndeye and Mohamed AG ERLESS (2013), *Société et Culture au Mali : Problématiques du changement*, Malivaleurs/ International Alert.

participants report that some families do not agree to give their daughter's hand in marriage to someone from a different religion, or to certain categories of men in society, including men of castes (see Section 1.3.1.1), a situation which often creates tension between families or within the community. For some, marriage refusal is often wrongly interpreted through the religious lens.

As a pastor from the Mopti region explains:

> "I eat with you, I drink with you, and we live together. I do not have any problem with you because you practise another faith [...] I raised my daughter in the Protestant faith, you have brought up your daughter in Catholicism, the other person raised his daughter in Islam. Islam forbids certain things that I do not consider prohibited [...] how do you get my daughter in marriage? This refusal is to avoid further problems in the future."[60]

Nevertheless, these few points of friction appear to be on a relatively low scale, and peaceful cohabitation of the major religions seems to endure as a source of pride to Malians.

1.3.1.2 Competition between religious factions within the same religion

Even though conflicts between religions are marginal, dissension is recurrent within Islam, the major religion, and this can impede social cohesion. From the point of view of participants, these divisions are caused by different religious factions within Islam that seek to advance personal interests.

Even though these issues affect the Muslim religion, with increased tensions and consequences, such issues are not unique to the Muslim religion. During the regional restitutions, a pastor emphasized that these types of dynamics are also present within Christianity.[61]

Proliferation of religious factions

From the point of view of people consulted, including the elites – some of whom are religious leaders – one of the main threats to social cohesion is related to the proliferation of religious factions and increased competition between them within the

60 Regional Restitution, Mopti Region, September 2014.
61 Regional Restitution, Mopti Region, September 2014.

major religions. Considering the central unifying role that religions play in Mali, the rifts within the communities are, indeed, a risk with major potential consequences for social cohesion.[62]

For many participants in the dialogue sessions, the proliferation of religious factions within Islam – and the difficulty in regulating the sector – creates many risks for cohesion. "*The first sign of religious conflicts is that there are mosques in every alley in Bamako*."[63] This proliferation of new mosques, which was observed by participants throughout Mali, will, according to them, lead to a diversification of interpretations of the Holy Koran. For many people, this would have disastrous consequences because it would bring more division to the society. As one participant said: "*Rival mosques are being built a few scores of meters apart and Muslim religious festivities are hardly celebrated on the same date for all.*"[64]

Yet for many participants, the proliferation of religious factions and mosques is not a problem in itself. Rather, it is the competition between the leaders of these religious factions that is causing the problem, as illustrated by a participant in the Sikasso regional restitution: "*I went to Mecca and in every street, there was a mosque, but that did not cause any problem among them!*."[65]

At the national level, this competition leads to a somewhat chaotic situation among the religious leadership. As Muslim associations multiply, the representativeness of religious leaders is often challenged by a segment of the community. Today, Mali has over 180 registered Islamic associations that have been grouped together into various committees, including the Malian Association for Unity and Progress of Islam (Association malienne pour l'unité et le progrès de l'Islam), the League of Imams (*Ligue des Imams*), the League of Preachers (*Ligue des prédicateurs*), the National Union of Muslim Women (*Union nationale des femmes musulmanes*), and the Malian Association of Young Muslims (Association malienne des jeunes musulmans). According to some participants in this study, conflicts and provocations are frequent between the religious factions, and sometimes within the same religious faction. In their view, these groups are rapidly heading toward entrenched positions, as a speech made by a spokesperson of one faction is perceived as throwing out a challenge to

62 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Kayes Region, April 2014.
63 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Left Bank, Bamako District, July 2014.
64 Participant Homogeneous Youth Focus Group, Left Bank, Bamako District, July 2014.
65 Regional Restitution, Sikasso Region, September 2014.

another. According to some participants, these tensions are fueled by support from both foreign states and private religious organizations.

Competition within Islam and foreign influence

In addition to this competition at local and national levels in Mali, recent decades have seen traditional Islam strongly challenged by new religious factions considered to be "foreign" or "reformers." Said one participant: "*When you take the genesis of Muslim religion in Mali, there was only Sufism, which included Tidiania, Oumaria, Hamadism, etc*."[66]

This external influence is attributed to some states of the Middle East and the Maghreb region in North Africa that are engaged in a major ideological competition that has resulted in the proliferation of religious factions around the world. In Mali, their influence has grown in a context of poor regulation of the religious landscape by state and religious leaders.[67] These countries often invest their substantial resources in the construction of places of religious worship and education in order to attract believers. One participant described the process this way:

> "The opening up to the Arab and Asian countries has led to the departure of our young learners of Islamic religious education to countries such as Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Libya, etc. On their return, the students come back with ideologies relating to the different religious factions with its consequence of various interpretations of the Koran and Hadith and also with money to impose their perceptions. They find fertile ground for their actions at the independent Radio Stations that employ young people who are not well-trained professionals in journalism, and who do not respect the ethics of communication. All this combined with corruption create the situation where Muslims do not get along."[68]

As pointed out by many participants, including some imams and other religious leaders, many "religious entrepreneurs" positioned themselves as intermediaries in order to gain from foreign donations. In almost all focus and regional groups, participants were concerned about this situation, which affects all parts of Mali.

66 Regional Restitution, Ségou Region, September 2014.

67 The last law regulating forms of religious worship in Mali dates back to more than 50 years: *Law No. 61-86 / AN-RM of 21 July 1961 on the organization of religious freedom and practice of religious worship.*

68 Regional Restitution, Kayes Region, October 2014.

Proselytism as a means of social promotion and gaining personal income

In the view of a majority of participants, internal struggles within Islam aim first and foremost at promoting the personal interests of certain religious entrepreneurs, who take advantage of the relatively low level of knowledge of some people to set them against each other for the sole purpose of attracting more believers, thereby getting more attention from external financial partners. Through opportunistic exploitation of religious discourse, they aim to build social and economic, and even political capital. In the words of one participant:

> "What is baffling when you listen to the radio stations in Bamako, one hears them talking about true gods. Some take advantage of the preaching time to portray themselves as miracle workers, they offer all kinds of medicines and solutions to people's problems and take advantage of the poverty and distress of the people to make money, and that is contrary to the spirit of religion.[69]

From the standpoint of those consulted, preaching has become, for some people, an avenue for enhancing their social status. This situation is also facilitated by the lack of regulation on preaching. Religious leaders and associations have tried to work on this at the grassroots level, but their efforts have not led to the effective establishment of a code of conduct by which to abide. As a representative in the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Worship admits, now, just about anyone can become a preacher and establish a bevy of believers.[70] These religious entrepreneurs not only create a certain social status but also influence that could possibly be converted into other interests, social recognition and political clout, for example.

Beyond social status issues, their involvement in religious competition enables these entrepreneurs to make financial gains, be it private funding from foreign powers involved in religious proselytism or through community self-financing:

> "We do not know what some of these preachers and religious leaders do for a living, yet they enjoy all the comforts that businessmen have: beautiful cars, villas, beautiful women. They have everything. If they do not receive money from someone, then what exactly do they do?"[71]

69 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Left Bank, Bamako District, July 2014.
70 Individual interview, Official-in-charge at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Worship, November 2014.
71 Regional Restitution, Rive Gauche Bamako, Bamako District, July 2014.

In a much more striking manner during the 2012 crisis, competition between religious factions was exploited by armed groups or groups of criminals. For participants, especially those from regions in the North, these groups, whose real objectives have little to do with Islam, use religious discourse in order to look legitimate in their action and facilitate their recruitment operations of candidates for Jihad. A participant from Gao indicated that:

> "Those who have come to yield to their barbarism in the name of Islam are not Muslims. We have been Muslims from the time of our ancestors. Their objectives are to occupy the land so as to carry out their dirty business. Otherwise, we know the Koran better than they do, those who followed them, have understood and are coming back. Today they are all regretting it."[72]

The risks to social cohesion associated with these increasingly heavy foreign interventions also seem to spread to various levels of the State. This rising tension continues and appears to be intensifying, despite a number of government initiatives over the last 20 years, to stabilize the issue in view of the risks to social cohesion. Even though for some observers such initiatives are violations of the principle of secularism, they, nevertheless, recognize that those initiatives are necessary in the present context.[73] Among the measures adopted, are notably (i) the establishment of an Islamic High Council for Mali (HCI), which aims to serve as the only interlocutor for the Malian government and which brings together all major Islamic tendancies; (ii) the recent creation of a Ministry dedicated specifically to religious affairs; (iii) establishment of rules to regulate preaching, especially on radio, even though there is hardly any compliance with it; and finally, even more recently, (iv) in a barely veiled attempt to counterbalance these influences, the conclusion of intergovernmental agreements with the Kingdom of Morocco for training 500 Malian imams in Malékite Islamic rituals considered as "moderate."[74]

72 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.

73 STAMER (2003), *op.cit.*

74 During the signing of the agreement when King Mohammed VI was visiting on the occasion of the investiture of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, the Ambassador of Morocco emphasized: "*We share with Mali the malékite rite, so there is (...) a perfect cohesion between us in terms of training Imams, and also in terms of religious practice ,which is that of a moderate Sunni Islam",* Jeune Afrique, "500 Malian Imams soon to be trained in Morocco», 12 November 2013. http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAWEB20131112102010/#ixzz3Jkr9nRBG.

1.3.1.4 Interpenetration of religion and politics

Both locally and nationally, some religious stakeholders become active on the political or social landscape, able to mobilize people around an election, for example. The creation of a domain of believers and the mobilization capabilities of these stakeholders represents a significant political and financial resource, not just for the "religious entrepreneur" but also for the relevant political stakeholders who recognizes their potential.

If the power of this new political resource is not lost on politicians, it is also not lost on these religious leaders. The people, however, appear to frown upon the direct involvement of religious leaders in politics. Thus, reference was made to the example of an imam who lost elections despite the support provided by the priest and the traditional ruler of his village.[75] Since then, the legitimacy of these leaders is being strongly challenged by the people:

> "In the olden days, the advice of imams was complied with to the letter. But today no one listens to those who tend to involve themselves in politics. Such is the case now in the Timbuktu region."[76]

For others, the intense struggle between the different religious factions of Islam in Mali "*conceals, indeed, another ambition, a political ambition, given the failure of the three political experiences of the past (socialist, one-party regime, democracy) which have not been able to meet the expectations of the majority of Malians*."[77] Even though Mali's constitution does not allow the creation of faith-based political parties, some of the participants are convinced that there is "*ideological and especially financial support from some Arab countries, especially those who are very rich and have influence throughout the world*."[78]

Examples of less direct involvement were also discussed in the majority of Focus Groups held across the country:

75 Regional Restitution, Koulikoro Region, October 2014.
76 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Timbuktu, Timbuktu Region, June 2014.
77 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.
78 Homogeneous Women Focus Group from Bamako,Left bank , Bamako District, June 2014.

> "When elections are approaching, politicians go to see religious leaders for their spiritual support but also and especially to seek the votes of their followers because everyone knows that in Mali all major leaders have people behind them. Even the President goes there or he sends emissaries. At Chérif Nioro's place, for example, the Presidential candidates for 2013 or their emissaries rushed there all day long to visit him, but what kind of visit."[79]

So even though outsiders analyze the involvement of religion in politics through the lens of secularism,[80] the majority of the Malian people consider the involvement of religion in politics as a threat to the credibility and legitimacy of the latter, which must be "neutral" and should be the first authority to resort to when there are disputes within the community. The interpenetration of politics and religion is therefore primarily perceived not as a political risk, but a risk to religion and the preservation of social cohesion.

The importance of religion in Mali, where it is the cement that binds the social fabric, explains why Malians are resistant to the idea of questioning the role it plays in the political arena. The topic is somewhat considered a taboo by religious leaders. However, once trust was established over the course of the dialogue sessions and research, participants expressed a sincere and shared concern about certain developments that have an impact on religion. Although no one challenges the unifying and peace-promoting value of religion, the manipulation and use of religious factions by certain individuals is a major risk to social cohesion in Mali.

1.3.2 The political dimension

The advent of political pluralism in Mali in 1991, following an uprising, has not yet solved the problems of democratic governance. The political game remains confrontational. In addition to the fragmentation of the political landscape which is closely interlinked with identity particularism of the country, the competition between political stakeholders seems to thrive on a huge gap in literacy levels and civic education among the population. As one participant put it:

79 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Nioro du Sahel, Kayes Region, April 2014.

80 Namely, that a so-called democratic system must be based on rational debate of ideas and arguments; which does not adapt to a religious argument viewed as dogma-based. On the other hand, Malians have expressed themselves on the issue and rather seem to see the risk otherwise: in fact, given the role played by Islam in Mali regarding social bonding - and especially with the decline of traditional structures (see Chapter 3) - it is the potential lack of legitimization of religion that poses the greatest threat to social cohesion.

> "Politics has brought division because people do not think alike. The manner in which leaders come to power does not make things easy; everyone comes to serve their own interests."[82]

According to a woman from Gao:

> "People do not understand each other here, that's for starters! I'll point out the political system because politics has contributed a lot to making people separate themselves from others. When the majority of the population is illiterate, there are politicians who take advantage of their condition to divide them."[83]

Another female participant in the same focus group also said this:

> "Politicians are part of the problem, they all come to look for followers, in their search for followers, they divide people; they put them against each other because everyone is looking out for his own interests and to settle in the south. In my opinion, this is part of the problem that prevents people from understanding each other."[84]

1.3.2.1 Imperfect configuration of the political market

The multiparty system, which is the foundation of the democratic idea and the political system adopted by Mali in the wake of the fall of the military regime of General Moussa Traoré, has gradually been misrepresented in Mali to the extent that it has had effects that are contrary to the objectives that led to its introduction. The proliferation of political parties, which is supposed to offer political options in terms of programmes and social projects and facilitate the alternation of political power, according to the people, has, instead, resulted in extreme segmentation. It has promoted political competition that is more focused on personalized than programme-based issues.

81 TRAORE, Ismaïla Samba, TRAORE Hanane KEITA and Mariam KONE (2013), Cultur Politique, Citoyenneté et Crises au Mali, Malivaleurs/International Alert.

82 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.

83 Homogeneous Women Focus Group, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.

84 Homogeneous Women Focus Group, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.

85 Commission on Planning and Statistics (2013), CPS-SAT FP-SI 2013, Mali.

According to several participants, there are too many political parties in Mali.[85] From 1991 to 2000, there were 68 political parties; in 2013 there were no less than 165 political parties. A man from Timbuktu said this:

> "Basically, the party issue is what originally divides people in Timbuktu. [...] Even France which initiated democracy, cannot boast of even five political parties yet we have 160 parties. Where are we going to with all that? That is chaos, that's a joke! But we cannot allow these things [...] so, frankly speaking, pass on that message to the President of the Republic. We want a maximum of two or three parties..."[86]

A shared analysis by a political leader in Bamako:

> "We have too many political parties, but when we were fighting for political change, it was not at all possible to limit the number of parties. But our hope is that over time, parties will merge. And actually there have been some attempts to merge parties [...]. If politics is perceived as a means to gain power to achieve personal interest as quickly as possible and enjoy the power and its benefits, to let the family and relatives enjoy, it is clear that everyone will start creating parties. On the other hand, if politics is seen as something noble that brings together people who have the same vision of the issues, the same will, the same determination, the same values to serve the country, politics would be an instrument of social cohesion. But today, unfortunately, this is not the case."[87]

Although in theory the multiparty system should enable the population to have multiple and diverse options in terms of social projects and public policies, the proliferation of political parties in Mali today is such that the election of representatives is not done on the basis of collective platforms, but on an individual basis. As such, politicians use all means possible to achieve their goals; all manner of alliances are formed and broken, even the most unlikely, in order to win votes.

It is after elections that coalitions are created between elected officials and political parties that have only a handful of elected representatives.[88] Shifting allegiances and

86 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Timbuktu Right Bank, District of Timbuktu, June 2014.

87 Individual interview, Political Leader, Bamako, November 2014.

88 During the legislative elections in 2013, 19 political parties won seats in the National Assembly, 147 Parliamentarians including 14 women.

changing of parties are also common, a phenomenon known in Mali as "political transhumance". Often, people say that these coalitions are not established on the basis of values or projects, but on bargaining and personal interests. That is the reason why a law was recently passed to address these practices at the municipal level, and it will be applied at the next local elections. However, this law does not apply to national elected representatives.[89]

1.3.2.2 The democratic culture gap

In all the regions consulted, participants emphasized that the dynamics described above find their ideal breeding ground in an environment where the understanding of democracy is limited. Consequently, in several focus group discussions held across Mali, the phrase "*people do not understand democracy*" was constantly voiced. As will be observed further below, although the candidates structure their campaign slogans around identity discourse (see Section 1.3.3), the people themselves usually conceive the principle of representation using the same reasoning. This is why the elected candidate is considered to be accountable to those who have supported him. They expect some form of "return on their investment" in the form of various personal income or privileges. This is a mentality that has even taken root more in the minds of people, according to an elected representative of Bamako, who argued that some people think that once elected, the candidates owe them to the extent that they have to take care of their daily expenses.

> People do not even want us and our children to enjoy the minimum benefits under the pretext that we are squandering public resources. And sometimes, they are the same people who knock at the door of politicians to look for money to pay for medical prescriptions and buy groceries.[90]

This dependency relationship that is created between the elected representatives and the electorate is seen by many as one of the elements that weakens the ability of elected officials to provide quality services, especially in rural areas. The concepts of transparency and accountability are so skewed that while a section of the population is more interested in seeking rewards and/or personal income, the other renounces civic participation. The most often cited example is in the payment of taxes and levies: having seen their candidate win, supporters feel they should not have to pay taxes

89 *Law No.2014-052/ of 14 OCT 2014 as an amendment to Law No. 2012 of 7 February 2012 on Territorial Community Code*.

90 Regional Restitution, Rive Gauche Bamako, Bamako District, October 2014.

and levies, and the successful candidate will be careful not to ask them to honour their tax obligation for fear of risking reelection. Conversely, in many cases, people who supported the defeated candidates do not recognize the legitimacy of the elected candidate. For this reason they also refuse to pay their taxes.

> "In our countryside, people are slowly beginning to realize that even if you do not belong to the same political side, those who lose the race can join the winners to work for the development of their communities."[91]

This structuring of politics around personal or voter relations, not to mention identity, results in a number of issues that not only affect the functioning of structures of governance, – elections and the alternation of power, personalization of politics, structuring elections as collective investments requiring returns, etc. – but also considerably weakens the Malian society by relying on and reinforcing divisions. It therefore is a case of reconstructing the entire manner in which the Malian society conceives politics, as one participant noted at the focus group of Dioila: "*There is a real gap in terms of information, education and communication in politics. Otherwise, politics must be seen as friendly kinship banter in Mali.*"[92]

1.3.3 The socio-ethnic dimension

Mali's socio-ethnic diversity is unanimously considered an asset, and Malians take great pride in this cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, and their peaceful coexistence. Yet, this ethnic diversity, like other forms of diversity, also seems to hold a risk to social cohesion. Multiple and diverse references to identity can be subject to exploitation and manipulation by stakeholders or groups, thereby undermining the social fabric.

Inter and/ or intra-community ethnic stratifications are very present in Mali. Although socially accepted, they can be sources of tensions in the management of social and political affairs, and this is especially so when they are subject to various forms of exploitation and manipulation. The relative lack of knowledge of others creates a fertile ground for the development of stereotypes and stigmas; whether they are based on community of regional affiliations, social or socio-professional class.

91 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.
92 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Dioila, Koulikoro Region, May 2014.

1.3.3.1 Ethno-cultural diversity and social stratifications

On account of its history and the complexity of the relations between communities that have characterized it, there is a strong social hierarchy in Mali, particularly within or between large families, communities, ethnic groups, castes, tribes, factions, etc. The complementarity and interdependent nature of relations between these different social groups has been one of the key foundations of social cohesion. Although kinship banter[93] – which is pretty much unanimously considered positive as a factor for reducing tensions and pacifying relations[94] – showcases this social cohesion, racial and intra-community stratifications, though socially accepted, can be a risk to social cohesion. Such stratifications can, indeed, generate tensions in the management of social and political affairs, especially when they are subject to various forms of exploitation and manipulation.

> "What formed the basis of the greatness of these communities is unity of action, it is the complementarity between ethnic groups, it is peaceful cohabitation, and it is the interdependence between the various branches of society. If we put people back to back on the pretext that we want democracy, if we allow anyone to come and say what he wants anywhere and anyhow, it will not work. We must go back to our values of civilization."[95]

At the intra-community level, these stratifications can also be exploited and manipulated by some political or economic entrepreneurs, as illustrated by a participant from Kidal, who thinks that "*the crisis in our country is the end-result of the rivalry between some clans, and this rivalry is based on personal interests and benefits.*"[96]

Thus, for example, the Mandingo culture is built on a social structure between Nobles, Warriors, Niamakala,[97] and slaves – groups that also have their own internal hierarchy. These social stratifications are always present in the minds of the people in the region dominated by the Mandingo culture.[98] On the other hand, in nomadic societies of northern Mali, social organization is more complex. The Tuareg societies have a very

93 *supra* note19.
94 A few participants have, however, qualified this issue, that it is by denouncing an abuse of kinship banter leading to unnecessary insults (Focus Group Kita), or an exploitation/manipulation for political purposes: Regional Restitution, Kayes Region, September 2014.
95 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Timbuktu, Timbuktu Region, June 2014.
96 Individual Interview, Member of Civil Society of Kidal, Kidal, February 2015.
97 *supra* note 21.
98 Regional Restitution, Ségou Region, September 2014.

elaborate structure that gives a prominent place to the marabout clans, to the warrior aristocracy. Between these higher classes of society and slaves, who are at the very bottom of the social ladder, there are intermediate groups (vassals) bearing different names.[99]

The issue of class was often mentioned in connection with social mobility problems for some descendants deemed as lower classes such as men from castes and slaves. While many people associate the issue of slavery with regions in the North, it is also present in several other communities and reflects the complex relationships between them throughout history. Thus, for example, in the Soninké community, although in the past former war captives who have become "slaves" worked only for their masters, they are now autonomous and are part of the family of castes. However, participants from the Timbuktu region mentioned that for the majority of slaves in these communities, do not feel marginalized, if anything, they often say they are proud to participate on a voluntary basis in major farm work and other manual duties for their former masters. According to a research fellow and lecturer in the Timbuktu region:

> "Truly, today, there are no slaves in Mali, with the exception of those that have inferiority complex, who believe that Mohamed is my master I have to respect him, I have to obey him ... Otherwise, whether Arab, whether Tamasheq and any other community, there are no slaves today, there are only people with inferiority complex."[100]

Nonetheless, a civil servant, herself a descendant of slaves, refuted this notion stating that mentalities related to slavery are still present within Malian society:

> "The term Bella, [...] to them, they use it to mean 'my slave'. Previously, there was slavery. We did not experience it but there was slavery. [...] Nowadays, no! And maybe, we are the children of the people they mistreated, [but] I will not accept that you mistreat me! Intellectually you are no better than I am, physically you are not better than I am, you are not better than I am on any level, so why would I become your slave?"[101]

99 For an in-depth study of the structure of the Touareg societies, see: BOURGEOT, André (2013), "Rebellions et djhihadisme dans le septentrion malien", in KONATE, D. (dir.), *Le Mali entre doutes et espoirs*.

100 Regional Restitution, Timbuktu, Timbuktu Region, September 2014.

101 Individual Interviews, Public Official, Ber, Timbuktu Region, June 2014.

In the same vein, according to a participant from the Ber focus group, even though this social hierarchy is deeply entrenched in certain communities, it is not the case for young people who have left these communities, to pursue studies elsewhere and to whom, upon their return refuse to be confined to an inferior social position.[102] A professor at the University of Bamako who was consulted expressed the same opinion:

> "The balance of power between the different components of some Malian communities and the necessities of survival of some of these social groups compel individuals, who are deprived of all economic base that could help them achieve their independence, to willingly or relectantly 'adapt' the status which has been assigned to them by society. But we cannot deduce from this observation and the 'postures' of apparent submission being adopted by these individuals as an acceptance of their dependency status."[103]

1.3.3.2 Poor intercommunity intermingling and lack of knowledge

Although Mali has long lived in apparent harmony, it is clear that the different communities that make up the country – be they close or distant to each other – seem to live in mutual unawareness of each other's socio-cultural specificities: "*A white person from North America knows northern Mali better than a Malian from the South.*"[104] This statement was echoed by a former Minister, who said that very few people from Bamako know the realities in northern Mali, the same applies to most people from the North.

> "Each of us is proud to be Malian. Yet we have little knowledge if any, of the culture, values or the sociological reality as well as the living conditions of others. This lack of knowledge creates misunderstandings."[105]

Consequently, we develop stereotypes and strange misconcpetions – accusations such as laziness, dishonesty, racism, etc. – Which leads to a categorization of communities and specific forms of stigmatization. Similarly, strong feelings of inequality experienced in different situations, including issues of development and redistribution of wealth

102 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Ber, Timbuktu Region, June 2014.
103 Individual Interview, Historian, Bamako, January 2015.
104 Heterogeneous Focus Group of Notables and Leaders, Mberra Camp, Mauritania, September 2014.
105 Individual Interview, Former Minister and Governor, November 2014.

(see Chapter 2), reinforce these stigmatizing views, thereby creating resentment and further deepening the divisions between communities.

A participant in a group interview with officials from the Ministry of Malians Abroad is among those who maintain that "*isolation has never existed in our country Mali,*" citing evidence of trade during the Neolithic period, well before the Sahara became a desert. Other participants cite inadequate intermixing between communities as the explanation for Malians' lack of knowledge of each other's realities:

> "Kidal is an isolate, it means that it is isolated. From all sides: it is isolated from Ahaggar, Aïr, Timbuktu, Gao ... and for that reason, through that isolation, in reality its very population became a mixed one only recently. It used to be mostly a Tuareg population and it creates problems, this characteristic feature is a problem that has been fundamental to what has been happening."[106]

This lack of knowledge and these simplistic views of others in terms of their reality, undermines mutual understanding between Malians, which is all the same essential to making collective decisions on the affairs of the country. A young elected representative from the city of Kidal is of the opinion that:

> "Today, Tuaregs are not nomads: they are city dwellers, they are billionaires, they are traffickers, they are businessmen, and they do everything. For as long as we manage them as small nomadic men and women, and we look for them around a well where there is a flock, it will not work! We look for them where we will not find them. [...] He who looks for us as nomads will not have the solution to our problems; he will have missed it all."[107]

However, from the point of view of some participants, this poor intermingling is not in itself a source of conflict, and the communities that make up the Malian society normally live in harmony and good faith. However, the lack of knowledge of others and the existence of clear "separations" between communities are latent cleavages.

106 Focus Group of Citizens of Kidal in Bamako.
107 National Conference, Bamako, January 2015.

Such differences rapidly become significant as soon as a conflict breaks out on either side, causing a state of tension in the community relationships and a crystallization of ethnic cleavages.[108] This may also be the case when an "identity entrepreneur," for various reasons, attempts to stir up divisions by playing on these cleavages, for instance, on the political front (see Section 1.3.2).

1.3.4 Independent radio stations as vehicles of exploitation and manipulation

In the opinion of the people consulted, these forms of exploitation and manipulation are also facilitated by the very low capacity of the State to regulate the public space. This concern is illustrated, among others, by the importance participants attach to the issue of "independent broadcasting" and their proliferation. For example, according to a female participant from Kolondièba:

> "When the campaigns begin, there are remarks that people make and broadcast on Radio Stations, and when you hear them, you will make sure that for all your life you will not like the broadcaster of such statements. It is the disagreements created by radio stations that cause the problem here in our country."[109]

The operation of independent radio stations, that are unregulated, so to speak, serve as an important vehicle for the propagation of speech to strengthen elements of cleavage within the population at the political, religious and ethnic levels. Although, contrary to what people think, there is a law that regulates the practice of independent Radio Stations in Mali,[110] the state is struggling to enforce it. According to the president of an association for the promotion of press freedom, unlike many other countries, in Mali, no decision-making body exists to take action against radio stations that violate the regulations.

Be it at the political, religious, ethnic and community levels, or at the intersection of one or several of these, people have denounced the fact that individuals or groups capitalize on elements of divisions within the populations to secure and/or strongly establish a support base for their own personal interests or agendas or for various personal incomes. This type of strategy is often associated with some political leaders

108 TARROW, Sidney & Charles TILLY (2008), *Politique du conflit. De la grève à la révolution*.
109 Homogeneous Women Focus Group, Kolondièba, Sikasso Region, March 2014.
110 *Edict 92-002/ P-CTSP of 15 January 1992 on permit for establishing Radio Broadcasting Stations.*

who are likened to "identity entrepreneurs." So, this diversity, which is an asset and a pride for Mali, is also a source of divergence, and therefore has a lot of potential to cause divisions. There is exploitation and manipulation of these differences by individuals or groups who, through their speeches and actions, stir up the differences; meanwhile this may leave scars that are likely to wound the society in the long run.

It thus appears that the Malian society is in the process of redefining its rules for living together. In the face of weak institutions that are not able to play an effective arbitration and support role, and considering the lack of structured spaces where these issues can be discussed, this process often generates tensions in socio-political cohabitation and creates an intergenerational gap between the elders and the youth of society. So, from the point of view of a participant in the focus group of Sikasso:

> "Social changes have affected the foundations of the Malian society so much, to the extent that we no longer even know where we are going; we have become neither bats nor lions that is to say, we no longer know who we are or even who we want to become."[111]

Considering the gravity of this situation, a participant from Timbuktu emphasized that:

> "There is the need for us to go back to our values of civilization. Our society is built on values that account for its greatness. Because we wanted to imitate the values of others, we felt it is based on bad choices made at the top; because we imitate unconsciously, we are no longer ourselves, and we have not become those we want to imitate, and we are caught in between both ends."[112]

111 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Sikasso, Sikasso Region, March 2014.
112 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Timbuktu, Timbuktu Region, June 2014.

CHAPTER 1 | Managing socio-political diversity and crisis of societal values

Mali is rich of its diversity. However, efforts to exploit this diversity portend risks for social cohesion in such areas as religion, identity and politics. In the face of weakening institutions that had traditionally structured it, Malian society seems at times to have lost its bearings and is no longer capable of effectively transmitting its traditional values. As a result, an inter-generational gap widens and divisive issues multiply.

Thus, the challenge is to determine the perspective from which to find appropriate, consenus-building and sustainable solutions in order to prevent socio-political diversity from becoming an even deeper risk factor undermining social cohesion. Issues that emerged in the research include:

- **Competition and exploitation of religion**
  How do we ensure that religion is not exploited as a divisive or polarizing factor?
- **Imperfection of the political scene**
  How do we ensure that political competition is developed around societal projects, public policies and geared towards the well-being of the population, rather than focusing on the exploitation of the weaknesses of the different sections of the population?
- **Exploitation of identity, social stratification, stigmatization**
  How do we transcend intra and inter-community social cleavages, go beyond stereotypes, sweeping generalizations and stigma, and consolidate cohesion at the national level?

Similarly, the deficiencies in the process of transmitting values result in the break-up of the intergenerational link. How can a more consensual socialization framework be developed around values likely to generate a “new type of Malian”?

- **Erosion of societal values**
  What tools could be developed and what mechanisms could be established so that people can redefine the framework, rules and shared values for living together in harmony?
- **System of education and transmission of values**
  What values are to be transmitted by the education system (traditional and religious), and where or to whom do we transmit them? How do we build consensus on these values?
- **Influence of information and communication technology (ICT) on societal values**
  How do we manage the impact and influence of behaviours and values brought on by ICT?

CHAPTER 2
Regulation of the competition for socio-economic resources and opportunities

Mali is a huge country covering a vast expanse of a land surface area of 1,241,238 sq. km2 located between the Tropic of Cancer and the Equator. However, its agro-economic potential, though significant, is limited and not adequately developed. Indeed, with 65% of the national space occupied by desert or semi-desert regions, the main agropastoral activity is concentrated within the riverine areas irrigated mainly by the Niger River. The activity on which about 80% of the populations depend, is carried out on barely 10% of arable lands, though it provides about a third of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).[113] Output is generally low and fluctuating, highly subject to the combined effects of low-tech farming practices and climatic uncertainties. In addition, the option prioritized by the public authorities to diversify the national economy by emphasizing agro-business, and an extractive industry structured around small-scale and industrial mining of gold, has not helped to strengthen the potential of the agricultural sector. As a consequence, a greater proportion of the rural population[114] who depend on it find themselves in an increasing state of vulnerability as far as their livelihoods are concerned; they have therefore switched to other types of professions or have migrated in their numbers to regions considered to be more prosperous. In all respects, this situation has eventually created serious demographic imbalances between the regions of Mali, leading inevitably to more pressure and increased competition for natural resources and some available economic opportunities.[115]

Indeed, the discussion groups organized throughout Mali as part of this participatory research on the obstacles to peace highlight serious tensions in intra and inter-community cohabitation and the erosion of trust in the regulatory institutions, regardless of region and socio-economic structure. These tensions are seen in the perceived deficiencies in the arbitration of access to economic opportunities and local natural resources by the different sections of the population. Appropriation of

113 Out of a potential of irrigated lands covering about one million hectares, only 130 000 are actually used.

114 80% of the Malian population live in rural areas.

115 COULIBALY, Moussa (2014), *Les maliens cherchent à punir des malfaiteurs de conflit dans les juridictions nationales, Afro Barometer, May 2014.*

these opportunities and resources is built around complex strategies because their availability is highly dependent on unpredictable factors such as climate change and the geographic environment as well as the socio-political context and the worsening living standards.

In many cases, the state representatives and some authorities who are supposed to regulate this access are also stakeholders themselves. In other words, their involvement is designed to benefit those who are in a more advantageous position than most local people; for instance, they include the "nouveaux riches," who have gained from the change in the local socio-economic structures and others who do not share the traditionally established values that used to structure the ownership of local resources. In an environment characterized by a wide array of standards and even a contradiction between norms and practices (the question of local agreements), the cohabitation of all these stakeholders makes for a heightened and unequal competitive playing field. Additionally, in whatever regions or even in the capital, some classes of the population, generally local people and vulnerable people such as youth and women, feel marginalized, unable to access local and national resources and opportunities. This situation causes resentments and feelings of injustice, serious challenges for the consolidation of peace.

Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the conditions under which tensions develop around access to economic resources and opportunities from the perspective of the population consulted, including the seeming failures in regulating the competition, mainly through agreements, and their perceived effects on socio-political cohesion in Mali.

2.1 Increased competition around economic resources and opportunities

Though Mali is situated in the Sahelo-Saharan region, as a result of its immense territory, the country possesses a relative variety of natural resources, be they water resources, wildlife species or mineral resources. Indeed, its water resources stretch over 4,500 kilometres, including the Senegal and Niger Rivers and from lakes such as Lake Debo as well as many watercourses and reservoirs that are relatively substantial. In some places, the country has forests and vast plains. With regard to mineral resources, the Malian sub-soil is one of the richest on the African continent; it has a wide variety of gems and fossil fuels. Among these are gold, diamond, phosphate,

manganese, limestone, oil, gas, uranium, bauxite, and rare earth. The economic potential of some of these resources are under-exploited. For the most part, however, the unequal distribution of these resources from one region to another poses a threat to social cohesion because of complex ownership dynamics. This challenge is at the same time socio-economic, political and socio-cultural. Examples include the ownership dynamics around agricultural lands and crop farming areas, but also around competition for resources such as urban lands, minerals, employment and public procurements.

2.1.1 Natural resources

As the backbone of the Malian economy, agriculture is practised by more than 630,000 small family farms of about 4.5ha on the average. Households constituting these family units vary from 9 to 10 persons, mainly concentrated on 40% of the national territory in the central and southern regions of the country.[116] In addition to its repercussions in terms of pressure on the available resources, this densification of the human presence driven by agricultural activity paves the way for increasing competition among stakeholders. As in many regions of Mali, agriculture co-exists with pastoralism.[117] Because the latter is generally the transhumant type, which thrives on the availability of grazing lands, tension can quickly increase and be quite elastic.

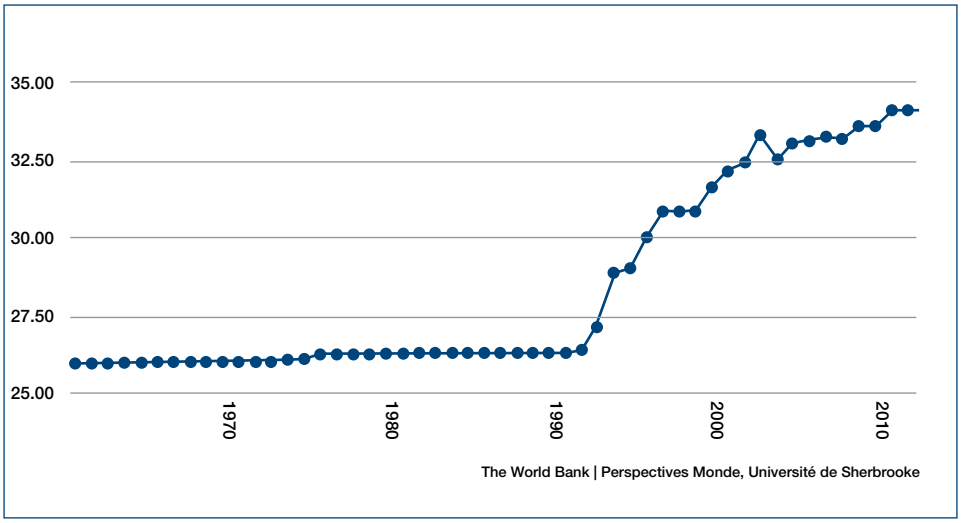
> "In a place where there is water, that is where the farmer cultivates his crops; it is the place where the animals are sent and that is where the fishermen carry out their fishing activity."[118]

> "In the past, there was a grazing pathway for cows; everybody agreed on that principle in our locality. But due to difficulties, the farmers are farming on the grazing pathway of the animals, yes! I am also one of the culprits; my farm has gone beyond the pathway of the cows. Therefore, if I trespass unto the pathway of the cows, the animals are compelled to enter my farm."[119]

In half a century, the proportion of arable lands developed for agricultural production or grazing has grown by at least 30% in Mali according to the World Bank.[120]

116 COULIBALY (2004), *op.cit.*
117 Main source of income for at least 30% of the population; COULIBALY (2014) *op.cit.*
118 Heterogenous Focus Group, Djenné, Mopti Region, February 2014.
119 A man who is more than 50 years, Heterogenous Focus Group, Diola, Koulikoro Region, April 2014.
120 World Bank (2010).

Graph 2.1 | Arable lands as a percentage of lands, Mali



Source: Perspectives monde, Université de Sherbrooke
Data: World Bank (2010)

Indeed, in 2010, lands for farming and grazing covered 64% of the national territory. It must be noted that the structure of this rural space is changing drastically[121] according to the needs for farming land and development or soil conditions. This change, which has been particularly momentous since the end of the last decade of 1980, is highly influenced by various unpredictable anthropogenic factors such as population growth, different kinds of migration, including rural exodus, economic factors such as the development of agro-business and natural factors such as climate change. In recent decades, the population has grown from 8.9 million inhabitants in 1998 to 14,517,176 in 2009, and is expected to hit 20 million in 2020.[122] As a consequence, a large section of the population will be using the same agro-pastoral resources that their parents used, whereas the land resources have not changed.

121 Depending on the state of the soil depletion, some arable lands can become non-arable but can be used for purposes of forestry and livestock as a result of the impact of planning, non-arable lands could be mobilized for agricultural purposes. But structurally, In Mali, the classification established in 1986 under the Land Resources Inventory Project (PIRT) shows that 15.8% of the land is made up of arable areas, 39.68% of non-arable areas and 8.73% of areas not suitable for agriculture: Coulibaly (2003).

122 General Population and Housing Census (RGPH) 2009.

> "The livestock breeders do not have space for their animals in our locality, but the population has increased, and the small farms have increased in size; in the course of the year, the livestock breeders and the farmers fight continuously in the bush. The mayors, the gendarmerie and the judges intervene in these conflicts on daily basis; there are even no more lands. There has been no law to indicate where the stockbreeders and the farmers should be. We who have not been to school, if there could be a place for the livestock breeders which the farmers would accept to comply with, there will be few problems."[123]

Concurrent to this phenomenon was an increase in the food needs, which resulted in additional demands for land for agricultural production.[124] The decline in harvests during the decade of the 1970's, coupled with the wave of drought which hit the country, led to a massive exodus of the population. These movements generally originated from the most arid regions to the more humid zones, from the rural areas to the cities or yet still movements abroad (see *Box 2.1*).

Thus, for the population consulted during the focus group sessions, the relations between the different dynamics (population growth, increase in the number of livestock, migration, in particular of the youth, etc.) and the pressure on resources are obvious. In fact, youth migration, one of the most frequent survival strategies, has created a situation of scarcity by structuring an area of tension in access and ownership of resources that originated with the drought that affected the production capacity in rural communities. Youth have migrated in massive numbers from the most vulnerable hinterlands for locations deemed more conducive for their personal development.

> "The villages do not have the young people to develop the land and very soon, there will be no young ones to bury the dead, they are all gone."[125]

The "*cities attract the youth*,"[126] said one participant about the phenomenon of young people who leave their villages in hopes of escaping poverty and improving their living conditions. In village economies, serious imbalances often emerge that create

123 Homogeneous Women Focus Group, Kolondiéba, Sikasso Region, March 2014.

124 The cattle have also increased significantly. Whereas the Malian Cattle and Meat Board (OMBEVI) estimated the cattle, sheep and goat as well as camel population to be about, 22,949,000 heads in 1999, the National Department of Production and Animal Industries, estimated as at 31 December 2009, that there were 8.89 million cattle, 11.3 million sheep, 15.73 million goats, 904,000 camels, 478,000 horses, 862 000 donkeys and 74,000 pigs.

125 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Kayes Region, May 2014.

126 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bafoulabe, Kayes Region, April 2014.

socio-economic splits between the haves and have-nots, as seen, for example, in the drop in the producer price of cotton. As another participant put it, "*since the parents give more respect to the children who have something*"[127] those who feel socially and economically worthless prefer to leave the village. Thus, in these abandoned rural areas, the exodus of a greater proportion of the labor force creates serious problems because "*some leave just around the rainy season without the knowledge of their parents*." Those who do not leave, on the other hand, may have to compete for meager resources, often with others who come from even more vulnerable rural locations to pasture their herds.

> "As a result of the increase in the number of men and animals, the competition for farm and grazing lands has increased and rendered cohabitation very difficult and created a number of conflicts which divide families and communities."[129]

In Mali, the highest population densities are concentrated in four main locations:

(i) the Bamako-Mopti-Sikasso triangle, corresponding significantly to the south basin of the Niger River, has a population of about 5 million inhabitants;
(ii) the sub-systems of Kayes and Kita-Bafoulabé in the valley of the Senegal River have a population of about 800,000 inhabitants;
(iii) the sub-systems of the North around Timbuktu and Dogon-Seno have a population of 950,000 inhabitants; and
(iv) the sub-systems of the East around Gao-Ménaka have a population of 330 000 inhabitants (CNRST 2000).

According to the people consulted, the pressure on the agropastoralist resources caused by human concentrations have enormous impact on their livelihoods and well-being. Indeed, the more people there are to exploit these resources, the more their income and production decline as the available land per household decreases in quantity and quality over the years.

> "The number of people is growing, the resources do not increase and their assets decrease all the more."[130]

127 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Ambedidi, Kayes Region, March 2014.
128 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Kayes Region, May 2014.
129 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Diéma, Kayes Region, April 2014.
130 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Koutiala, Sikasso Region, March 2014.

Box 2.1 | Climate Change in the Liptako Gourma region

The effects of climate change can be seen in the decline in the capacities of the pastoralist livelihoods. An illustration of this is the zone of intervention of the Liptako Gourma Authority (ALG), a sub-regional organization comprising Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The territory of the ALG cuts across these three countries, from the centre of Ouagadougou Township to Timbuktu, Kidal and Fillingué, and includes a large portion of the active centre of the area of insecurity in the North of Mali.

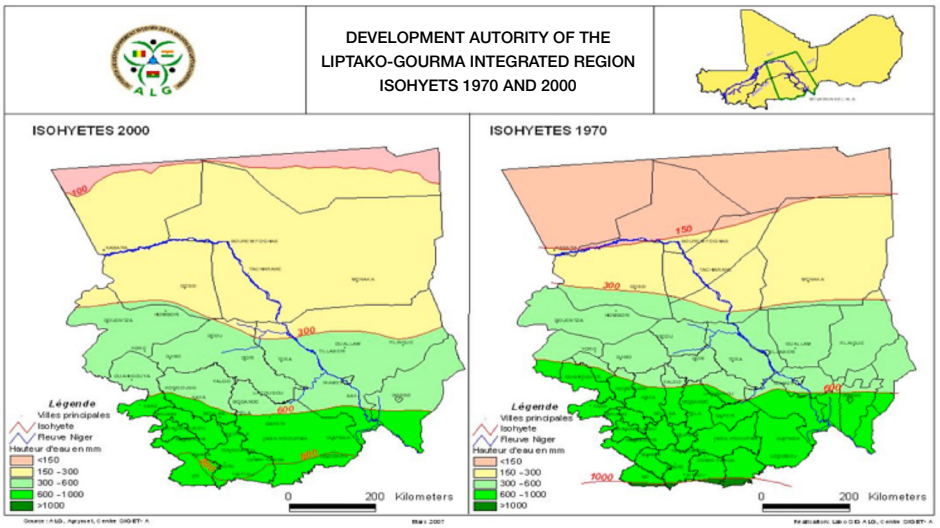
Climate change in the area can be observed in the movement of boundaries of the traditional climatic zones, which are:

Climatic areas	Pluviometry
Sahelo-Saharan	0 - 300
Sahelian	300 - 600
Sudano-Sahelian	+600 - 900

As seen in a comparison of the maps below, the isohyets (lines connecting points with the same amount of rainfall in a given period) of 1970 and 2000 reveals that the Sahelian climate (rainfall varying between 300 and 600 mm) is now limited in Mali to Koro County, whereas previously it extended further to the north of Douentza, and almost the entire area of the "Gourmas" was within the Sahelian climate as well.

Thus, the Liptako Gourma region is now more than 56% Sahelo-Saharan as against 48% in 1970; it is now 28% Sahelian as against 30%; and is now 16% Sudano-Sahelian as against 22%. On the 750kms mark, arid conditions have since 1970 taken over about 54,000 km2 of lands, progressing 72 kms, or an average of 2km per year. One of the direct consequences has been a decrease in the total biomass (potential fodder) from 48 million tons to 42 million tons, or an average decrease of 200,000 tons per year. In terms of the carrying capacity of the rangelands, the loss is about 730,000 TLU (tropical livestock units), or a grazing deficit of 24,000 TLU per annum.

In this whole region, pressure increased on the humid areas along Niger River, ponds, wells and generally developed areas. Conflicts among farmers and livestock breeders and among communities have become more and more violent and have increased drastically in number.



Another source of pressure on rural lands, in addition to changes in the demographic ratios and climatic uncertainties, is the advent of multinationals with an interest in agro-business. This international "land-grab" movement reached Mali in the mid-2000's, with the government signing agreements with public and private investors, a majority of them foreign organizations, that affected hundreds of thousands of hectares of farmlands, mainly in the Niger Office zone. According to people consulted, these contracts are contrary to the interests and welfare of the neighbouring village communities.

> "We have the impression that the development of the Niger Office was carried out with the aim of promoting the establishment of foreign multinationals or institutions not originating from the zone to the detriment of the local population."[131]

> "The land is being grabbed from the poor people, who lack the means and are defenseless, only to be sold without even their consent."[132]

According to statistics from the National Farmers' Union of the Niger Office, Mali ceded about 600,000 hectares of arable land to Libya, China or western companies in this manner.[133] The population interviewed in this research doubted claims that these

131 *By Focus Group* Participant, Macina, Ségou Region, January 2014.
132 A 45-year old man, Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bougouni, Sikasso, March 2014.
133 There are no reliable statistics to assess the expropriation of lands in Mali.

transactions were carried out under transparent conditions. They also pointed to the involvement of the local elite in land-grabbing competition in both the rural areas and the urban centres, a new terrain of tension for resources.

> "For example, when we take Markala where the Office is located in this locality, it is because of the siting of the big dam. If you look at the Markala commune, how many families in Markala [have] a hectare of farmland? Some Bamako residents have between 10 to 20 hectares at the Office? But why? You are in the government, you take money from there, you earn your salary; workers are there without any means, the land from which they can make a living for themselves, this same land, you come from Bamako to take it away from us, are they more Malian than we are? We should have a look at the issue."[134]

> "We have to say it, we must say it, isn't it so! I am not afraid to say it, these elected folks come here and engage in land speculation most of the time."[135]

Furthermore, though majority of the Malians live in the rural communities, many cities are experiencing demographic growth. This situation has created a great need for space for their establishment and generated land ownership dynamics in the urban communities which are complex and constitute a source of tension. According to Djiré, the land ownership /registration procedures in Mali are extremely systematized.[136] They are therefore supposed to be transparent in principle, but all the same the processes are bureaucratic and they are vitiated by a lot of inadequacies. Among these inadequacies is the high cost of certain charges that prevent many people from owning property. In this context, according to those consulted, the elite are able to carve out huge tracts of property for themselves as a result of their financial clout.

> "As a result of the population growth, the elected authorities acquire the pastoralist farmlands by turning them into residential areas, but also for personal and illicit acquisition of wealth."[137]

134 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Dioro, Ségou Region, January 2014.
135 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bamako, Bamako District, June 2014.
136 DJIRE, Moussa (2006), *Immatriculation et appropriation foncière dans une zone péri-urbaine du Mali - Les avatars d'une procédure (nécessaire ?)*, International Symposium "Les frontières de la question foncière, Montpellier.
137 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Macina, Ségou Region, January 2014.

In practical terms, both in the rural areas and urban centres, land is at the center-stage of serious issues and it constitutes the basis of "risk-generating" appropriation dynamics. At the same time, as these appropriation dynamics pit neighboring communities against one another, they also constitute a demarcation boundary between the rich elite who are capable of speculating and the poor peasants who feel aggrieved as far as land access is concerned. Nevertheless, the cleavages do not concern only land (or agro-pastoralist resources) and the related rights of use: other economic opportunities are also part of these ownership tensions. Those consulted in this research cited youth employment and minerals.

2.1.2 Other disputed economic opportunities

In addition to the strong feeling of exclusion from landed property is a more profound resentment of injustice driven by the exploitation of mineral resources in several village communities. Gold is one of the main sources of income of the country and of the population engaged in small-scale mining, and people have the feeling that foreigners have invaded their land. There is a sense that people who are wealthy (financially or in the area of technical competence), exploit the mines while the people who actually live therederive no benefit from it. Some decades ago, cotton production was the main source of export revenue (close to 60% of the GDP) but it was relegated to the background by a focus on the developing gold production. Within the period of one decade, gold became the main foreign exchange earner with almost 70% to the export earnings of the country a 15% contribution to its GDP.[138] This sector is structured between the extractive industry held by the multinational companies and a host of small-scale miners.

In Mali, there are about 200,000 small-scale miners of gold, about half of them women who generally come from outside the zone in which they carry out these activities. Their presence is often seen in a bad light by the native communities because of the different ways of life they import and a perception that they earn money by any means possible. But the issues go beyond that of the social diversity driven by the massive influx of gold washers: it is a question of the distribution of the income and economic opportunity. During the group discussions, several people expressed their frustration at not benefitting economically from the activities generated by their local resources. Though small-scale mining is open to the most enterprising, a common complaint is that the mining firms prefer to hire people from outside the community rather than the local youth.

138 Oxfam America (2006).

> "The discovery of gold or other forms of wealth in any locality in the country should not be a divisive factor, but that is actually the case; therefore if gold has brought about misunderstandings, the main source of these problems should be directed to the authorities."[139]

In addition to feeling discriminated against in the area of employment in their own country, an increasing number of Malians, mainly the youth, during the entire period of the research criticized the modalities for access to employment in the civil service and also in the private sector. Indeed, for several people who spoke during the focus group discussions, the chances for an ordinary Malian who has completed university education or an advanced institute to be employed in the civil service without the intervention of a relative are very slim. This applied to the military or paramilitary professions as well. They expressed a profound feeling that in Mali there is a kind of social reproduction at the top, with the elite and the well-to-do getting the opportunity to "send their children and extended family members" into the army. There was talk of the "papous," the darling children of senior officers who owe their entry into the armed forces only because of the rank of one of their close relatives in the military high command.[140] These impressions, which are widely known by ordinary people, are shared by the so-called silent majority of Malians.

> "I prepared my application to be a guard and submitted it in 2007, I went through the test, I ran and I came in seventh out of about 20 contestants. But it is the last people in the competition who passed; I did not pass, yet I thought it is the best people who would pass; it is at this point that a colonel confided in me that: if you submit your application, you need to put a 'brick' on the application (implying money) so that the wind will not blow it away. It means Mali no longer exists because even in the army, which is responsible for security issues, one needs to pay a bribe to be able to get in. Therefore, I went back in 2009, I submitted my application and I put a 'brick' (of course money) on it so that the wind would not blow it away; I waited without even writing the exams; my undercover always comes to inform me all the time about my position in the exams until the day I was called to jump into the truck for training, you see!"[141]

139 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Garalo, Sikasso Region, March 2014.
140 Heterogeneous Youth Focus Group, Mberra Camp, Mauritania, September 2014.
141 Heterogeneous Youth Focus Group, Mberra Camp, Mauritania, September 2014.

During the focus group discussions held in one of the military barracks of the country, it was consistently indicated by the soldiers present that recruitment into the army was not based on criteria such as competence for the position applied for but on whom you know or the payment of bribes. It is not rare for the highest political and military authorities of the country to interfere in the recruitment processes to impose their protégés. This situation is a source of frustration, not just for those who do not enjoy the same advantages, but for those who practise a trade or craft and find themselves marginalized in a process that favours links that are other than professional. It also results in the creation of cliques and, in the absence of skills, many military personnel on duty find that they lack the required level of commitment.

> "We went through the training. It was after four months that a bus transporting the children of state officials pulled up; How can we talk of having an army yet it is at the general assembly that they are taught the basics; how to salute and respond to a military salute; the at ease position; standing at attention; left and right! Later, they are asked to join the others! Fat men like these and without any training, how will they be able to withstand the desert conditions? Men who have not even gone through the four months intensive training, their list was ready by the end of the training. How then can one feel like they are from Mali in all that? Yet when it comes to us, they force us to pay money so as to secure a job. Yet there are those who do not even undergo the kind of suffering that a soldier has to go through."[142]

According to those consulted during the research, access to resources and economic opportunities in Mali is imbalanced. The most vulnerable communities have a strong feeling of inequality in the competition for resources and opportunities, which is increasingly becoming tense. Native people talk of inequality vis-à-vis non-native peoples, the youth talk of inequality vis-à-vis the elderly, the rural folk talk of being disadvantaged vis-à-vis urban residents. As such, ordinary citizens believe they cannot compete with the elite who have economic, cultural or social capital to own land or "place their sons" in well-paying jobs. These feelings of inequality are deeply-seated and widely shared in that people almost systematically blame state authorities and other institutions charged with the fair regulation of the equal access by all citizens to economic resources and opportunities, for lacking in their responsabilities. These complaints are mainly in relation to conventions.

142 Heterogeneous Youth Focus Group, Mberra Camp, Mauritania, September 2014.

143 In Bambara known as *benkanw, sigikanw.*

2.2 Perceived regulatory deficiencies: the case of conventions

In the Sahel, more than in any other region in sub-Saharan Africa, the management of natural resources is of cardinal importance due to the climatic uncertainties, population growth and the strong pressure on vital natural resources that are gradually becoming scarce. The historical development of conventions or agreements follows the socio-political trajectory of Mali and is presented in three broad stages: precolonial, colonial and post-colonial, with the advent of democracy in Mali serving as a turning point, following the 1991 revolution.

The Malian society was historically founded on the basis of conventions,[143] in accordance with popular beliefs, between the animals or spirits inhabiting a certain place and the early settlers,[144] and equally with subsequent incomers. While more often than not the conventions were unwritten, they presented a general guiding framework for governing social relationships and relations between man and nature. These agreements determined the local social and regulatory configurations still in effect in a number of localities. Before colonization, the right to land and natural resources was based on the principle that they belonged to the first settlers. New arrivals were supposed to enter into agreements with the initial settlers.

Access to land was regulated in accordance with local customs and traditions of the localities where the population remained attached to their traditional practices or in accordance with Sharia in the areas that historically practised Islam (Timbuktu, Djenne, Mopti, Gao, etc.). The mystical nature of these principles facilitated their legitimacy, implementation and sustainability. Thus, each resource was entrusted to one or several masters (master of water, land, grazing, etc.), who ensured, on behalf of the community, the mystical management of these life-supporting resources for both men and animals alike. These types of conventions also regulated other activities which went beyond the management of natural resources such as taxes and levies, paid labour, etc. In certain areas, the right of use in effect, was in conflict with property rights. With the exception of zones in the central delta region of Niger and cultural cities such as Timbuktu and Gao, few precolonial conventions were put in written form: they were generally established verbally and transmitted to the following generation in the same way. Even in cases where they were codified, the documents no longer exist since they were destroyed during wars or because of problems of preservation. These remained in force until the colonial era.

144 DJIRE (2006), *op.cit.*

The local regulations structured on the basis of traditional conventions were eroded with the advent of colonization. The notion of customary law was introduced by the colonial legislature in order to minimize the value of traditional rights regulating land, water, forests and grazing lands and to develop the legal values of the colonial power. Thus, the decree of 2 May 1906 established the written form of evidencing in the colonies of French West Africa (AOF) in which an agreement was drafted and certified by the colonial administrator and represented a civil deed. Sample colonial agreements implemented included the agreement between the villages of Malé and Djidabougou (Ségou region) between the farmers of Djidabougou and the Fulanis of Djidabougou Wéré on 15 May 1952 and decision 140 of the Commandant of Timbuktu on the right of use of the bourgou pasturelands and other grazing grounds by the village of Tassakantin in an agreement signed on 20 March 1936.[145] The colonial administration also attempted to resolve the conflict between Salsalbé and Sossobé by an administrative decision of 11 March 1936 confirmed three years later in the form of an agreement that regulated the order of access to grazing lands but did not settle the issue of property. These measures helped to preserve natural resources and regulate access to them while also preventing and managing disputes and conflicts. Colonial administrators never sought to settle matters regarding property but to calm tensions; thus, some of these conflicts remained dormant until Mali attained independence in 1960.[146] The authorities of the first Republic (1960-1968) then adopted quite a different approach in which all resources were placed under trusteeship of the state.

Contrary to the decree of 20 May 1955, the last fundamental text of the colonial administration in land matters, the first post-colonial texts did not make any reference to customary law. Moreover, they affirmed state monopoly over land and natural resources. Under the first Republic, Law No.63-7/AN-RM of 11 January 1963 established the principle of eminent property of the state in relation to land and natural resources. This law abolished the right of traditional land administrators and assigned it to the Water and Forestry Department. At the centre of the land policy was the principle of equity expressed in the approach dubbed “the land belongs to the person developing it,” leading to the coming into force of official licences for fishing, hunting, land clearing, occupation, etc.[147] This provision completely overhauled previous practices, since the traditional administrators were replaced by representatives of

145 The Tel Imedes and the Peuls: following established practice, sedentary people are supposed to ensure custody of their farms during the day, then the nomads would gather their herds at night.

146 The conflict betteen the Sossobé and the Salsalbé, for example, is still a burning issue: see Chapter 4.

147 KASSIBO, *op.cit.*

the state and were sidelined in critical decisions regarding nature conservation. From the point of view of some participants in the consultations, the traditional principles and administrative mechanisms governing natural resources (ie, bushfires, tree felling, hunting, fishing, etc.) had contributed greatly to the conservation of nature, yet had become regulated and even sometimes banned by officials of the Department of Water and Forestry.

What's more, environmental conditions worsened under the combined effect of negative practices regarding the use of resources and climatic uncertainties. The fast pace of desertification and soil degradation following cycles of drought (see section 2.1.1 and box 2.1) compelled the authorities of the 2nd Republic (1968-1991) to adopt another approach in collaboration with international and sub-regional organizations. Thus, the participation of the populations in the management of resources was a strategy to be explored. Customary rights were then reconsidered under the Code on Private and State-owned Lands instituted by Law No. 86-96/AN-RM of 1st August 1986. The notion of agreement reappeared in the period from 1970 to 1980. It was established on the need for participatory management of natural resources in the face of the degradation of these resources. This mechanism was prioritized under the Regional Strategy for Combating Desertification adopted by the nine Member States of the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the main axis of which consists of "the voluntary engagement of and participation by the populations." The different forums and meetings organized for this purpose served as the framework for this new approach.[148] The projects and programmes based on the participatory approach in fishing, forestry and pastoralism received the attention of donors as a matter of priority. Thus, the agreements referred to as local were developed in areas such as agro-sylvo-pastoral interventions, including inter alia: the Regional Convention on Fisheries in 5th region in 1972, and the one developed with the support of Operation Fisheries in 1987 and in 1990.[149] Similar experiences were carried out within the framework of pastoralism by the Livestock Development Board of Mali (ODEM) with the aim of managing the pasturelands (water points, salty lands, etc.). However, the functionality of agreements has been confronted with several constraints, among which are administrative bottlenecks, apathy on the part of officials, and rivalries among members of the relevant insitutions. These impeded the resolution of urgent problems, especially the withdrawal of partners after the financing period,

148 Ségou Forum in Mali in May 1989 and in Praïa, Cape Verde in 1994.
149 KASSIBO, *op.cit.*

creating problems of ownership and threatening the ability of various beneficiaries to sustain the conventions.

With the advent of democracy in March 1991, came another form of conventions based on real negotiation between the villages and the local technical and administrative structures with the intermediation of NGOs or research bodies. It is important to point out that these negotiated conventions came about in a new political context that promoted citizen participation. The idea of local agreement grew out of local project management experiences with NGOs in which rules for managing resources were negotiated among the communities and with the technical agencies.

There are pioneering experiences of negotiated conventions all over the country, and they include, inter alia, the revitalization of the Ogokana in the Dogon country,[150] in the fisheries sector in the Delta region. The different experiences mark a point of departure and made way for a series of agreements in the Mopti region: the convention for the management of pasturelands, the convention for the management of grazing lands, and the convention for the management of natural resources in the Sikasso region in 1996. Several agreements have been initiated in localities such as Molobala, Yanfolila and Bougouni with funding provided by the French Development Agency (AFD). Local conventions exist almost everywhere in the country, whether it is a known location or not, formal or non-formal.

There are conventions ranging from random settlement of a dispute to the determination of a general platform for the settlement and or/ prevention of conflicts. The conventions are legitimate instruments for the protection of community investments realized through organized groups.

Although conventions are widely seen as important tools for managing related resources at the local level and for preventing and managing conflict, conventions are often faced with serious difficulties. These relate to the vestiges of the different types of management that have been superimposed on each other since the era of the great empires until the advent of democracy and the issue of their legitimacy and legality.

The legal value of local conventions is a recurring theme. Whereas some people are looking for the legal grounds of local conventions in the texts, others emphasize their

150 Traditional structure comparable to the Forestry Policy.

essential illegality.[151] This occurs within a context in which decentralization has been selected as the mode of governance to mediate between the centres of decision-making and the population, a process that makes local government authorities the managers of economic development.[152] It also establishes local conventions as the benchmark instruments for managing natural resources in the organization of agro-sylvo-pastoralist activities through deliberations by local governments and public service delegations in charge of management (compliance with right of use and traditional practices). Furthermore, the local conventions can be turned into administrative policy decisions by the local government authorities that are enforceable against all persons.

All the same time, the new local political elites are facing major challenges, such as a plurality of frames of reference and land rights, difficulty in land access, dispute settlement problems, advanced deforestation, water scarcity, and other environmental problems. These challenges contribute to throwing rural production systems off balance, and also help explain the difficulty that elected representatives have in fulfilling their mission to foster local development and mediate the numerous conflicts between the users of these resources. According to the current law, local governments are responsible for regulating the use of natural resources in order to protect the general interest.[153]

According to those who took part in the research, In general, Mailans do not have a common understanding about the management of resources they need in order to carry out their activities. According to some, the government officials who replaced the traditional management mechanisms did not have sufficient foundation of knowledge of those mechanisms and the confusion and contradictions that accompanied them. For others, the old agreements could not be adapted to the different changes of context. Whatever the reasons, many people believe they have been marginalized from the enjoyment of resources.[154]

151 DICKO, Abdel Kader (2002), *Les conventions locales dans la gestion des ressources naturelles au Mali. Cadre de référence pour l'exercice des compétences des acteurs de la decentralization.*

152 SIDIBE, H. et J. CIAPPERS (2010), *Comment élaborer et mettre en œuvre un programme communal de Développement Communal*

153 GRANIER, Laurent (2010), "Les conventions locales, des outils efficaces de gestion concertée des ressources naturelles ?", *fiche technique, Foncier & développement*, http://www.agter.org/bdf/_docs/ctf_granier_conventions_locales_fr.pdf

154 Heterogeneous Youth Focus Group, Kayes Region, Kayes, April 2014.

The question of access to other economic opportunities also emerged as an important issue during the consultations. Some categories of the population believe that they are the subject of discrimination in terms of access to opportunities such as employment or public procurements.[155]

2.3 Perceived impact on socio-political cohesion

In a systematic manner, Malians consulted within the framework of this participatory research have a feeling that they lack equitable access to natural resources and economic opportunities in their country. They cite the defective regulation by public authorities of access to resources and other economic opportunities as the main reason they are deprived of enjoying these benefits. They point out that some authorities are also stakeholders in the competition for resources. Endowed with resources and greater influence – together with the elected elite and the nouveaux riches – these authorities enjoy special access which the other less privileged categories of the population do not have. Moreover, the rules of the games leaving a lot of grey or uncertainty areas, they are not very much respected. Thus, in addition to creating tensions in neighbourly relations between those vying for resources and opportunities, this deficient regulation causes a deep sense of unease among the Malian people regarding the legitimacy of regulatory institutions.

2.3.1 Tensing of cohabitation relations at local level

The competition for natural resources and economic opportunities is driven by the complex strategies for appropriation designed by some stakeholders, in particular, the elite. These strategies, whether they are violent or relatively peaceful, are aimed at promoting exclusive ownership of available resources in the various regions, to the detriment of a large majority. Their implementation creates so much frustration among the population that if the situation is not brought under control, it may lead to violent situations and open conflicts. In this type of situation, the stakeholders who are mostly targeted for criticism by the population are the state representatives, who, as explained above, are no longer perceived as fair arbiters since they are often interested parties in the competition for access to resources. The reaction to the de-legitimation of the function of arbiter can be seen in both the dispossesion strategies and the confrontational co-management of resources. In many localities where there are valuable resources like agricultural lands or minerals (mainly Sikasso, Kayes,

155 Heterogeneous Youth Focus Group, Timbuktu, Timbuktu Region, June 2014.

Kouklikoro), the local population feels victimized by outsiders who gain access to the resources. They view the huge investments to harness the local resources, mostly from foreign capital, as against the interests of the native population.

> "The investments, whether they are in the agricultural sector or in the mining sector, target the best agricultural lands, therefore where the population live. The resultant effect is the forcible expulsion of the population from their abodes or lands on which they farm."[156]

Furthermore, this kind of resource development considerably reduces the amount of available land for agriculture by the rural people, seriously affecting their means of livelihood. The same applies to the industrial production of gold, rice or biofuels: the population whose locality is earmarked for the implementation of these types of policies is always affected. According to some participants of the focus groups, large-scale production of these assets on their lands is often done by dispossessing the most vulnerable populations, depriving them of their principal means of production. In the *Office du Niger* zone for example, dispossession of their lands for rice production is accompanied by expulsions manu militari of the farmers from their lands, causing problems of relocation, loss of accommodation, resettlement in unsuitable, dangerous locations, and break up of families in the local communities.

> "These expulsions violate their rights and compel them to enter into a show of strength that is totally lopsided and constitute in their opinion an infringement on the dignity of the individual."[157]

Furthermore, for participants, the financial power that accompanies these large-scale development projects is established in negotiations in which the rural communities are at a great disadvantage. The power relations almost always turn against rural communities as public authorities do nothing to throw their weight behind them in the discussions. This failure to support the local population as a viable counterparty contributes to the erosion of trust between the state and the local population: "*They have taken away our lands for peanuts and today, we are worse off than previously*."[158]

156 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Niono, Ségou Region, January 2014.
157 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Sokolo, Ségou Region, January 2014.
158 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Sokolo, Ségou Region, January 2014.

For the local population, from the inception of these major operations, the investments "*are always presented in a more attractive light in terms of advantages and benefits for the local population*."[159] But quickly, the people realize that "*the reality is quite different, once the investors have settled down, they forget about their promises of jobs for the local population, the promises of building infrastructure. Worse of all, they very often violate several aspects*"[160] of their rights, non-payment of taxes, environmental pollution, etc. As a result, the dynamics of impoverishment set in, causing the rural communities to resort to exodus.

In many localities, neighboring populations may be brought together to jointly exploit some resources and opportunities such as pasturelands, water sources, and fishing locations. Very often, local agreements exist to organize this type of relations with local resources.

> "These local agreements, which are mechanisms considered as more operational than the official laws, have been in existence for a long time and their basis is the reciprocal engagement of the population to comply with the agreed rules. They promote, in principle, the participation of the local population in the management of resources."[161]

Yet many community members observed that the agreements are less and less respected by the parties. This situation causes numerous conflicts, often deadly, which sporadically disrupt relations between communities: between livestock breeders and farmers and between sedentary farmers and nomadic pastoralists for access to water points, for the passage of cattle through pasturelands, and regarding arable land and mineral-rich land. The tensions arising from this competition degenerate very rapidly and they often turn into bloody conflicts. From the point of view of a focus participant,

> "Agreements that are difficult to be complied with date as far back as 200 years. The persons who signed them are no longer alive and a lot of things have changed since then. If these agreements are posing a lot of problems, it means they no longer reflect the reality, so people should muster enough courage to review them, otherwise conflicts will never cease."[162]

159 Heterogeneous Youth Focus Group, Kayes, Kayes Region, April 2014.
160 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kenieba, Kayes Region, Avril 2014.
161 DJIRE, Moussa Abdel Kader DICKO (2007), *Les conventions locales face aux enjeux de la décentralisation au Mali*
162 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Nioro, Kayes Region, April 2014.

It is not uncommon for communities to violently appropriate resources from other communities. In local contexts characterized by a wide security vacuum, there is a great temptation for some groups or individuals to arm themselves, and to sometimes organize militias to protect their property. The population which took part in these discussions claimed that violence is very often used to gain access to or control certain resources. Armed conflicts break out between the different occupational groups, particularly between farmers and livestock breeders (inter-activity conflicts), or among stakeholders sharing the same activity or engaged in a dispute on the same resource (intra-activity). The sectors of activity most involved in these types of conflicts are the farming and livestock sectors, as mentioned above. The livestock breeders blame the farmers for occupying the grazing tracks for blocking the access of the animals to water ("*now the fields have feet and they are moving*")[163] and the farmers blame the livestock breeders for allowing the animals to trample on and destroy their crops.

> "The transhumance pastoralists think they can do anything they like, they do not respect the timetable for transhumance and allow their animals to destroy our crops."[164]

Though every one agrees about the existence of development schemes and agreements, some blame others for the violation. In this environment of mutual accusation, community members criticize the state and traditional institutions for their lack of proactiveness or sometimes on suspicion of taking sides. Both sides think that the representatives of both the state and traditional institutions are unable to enforce the agreements of which they are the guarantors. Thus, according to the population, in the face of the inaction on the part of public authorities, "*force becomes the only means of ensuring that their rights are respected*."[165] They resort to the purchase of arms and machetes. According to some farmers who were consulted, "*all the Moor and Fulani herdsmen are armed, they threatened us with their weapons, so we too went to look for arms*."[166]

163 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Niono, Ségou Region, January 2014.
164 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Ambidebi, Kayes Region, March 2014.
165 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.
166 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Ambidebi, Kayes Region, March 2014.

2.3.2. Declining trust in institutions

As has been seen, the competition for resources and economic opportunities is inextricably linked with the capacity of the institutions to play the role of arbitrators in fulfilling their regulatory functions. Generally, the population consulted during the participatory research did not view the competition itself as the causative factor. On the contrary, they attribute it to ineffectiveness and malfunction within the institutions responsible for regulating the competition and the mechanisms established to resolve the emerging conflicts among the stakeholders.

The most vocal critics of institutions are elderly people who judge contemporary institutions to be weak in light of a nostalgic view of a strong state in the past. They see the institutions responsible for regulating access to disputed resources as inefficient, giving advantage to a minority to the detriment of the majority. This is applies to the traditional and state mechanisms.[167]

This research has established the widespread belief that the institutions and stakeholders that are supposed to ensure the regulation are unable to shoulder their regulatory functions because they are partial. However, participants almost unanimously agree that the people complaining are also part of the problem since many of them also engage in corrupt practices. Some, they believe, hide behind their poor economic circumstances and their ignorance of the laws and texts to justify their participation in the corruption. At the same time, most are conscious of the fact that a well-regulated competitive environment would be beneficial to all and would assist in avoiding most of the conflicts concerning access to resources. Yet when there is a need to organize around the harnessing of resources among several stakeholders, few do so because they lack trust in the established system. They believe that the state, local governments and the traditional authorities are also not transparent and do not honour their own commitments vis-à-vis the population. This conviction, even though generally shared, is a demonstration of the in-depth nature of the crisis of trust between the population and those in power.

167 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Koulikoro Region, April 2014.
168 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Keniéba, Kayes Region, April 2014.

> "The traditional authorities who were previously at the centre of the organization of life within the society are handicapped today by the lack of legitimacy, sometimes through manipulation by "politicians", and sometimes by the state or even by some individuals among the population itself."[168] (See *Chapter 1.*)

Some people say that "*they find it difficult to understand how within such a short period of time, their traditional institutions which had always ensured a fair and equitable distribution of resources and managed conflicts conveniently, find themselves in such an ineffective and powerless situation*."[169] Other participants cite the "*new mode of so-called democratic governance*"[170] for totally weakening the traditional authorities.[171] One participant said that "*the state has killed the traditional institutions*"[172] by depriving them of coercive power to the point that, in the words of another participant, "*the opinion of the village chief is no longer important in decision-making concerning the affairs of the population*."[173] Indeed, traditional authorities are consulted only to "*fulfill formalities or to calm down dramatic situations which happen to be out of control of the authorities and the elected representatives*."[174]

To be sure, many Malians have a tendency to idealize a past in which "*the traditional authorities were able to regulate everything*."[175] This point of view reflects one side in a split in the population between those who do not "*know anymore where to put their head in the face of this new situation*"[176] and those who "*fear for the future*."[177] In competing for access to resources, the communities are confronted with more powerful stakeholders and a multiplicity of regulatory standards. To review, several rules and standards of access to resources co-exist and overlap in Mali. There are those established by the state by means of legislative and regulatory texts which are often viewed by some people as "*not taking their interests sufficiently into account*."[178] Then there are the ones established by the traditions in the form of oral traditions,

169 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Kayes Region, May 2014.
170 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Zégoua, Sikasso Region, March 2014
171 MAGASSA, Hamidou and Doulaye KONATE (2011), Cartographie des pouvoirs et de leur légitimité au Mali, Commissariat au Développement Institutionnel.
172 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bafoulabe, Kayes Region, April 2014.
173 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Kayes Region May 2014.
174 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Kayes Région, May 2014.
175 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Zegoua, Sikasso Region, Mars 2014.
176 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Koutiala, Sikasso Region, Avril 2014.
177 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Kayes Region, April 2014.
178 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Kayes Region, May 2014.
179 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Zégoua, Sikasso Region, April 2014.

deeply rooted in the practices and more familiar to the general population. According to the people consulted in this research, there is lack of cohesion among the different standards which "*very often contradict one another*."[179] Some representatives of the state refuted these allegations during the consultations, stating that the local population are always associated with all the initiatives of the state,[180] especially in harnessing local resources, and that the people's interests are taken into consideration in the specifications of the agreements. Still, people claim they are not aware of the content of the texts. In the absence of coherent rules and standards and accepted by all, stakeholders will continue to exploit regulatory loopholes, overlap and contradictions in pursuit of their interests.

The consultations also revealed that a majority of state officials, who are supposed to be neutral and impartial arbiters, are perceived as corrupt. As discussed above, instead of being good arbiters, many state officials allow themselves to be corrupted by one of the parties engaged in the competition or in some cases directly vie for access to resources with the local population. By using their privileged status to gain favourable access, they illustrate the popular view that resources are in the hands of just a minority to the detriment of the majority. Many extend their influence and to exercise broad control over new opportunities which arise, often by cumulating different functions. They are at the same time "*the village chief, mayor of the commune, economic operator, and president of several community management committees*."[181]

Some use the economic capital they have gained in the easy accumulation of resources further bolster their political power by gaining or making political appointments so as to guarantee their access to public procurements. This situation undermines social cohesion, and in the opinion of some, could result in protest and even violent conflict as disadvantaged stakeholders increasingly feel they have been unjustifiably dispossessed of their means of livelihood. This feeling grows worse when major infrastructural developments or key reforms do not adequately take local people into account.

180 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Ségou, Ségou Region, September 2014.
181 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Sofara, Mopti Region, February 2014.
182 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Rive Droite Bamako, Bamako District, June 2014.

> "While a large proportion of the population are wallowing in wretched conditions and in poverty, the accumulation of wealth by just a tiny minority grows in such a revolting manner."[182]

These risks threaten the sustainability of social cohesion, suggesting the need to urgently address key challenges. Principle among them is the need to establish transparent, participatory and fair mechanisms to manage resources and opportunities for all.

Using audiovisual tools helps to stimulate mutual understanding between social groups which, due to geographical, cultural, ethnic, generational, and even psychological distances, would not normally engage in dialogue. Above: A heterogeneous focus group meets in the town of Sikasso in March 2014. Below: Participants at the National Conference in Bamako in January 2015 watch a documentary on the Self-Portrait of Mali on obstacles to peace.
(Photo credits: IMRAP).

The team consulted Malians in all eight regions of Mali and in refugee camps in neighbouring Mauritania and Niger. Above is a view of M'berra camp in Mauritania. Below: Youth from the camp return to their activities after several hours of dialogue in September 2014.
(Photo credits: IMRAP)

Consultations in the various counties were followed by "restitution" sessions at the regional level to validate and deepen issues emerging from the analysis of the initial dialogue sessions. The restitutions were then followed by a National Conference (cf. Methodology). Above: A sitting of a Working Group during the Kayes regional restitution in September 2014. Below: A plenary session of the National Conference in January 2015, a sub-prefect aides a young person from Gao during his speech by holding the microphone.
(Photo credits: IMRAP)

Participants at the closing session of the National Conference held from 27 - 29 January 2015 at the International Conference Centre of Bamako (CICB).
(Photo credit: IMRAP)

CHAPTER 2 | Regulating the competition for socio-economic resources and opportunities

The competition for socio-economic resources and opportunities is rife in Mali and continues to grow due to factors such as the rapidly growing population and climate changes. Malians' standpoint, this does not augur well for equitable distribution. As such, access to means of livelihood is not guaranteed for all, which leads to tensions within and between communities at the local level as well as among the population and the regulatory institutions. It is important to prioritize which factors to address in order to ensure an equitable regulatory mechanism that is acceptable to everyone.

- **Pressure on resources**
  How can we manage and anticipate the unforeseen factors that affect the availability of resources? How can we mitigate the impact of climate change at the local level? How can we protect the resources? How can we facilitate behavioural change among the people?
- **Rules of play and inequitable access to economic opportunities and resources**
  How do we ensure that all categories of people, particularly the youth, the vulnerable and disadvantaged as well as women, have equitable access to various economic resources and opportunities? How do we ensure better coherence, understanding and respect for laws, conventions and regulations on access to economic resources and opportunities as well as ensure that the various institutions have an obligation to guarantee the application of these laws? How do we reconcile the economic, social and environmental aspects?
- **Limitations on access to jobs for youth**
  What kind of education should we give young people to ensure that they become employable? How do we ensure fair recruitment processes within the public sector, the army and the private sector? How do we strenghthen the mechanisms and structures which have been put in place to provide for the needs of youth?
- **Capacity and legitimacy of institutions responsible for distribution of resources**
  How do we engender more trust in the regulatory institutions, strengthen them and make them more legitimate? How do we ensure cohabitation and coherence between the formal and traditional institutions?

CHAPTER 3
Governance of access to public services

In addition to the issue of fairness with regards to access to economic resources and opportunities, the poor delivery of public goods and services has been cited as yet another major obstacle to peace in Mali. Structural shortcomings in the delivery of public services – health, education, security, justice – accessible by all and of acceptable quality, generate amongst population a strong perception of inequality. This feeling is particularly strong between the north and the south, or between regions and the capital, Bamako. Thus, each area considers the other to be more privileged in investments financing by the State and technical and financial partners, infrastructures, and the State's presence in general.

The contradictions in and incomplete nature of the decentralization process have consistently been cited as sources of the people's discontent, which is due mainly to the inadequate transfer of skills and resources. The clash of jurisdiction or authority linked to the creation of new power bases, results in a difficult relationship between appointed and elected authorities, calling into question the legitimacy and legality of such authorities. In fact, the Malians who were consulted as part of this research reiterated that there is a lack of clarity in the modalities of administrative dividing the country and the lack of ownership of the process by the stakeholders. This situation adds to a perception of failure on the part of the authorities, structural deficiencies of the State, the effect of some socio-cultural constraints (social relationships), the negligence and apathy of some State officials, the flaws in humanitarian aid policies of international NGOs, and the people's lack of civic spirit.

3.1 Structural imbalances and deficiencies in the provision of public services

In the various sectors, (education, health, security, justice, etc.) in Mali, the provision of public services remains highly inequitable and inadequate in spite of concerted efforts by public authorities.[183] These structural inadequacies are as much quantitative

183 HØYER, Katrine (2013), *Crisis in Mali, A Peacebuilding Approach*, Malivaleurs/International Alert.

as they are qualitative, accompanied by wide imbalances between rural and urban areas as well as between the capital, Bamako and the rest of the country.

3.1.1 Education

Mali's educational system, built on the relics of the colonial educational system which was aimed at helping a portion of the local population to administer the country, has undergone various changes since the country's independence in 1960. Although touted as a national priority by the Malian authorities of the time, in the long run, the educational system has not received the attention and investment necessary for its development. In spite of the fact that a law was passed in 1962 to reorganize the educational system, and more specifically, mobilize resources to construct and equip schools as well as recruit human resources, the regime change in 1968 brought about a drastic change to the situation. The military government which came into power after a *coup d'etat* oversaw the downfall in the development of the educational system.

Under the combined effect of budgetary restrictions imposed by the country's main donors, the Bretton Woods institutions – the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank – and of a quasi-systematic resolve to quash student/teacher movements, the teaching profession was considerably devalued, particularly in terms of the monetary compensation received by teachers. All protest attempts by unions were strongly repressed while budgetary allocations to the sector were substantially reduced. The resulting effects were quickly felt: Mali's educational system experienced a series of crises which significantly affected its ability to function. Although in the first ten years of its independence, Mali succeeded in educating one third of its boys and 20% of its girls, and thus increasing by three-fold the educated population compared with the educated population at independence, school attendance rates reduced considerably. By the end of the 90s, school enrolment rates had declined from 29% to 22%.[184]

When Alpha Oumar Konaré came to power in 1992 following the democratic transition, various intiatives were taken in an attempt to reverse the negative trend: private tuition was recognized and integrated into the educational system, community schools were established and various educational programmes and innovations were initiated. These interventions contributed to increasing school attendance rates; however,

184 Ministry of Education: CPS (2012).

developing the school mapping remains a huge challenge for the country. As such, it was observed that in Mali, as in other poor countries, more than a million children are not enrolled in schools, as their access to education is determined, to a large extent, by where they live.[185] Significant imbalances exist between rural children and urban children: those from the villages often have to walk several kilometres in order to attend the nearest elementary school. In addition, these village schools often do not have qualified teachers or serve as duty stations for new teachers.

> "In the past, children from the rural areas were always among the best in class. But today, when assigning teachers, they say 'go and start from the village since your level is not too good and you can later come to the city' as if to say that the children from the rural areas are not Malians just like those in the cities."[186]

Under such conditions, the quality of teaching continues to depreciate for various reasons: inadequate motivation and level of remuneration/qualification of teachers, adhoc testing of educational innovations which were sometimes not put in the right context, not to mention difficult teaching environments. From the standpoint of some Malians, "*our country has become an experimental ground for rich countries which often tie their aid to the introduction of new educational systems*."[187] In Mali today, we can hardly count one teacher for 53 pupils at the primary level. Although the country more than doubled its school enrolment at the primary level between 1999 and 2011, the teacher to pupil ratio has reduced.[188] The country needs 40,000 additional teachers by early 2015. Efforts have been made, albeit, at the expense of quality: 4 teachers out of 10 are college dropouts and close to 6 out of 10 have no qualification.[189]

> "Education is first and foremost about human resources. If the teachers are not well trained how can the students better understand? How do you expect someone who is not well trained to train a child? There has been a lot of trial and error with respect to the educational system from 1960 to date. There have been hundreds of teaching methodologies. Our educational system is not imbued with our social values. Malian

185 UNESCO (2014), *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*, 11th Edition.
186 Homogeneous focus group of young teachers, Kati, Koulikouro Region, April 2014.
187 Regional restitution, Kayes region, September 2014.
188 UNESCO (2014), *op.cit.*
189 Ministry of Education: CPS (2012).

> intellectuals are responsible for this situation, designers of educational programmes receive better remuneration than the teachers at the grassroot who have the huge responsibility of educating; this demotivates teachers."[190]

In addition to the various problems outlined above, the people expressed concerns over the behaviour of some members of the teaching profession as described below by a participant from the Koulikoro region:

> "Today, school has become a place of shame because of the attitude of some teachers, they will do anything for money. In addition, they court the pupils and give out marks which, they call 'sexually transmitted marks'. The girls, having realized this, do not stop enticing them."[191]

Nevertheless, according to a former senior official of the educational system,

> "There have always been bad teachers. But what can we do? We should not dream that we will always have teachers who love to teach. As soon as their contracts are prepared, the State must undertake a follow-up. That is what is lacking. People are recruited [and] once they have been recruited, they do whatever they like. The blight in the educational system today is inspection."[192]

Besides these structural shortcomings, a good number of Malians who were consulted, believe that some provisions and current realities specific to the educational environment affect the authority of the teacher and by extention, the delivery of education, thus undermining all the more, the quality of education in the country. These provisions include the prohibition of corporal punishment and the weakening of pupil discipline. In Mali today, school is perceived to be more of a place where minimum training is given than a place where education is provided.

> "Speaking of school! I am the one who knows how it is today. There is training but no education. Yes! So if they were to change the name of the Ministry in charge of education to Ministry of Instruction, we will be all the more happy. Education should be removed from the title. Yes! Education should be taken out of the title because as per the educational

190 Heterogenous Focus Group, Bougouni, Sikasso region, March 2014.
191 Regional Restitution, Sikasso, Sikasso Region, September 2014.
192 Individual interview, former National Director of Education, Bamako, February 2015.

> regulations of today, the child cannot be disciplined. I'm referring to the internal regulations of schools which do not allow a child to be beaten. You can neither insult nor punish a child. In the past, a child was educated at home or at school. The children from the Koranic schools dare not go to school if they cannot recite the day's lesson for fear of being severely punished by the teacher but as for our children, the homework accumulate, in addition to today's homework, there's that of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. They are not bothered and the teacher cannot punish them."[193]

The government, in recognition of the need for human resource, has put in place a 90-day accelerated training programme called the Alternative Teachers' Recruitment Strategy which aims at quickly making up for the lack of teaching staff and empowering teachers to teach. In the opinion of an education consultant in the Kayes region, the fundamental problem of the public educational system is rather the lack of stability and continuity in the content of educational programmes and the ever changing teaching techniques.

> "This is because the donors dictate to us which systems to experiment. Out of the blue, they tell us 'stop that system and implement this one rather'. We take millions from donors and invest them in big cars. We should not only talk about madrasas. What has killed the educational system is the 'New Primary School', it is a lie, let us not deceive ourselves. As long as we do not have a stable educational system, things will not be fine [...] We have sold the future of our children for money!"[194]

This is an opinion partly shared by the former National Director of Education, who reckons that:

> "The reality is that the State does not have the means to manage education. It is obliged to call on countries that want to provide support. These countries have their vision of education, they have their perception of education and they have their policies on education. I think that the intellectuals in this country do not adequately defend the interests of their country, because it is about how you negotiate."[195]

193 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Nara, Koulikoro Region, April 2014.
194 Regional Restitution, Kayes region, September 2014.
195 Individual Interview, former National Director of Education, February 2015.

These observations apply not only to the education system but also to the health system.

3.1.2 Health

As signatory to almost all international conventions[196] on promoting better access to quality health care, Mali seems to have made progress in matters health. This is evident in the widening of vaccination coverage, free caesarian section operations in 2005, mandatory health insurance, etc.

In spite of these measures, the provision of health services remains inequitable. With a birth rate of 6.16% against a mortality rate of 13.22%,[197] and an infant mortality rate of about 128 for every 1000 births,[198] access to health services is still one of the major concerns of the people of Mali. In spite the considerable efforts made by the State and its technical and financial partners, NGOs as well as the private sector, huge disparities persist between regions with respect to infrastructure, equipment and available personnel. Presently, the Mali's health map, which was updated in 2011, indicates that out of the 1,235 existing public health facilities throughout the country, 216 of them, representing 17.5%, are located in the Sikasso region and 206 (16.7%) are in the Kayes region. The regions with the lowest number of public health-care facilities are those of Bamako with 6.6%, Gao 5.7% and Kidal 1.2%. Of the 1,090 private facilities in operation in Mali, 49.4% are in Bamako, 16.8% in Koulikoro, 10.2% in Sikasso and 9% in Kayes. The Kidal region has only one private clinic while Bamako has more than half of the clinics in the country, that is 68 out of 104 clinics.[199]

In addition to this inequitable geographical distribution, it must be noted that these facilities, notwithstanding their position in the country's health-care pyramid, with a few notable exceptions, have outdated technological facilities ("kits"). It has been observed that 62% of these technological facilities are in Bamako. Similarly, 61% of electrocardiograms can be found in Bamako, 10% of which do not function, and Kidal simply does not have any.[200]

196 Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified in 1992, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child adopted in July 1990, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, ratified on 21st December 1981, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, among others.

197 Ministry of Health: CPS (2013).

198 2012 Figures: UNDP (2014), Human Development Report, 2014.

199 Ministry of Health: CPS (2013).

200 Ministry of Education: CPS (2012).

For many Malians, in addition to the poor rate of health-care coverage and inadequate equipment in health-care facilities which restrict their access to health care, the professionalism of some health-care personnel is sometimes called into question. Besides the defence and security forces and the judiciary, health-care officials represent one of the most criticized professionals; people find some of their actions within health facilities, frustrating. Thus, their lack of ethics while excercising their profession notably with respect to managing community health centres, was identified as one of the key weaknesses of the health system. As such, some people do not use the numerous public health centres because of the apparent absence of qualified health-care practitioners and excessive health care costs. In addition, the widespread resort to self-medication by many Malians (abuse of traditional medicine, recourse to "on-the-ground pharmacies"[201]) is as a result of this situation.

> "We do not have enough qualified health-care practitioners here. The few who are here think that the hospital is theirs. They sell us drugs as and when they want and that is why people self medicate, either with traditional medication or from makeshift pharmacies."[202]

3.1.3 Security

The security service is one public sector whose structural inadequacies were exposed as a result of the 2012 crisis in Mali. In fact, security forces in Mali were unable to contain the growth of various movements and armed groups in the north of the country. This situation led to a series of events (military coup d'etat in March 2012, followed by the transition and presidential and legislative elections in 2013) which resulted in the reconfiguration of the national socio-political landscape. Events which, according to a former minister, Zeini Moulaye, revealed serious "*structural weaknesses of institutions, obvious inadequacies, insufficient physical, human, material and financial capacity as well as a lack of professionalism, ethics and integrity*" in Mali's defense and security system.[203] With a geographical area of 1,241,000 km2, Mali is a country which shares approximately 7,243 km of border land with seven other neighbouring countries. The size of its geographical area poses a huge challenge to public authorities in terms of ensuring the safety of goods and people.[204] In various parts of the country, the

201 Unprofessional medicine vendors, often street vendors who display their medicines on stands or even on the floor.

202 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kolokani, Koulikoro Region, April 2014.

203 Moulaye, Zeïni (2013), *Quelle architecture de sécurité pour le Mali?*, communiqué at a conference on Mali's new security structure, Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

204 A comprehensive analysis of security issues in border areas, see: Danish Demining Group (DDG) (2014), Assessment of security risks at border posts – Liptako-Gourma region: Mali, Burkina and Niger.

presence of the security forces is irregular with a ratio of about five military personnel to 10,000 people and one police officer to 2,204 inhabitants.[205]

As you move from the capital towards the north of the country, the ratios reduce considerably. In some portions of this vast expanse of desert, there is no State control.

> "We are not safe in this country, we, human beings and our herds. Whose fault is that? It's the fault of the State. We are not protected by the State, the State does not protect us. Not long ago, a number of sheep and cattle were stolen from here. Thanks to our youth association, we were able to put a stop to this. Otherwise the State will do nothing. You get me, don't you? They came to our homes and took our sheep from their shade and our cattle as well....even afterwards some were still not found."[206]

As explained by many natives of these areas, who were consulted as part of the research, they have a deep sense of isolation and a strong urge to be close to and be easily identified with communities of neighbouring countries mainly because in many localities in this part of the country, national symbols are non-existent. These include public buildings, State symbols such as border posts, and the national flag.

> "As you move further away from the inhabited localities, you will also observe that there are hardly any national security forces. The presence of the State is not really felt at our borders; on the contrary, the first local hamlet of the neighbouring country can be identified by a flag. This state of affairs only increases arms and drug trafficking in our country."[207]

Thus, in the opinion of the people, one of the consequences of the lack of security forces is the increase in illicit and criminal activities in disturbing proportions. These include organized crime, theft of livestock, sale of contraband goods, arms and drug trafficking, etc.

> "It is very easy to buy firearms today. They are sold everywhere and at any price. Anyone with money can even buy himself a tank now."[208]

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205 DGPN/MSIPC_2012/CPS-ATFPSI, Statistics (2012).
206 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bourem, Gao Region, June 2014.
207 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Nara, Koulikoro Region, April 2014.
208 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Douentza, Mopti Region, February 2014.

According to the people, even when the security forces are in the locality, they do not always have the equipment or the level of commitment necessary to respond to this insecurity.

> "How do you expect Mali's under-equipped, underfed and unmotivated army to take on well equipped and highly motivated adversaries? I do not see any possible comparison between the equipment our army has and that of armed groups."[209]

In 2012, Malian troops, authorities and institutions had to retreat from a large portion of the north of the country when confronted by advancing armed groups. This retreat and the events that followed, dealt a final blow to the people's lack of trust in the State which was already shaken by the past crisis (see Chapter 4, Section 4.3.2). The defeat of the national army by the armed groups, its retreat to the south as well as the retreat of State representatives were generally perceived by the people as "*being abandoned yet again by the State and thus a betrayal [which comes on the back of their] exclusion from national development.*"[210] Consequently, according to some of the people who were consulted, there is absolutely no confidence in the State and the army to ensure the safety and development of some parts of the country.

> "We must not be afraid to be forthright in speaking about the obstacles today. The State gave up on its responsibilities with respect to the regions in the north. The State was not able to ensure the safety of its citizens and this has resulted in mistrust between us and the State. This trust will not be regained because to date, we do not feel safe with the presence of the law enforcement agents who are supposed to ensure our safety. It is frightening when we say it, it is a lack of trust. The State abandoned us on the first of April [the day Gao fell to the armed groups]. The State even abandoned children from other regions who were brought here because of the imminent insecurity and terrorism. Can that be described as managing security? With respect to this issue, the State has failed and continues to fail to date."[211]

209 Homogeneous Focus Group of soldiers from the Kayes camp, Kayes Region, April 2014.
210 Homogeneous Focus Group, consultation framework Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.
211 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Goundam, Timbuktu Region, June 2014.

Some people think that the State and the national army excel in "*the art of fleeing when things get too hot, once there is the slightest of movements. I remember the recent events at Kidal, they all fled again! We heard in the morning that the prefect himself had fled to Timbuktu to board a plane to Sévaré!*"[212]

According to a former executive manager and security specialist, Mali must give second thought to the way in which the notion of safety and consequently security systems are constituted and particularly the place and role of the citizen within this system:

> "Today, there is a national security reform commission. The commission has been working on the basis of what we inherited from the colonial era in terms of security and defense infrastructure and also from decentralized administrative and security establishments. At the decentralized level, there is a new trend which is human security. I mean that human beings are at the centre of the human security process because we are all concerned [and] because it is not possible to have a soldier or a police officer for each citizen. Each citizen must play their role at all levels because security is a concern for each and every one of us."[213]

This lack of trust in the State (see section 4.3, Impact of management mechanisms on society) is not limited to security alone but also considerably affects the judicial system as well.

3.1.4 Justice

In the area of justice, a majority of Malians who participated in the research emphasized their preference for the traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution, which they consider more legitimate. Thus, they resort to modern justice, whether in the rural or urban setting, only when the traditional mechanisms of mediation (friends, neighbours, family, religious heads, village/area/neighbourhood chiefs) have failed. The latter, however, as indicated earlier in this study, are finding it difficult to adapt to the changing reality – demographic changes, migrations among others (see Chapter 2) as well as to the threat of "competition" posed by State institutions. Nevetheless, contrary to the work of the traditional authorities, the people believe that modern justice *"does*

212 Homogeneous Focus Group, Consultation with eminent people from Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.
213 National Conference, Bamako, January 2015.

not resolve conflict, rather, it divides"[214] and when it causes such division, the parties involved can never live together peacefully. In their opinion, "*the person who takes you to court on whatever issue, is not an opponent but an enemy for life, to whom you can never again give a gift*."[215] There is therefore a huge gap between the formal judicial system and traditional values, modes and regulations which are being increasingly stripped of their power and legitimacy. (See Chapter 1.)

In the opinion of the participants, the alienation of the people from the courts can be largely explained by the exclusive use of modern law by the courts in a country where the laws, which are all written in French, cannot be accessed by majority of the people because they are mostly illiterate.[216] These factors contribute to widening the gap between the courts and those seeking redress. State officials tend to emphasize the lack of resources and infrastructure as the reason for their inefficiency and the alienation of the people from the courts,[217] however, there is the need to also understand the problem from the perspective that people do not understand, do not accept and do not recognize the legitimacy and authority of these officials.

Like many countries in the world, Mali has a relatively structured judicial system comprising 1 Supreme Court, 3 Courts of Appeal, 16 lower courts, 3 commercial courts, 3 administrative courts, 42 justices of the peace with wide-ranging competence, 11 labour courts, 8 juvenile courts and 3 military tribunals. Beyond this organizational nomenclature however, some of these courts are not operational or where they are operational, they do not have the manpower strength and quality of human resource required to meet the expectations of people seeking redress. In spite of the efforts of public authorities to improve and increase human resources, the judge/inhabitant ratio largely remains below international standards, with Mali recording one magistrate for 7,000 inhabitants.

In spite of the recruitment of additional legal trainees, there is still a mismatch in the ratios such that the scope of authority exercised by some judges, particularly the justices of the peace with wide-ranging competence, has resulted in the people scornfully conferring on them the "*same powers as the good Lord himself*."[218] This

214 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.
215 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bourem, Gao Region, June 2014.
216 4th General Population and Housing Census (GPHC) - Mali 2009.
217 Regional Restitution, Ségou Region, September 2014.
218 Unlike lower courts (Magistrate courts) in the big cities, peace tribunals have only one judge who takes on the duties of prosecutor, investigator and judge.

lack of personnel, in addition to the precarious working conditions, largely contribute to making the procedures tortuous and burdensome which have led to the lack of trust the people have for the judicial institution. The lack of confidence of the people of Mali in the judicial system as well as their limited access has made it one of the institutions the people increasingly disregard when there is conflict. An evaluation carried out by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) established that barely 37% of Malians believe that it is easy to access justice,[219] a figure which was confirmed during our consultations:

> "People are not equal before the law! In this country Mali where we live, people are not equal before the law however insignificant it may seem."[220]

There is almost always the perception that this institution is a real prototype of corruption and partiality. For some people, *"justice is merchandise which is sold to the highest bidder*;"[221] for others, "*the courts have become markets*."[222] However, in their defense, members of the judicial system believe that in Mali, "*the delivery of court rulings is becoming more and more difficult because of the social burden*."[223] Often, the enforcement of laws or court verdicts is at odds with the intervention of some personalities (village heads, imams) who can use their symbolic and traditional power to curtail the execution of a sentence. This has led to the perception among people that verdicts are never executed. Thus, a convicted person can remain free and sometimes even harass his victims.[224] Besides, as reiterated by the judges consulted during the research, a judge is often obliged to consult various sources in order to arrive at his decision; this sometimes prolongs the procedures and gives people the impression that the procedures are being intentionally slowed down to extort money from those seeking redress. For these people however, a court case, no matter the nature of the case, can take years without being resolved, with the courts "*milking*"[225] the two parties. The parties involved would often be asked to pay fees ostensibly to ensure that progress is made in the case. Finally, judges are also suspected of often passing to each other "*financially enticing cases*". This practice, which is known in their jargon as "*recycling conflict*,"[226] is widespread in the country.

219 Dembélé BABA, «Gouvernance au Mali: La justice toujours inaccessible aux justiciables», *Le Républicain*, 2009.
220 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bougouni, Sikasso Region, March 2014.
221 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Nara, Koulikoro Region, April 2014.
222 Homogeneous Youth Focus Group, Bamako, June 2014.
223 Regional Restitution, Ségou region, September 2014.
224 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Niger Refugee Camp, June 2014.
225 Heterogeneous focus group, Mopti, Mopti Region, February 2014.
226 Friedrich Ebert Foundation (2014), *The prevention and management of community conflicts in Mali*.

According to a Supreme Court judge, apart from the problem of corruption, there are many other issues linked to justice delivery:

> "The enforcement of justice poses a lot of problems even for the judges who do not have a free hand to do their work. I will tell you why. It is often not about money, a relative or even a colleague can ask a judge 'I'm sending this person to you because of his problem, try and help him.' This is a form of corruption [...] If the judges are left to do their work, if nobody offers them money, if nobody comes from above or below to tell them 'I have this issue, I want you to do this or that' I believe a lot can be done. Because nowadays, it is no secret that the Executive weighs heavily on the Judiciary, meanwhile these two arms of government are different and independent of each other. Today, judges are appointed by the Executive because it is the Minister of Justice who makes proposals for appointments. It is true that it is the Supreme Council of the Judiciary which issues appointments but it is done under the supervision of the President of the Republic who can impose whoever he wants at whichever position he desires. For as long as this persists, can judges be independent, really? If they are told to do something can they refuse to do it? No!" [227]

Another factor which has deepened the perception among people that the judicial system has very little credibility, is the cost and method of service delivery. The court, as was repeatedly emphasized by the representatives of communities consulted in the study, remains inaccessible and inequitable mainly as a result of language barrier. "*We do not understand the language in which justice is rendered*." The lack of knowledge of the language in which court verdicts are rendered is seen by some people as a major handicap in the access to justice. In this environment in which trust in the judicial system is weak, the officials and/or court officials are perceived by people as working for the rich to the detriment of the poor (corruption, influence peddling, diversion of evidence). According to some people, "*judicial and court officials are the ones who motivate people to go to court even over issues that can be resolved by traditional authorities because they know that they stand to gain*."[229]

227 Individual interview, magistrate Bamako, February 2015.
228 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bandiagara, Mopti Region, February 2014.
229 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Douenza, Mopti Region, February 2014.

According to a judge however, these accusations can be largely explained by the problem of ignorance and perceptions:

> "When people say that justice is not well delivered, it is because justice is misconstrued by many people. [...] People say that justice is not well delivered but justice cannot be well delivered because people do not trust the justice system [...] When a judge delivers his ruling he is not being fair, he gives judgement between two parties and the party that wins is happy and says nothing, they do not say the 'judge is good' or the 'judge is bad'. But the party that loses spends its time vilifying the judges as if to say that if they did not win it is because either they did not give enough money or because their opponent gave more money than they did."[230]

In the light of this gloomy picture of the judicial system painted by participants in our interviews, a young university student gives this analysis:

> "They say 'it is the relatives...', 'it is because of money', but I have followed cases where the judge gave a very good judgement. The people must therefore have confidence in their justice system and to do this we must properly train the judges again, they must be given the needed resources and the independence of the judiciary must be guaranteed." [231]

3.2 Crumbling service delivery: corruption and lack of civic responsibility

During our consultations, the people unanimously indicated that services rendered by public officials (those of the State and the local communities) are not satisfactory. According to them, whether it relates to education, health, infrastructure, security, justice or obtaining a simple administrative document, the officials in charge of meeting the needs of the people are deemed incapable of living up to expectations. The lack of material and financial resources has been cited as one of the reasons for the inefficiency of public officials. However, their individual and collective behaviour, lack of standards, corruption, favouritism, absenteeism are equally emphasized as contributing to the poor quality of service delivery.

230 Individual Interview, magistrate Bamako, February 2015.

231 Homogeneous Focus Group, young university students, Bamako, Bamako District, July 2014.

3.2.1 Shared corruption

People condemn the lack of equity and the corruption of State officials and authorities. These phenomena, which are not marginal or related to a specific locality, appear to be widespread throughout Mali and affect the entire administrative system to the point that the former Prime Minister, Moussa Mara, said, during his General Policy Statement to the National Assembly: "*corruption has reached a critical stage that the pessimists say that there is no cure for corruption in Mali. I can however, assure you that there is no truth in that because the fight against corruption is a major concern to the President of the Republic*."[232] His successor, Prime Minister Modibo Keita, appointed on 8 January 2015 also indicated, when he was about to take office, that "*cleansing the public services*" must be one of the priorities of the government of Mali.[233]

Community representatives who participated in the research believe that officials use corruption as a means to satisfy their desire for personal gain. People see corruption as an exception which explains to a large extent the people's lack of confidence in public officials. According to some participants, "*the lack of fairness and corruption generate tensions among the people because those who benefit from these corrupt practices are considered more privileged and those who are unable to benefit from them [for lack of money] constantly criticize the latter. Thus, there is no end to the problems*." Justice, though a right for every citizen, is undermined when those who must settle conflicts among the people cannot be trusted.[234]

> "I think that the dishonest behaviour of leaders worsens conflicts among the people, [...] if those who enforce the law are fraudulent, greedy and take bribes to make what is right look wrong [...] to everyone. If you live together in a community and the officials bring about divisions among you by enforcing the law the way they want, can you still love one another?"[235]

Some people go to the extent of saying that "*the one who is not corrupt does not remain in his job for a long time. His corrupt colleagues will do everyting to make*

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232 Prime Minister Moussa Mara, *General Policy Statement*, Tuesday 29th April 2014.

233 L'Essor, "First Cabinet meeting of the new government: The two major challenges that need to be addressed", 15th January 2015.

234 Regional Restitution, Kayes Region, September 2014.

235 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Sikasso, Sikasso Region, March 2014.

him leave because he becomes a barrier between them and their happiness."[236] This perception is so widespread that some people go to the extent of believing that there are no honest officials.

> "I was born and bred in Mali but I have never seen an upright and honest leader. That is what brings about the conflict among us because for every problem we want to go to court but when we get there, we find that they themselves are not honest people and we do not get justice. That is the only obstacle [to peace] in this country."[237]

The consultations we had with the people highlighted the fact that majority of State officials who are expected to ensure neutral/impartial arbitration are considered corrupt. People often consider them as being stakeholders themselves or abusing their power by "*involving themselves in issues which do not concern them*."[238] Finally, the people believe that instead of being good mediators, State officials allow themselves to be corrupted by one of the parties involved in the conflict in exchange for resources, most often by "*siding with the highest bidder*."[239]

> "If the parties do not respect or circumvent established conventions, it is because the officials who are responsible for settling disputes are themselves under the influence of money."[240]

The State officials do not acknowledge that they are corrupt, however, their representatives who were consulted as part of this research acknowledge that they "*lack the resources*" to handle the tasks assigned to them. With respect to justice for example, in addition to the challenges common to all State officials, the ones in the judiciary are confronted with lack of resources to enforce verdicts given as part of the court's judgement. According to one such official, "*it is often not easy*" to give judgements because the basis for rendering verdicts is often very shaky since most verdicts are based on oral evidence or contracts.

In such a situation of total mistrust for the courts and officials, truth becomes subjective as each person considers that the truth is not being told and that the one who is right is the one who has the connections or the money.

236 Regional Restitution, Sikasso, September 2014.
237 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kayes Region, April 2014.
238 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kadiolo, Sikasso Region, March 2014.
239 Homogeneous Youth Focus Group, Bamako, Bamako District, June 2014.
240 Homogeneous Youth Focus Group, Macina, Ségou Region, January 2014.

> "What are the courts established for? Is it not to speak the truth? Do we find truth at the courts? No, let us not deceive ourselves! There is injustice in justice, but where has justice gone to? Nowhere! That is the reality, in other words, there are things that everyone can see but everyone is afraid to say! But as for us, we will say them, we will say them without running any risks. We are not insulting anyone but the truth must be told. This country has suffered enough. This country is tired because those in charge do not do the work they are paid to do, once appointed, they only look out for the gains they can derive."[241]

> "Someone is given assistance although he is wrong. Let everyone follow after the truth, let the truth be told in the family, let it be told in the village council, let it be told in the courts, let it be told by those in authority (prefects and sub- prefects), let it be told especially by you the people of Bamako."[242]

Thus, the power of "almighty money" is strongly identified as a pre-condition to access not only justice but also employment, administrative documents, resources required for production such as land. As a result of these sentiments, people are compelled to adopt behaviours that encourage circumvention of laws and are considered as devoid of a sense of civic duty.

> "It is true we are not good, but the government is also bad. The government has completely destroyed power. The law does not exist, today if you have money, you can have the leaders in your pocket. Someone takes me to court but I have no money. He goes to his friends and gives the judge money, will he give judgement in my favour? As a poor person?" [243]

Within an environment where services have been monetised (including justice), in a country where majority of the people live below the poverty line,[244] circumventing good civic practices becomes a game which many play. The people believe that if everyone can be assured of fair treatment, many of the behaviours considered as detrimental to

241 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kayes, Kayes Region, April 2014.
242 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bourem, Gao Region, June 2014.
243 Heterogeneous Focus group, Kambila, Kati, Koulikoro Region, April 2014.
244 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2012), Human Development Index, Report 2012.

public interests will not see the light of day or will not be widespread within the Malian society. According to them, these behaviours are partly in response to government's own behaviour. The people do not ecognizes themselves in government's actions, and the latter does not put in place conditions which facilitate good communication to ensure trust between them and the people. With regard to perceived weaknesses in the delivery of public services, some people recognize their responsibility since they never help to put things in their right order. Thus, they acknowledge that although some behaviours they exhibit are expressions of humour, they contribute, to a large extent, to lessening the ability of public officials to provide them with good quality service.

Among the behaviours acknowledged by the people is the fact that most of the time, they, the people, are the ones who take the initiative to offer money to officials when they have a problem even before the latter request for it, explains one participant from the Mopti region:

> "They say that the officials [judges] take money from people but we are the ones who go and offer them money, so it is normal if they take it. Instead of accusing the officials, we must acknowledge that we ourselves are sometimes responsible."[245]

Another well recognized practice is that people reduce the amount they pay in taxes and levies on the pretext that they do not know how public funds are used.[246] These are ill-intentioned strategies people use to shirk their civic duties; however, they also reflect the extent to which people are unable to influence decisions regarding the development of their areas. According to some participants, government must be accountable to the people if the country is to an end certain practices that perpetuate poverty and create societal tensions.

> "If mayors could explain how each penny of the town's funds are used, people will pay their taxes before the date is due. But that is not the case. The mayors do everything on the quiet, the Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plans (PDSEC)[247] are developed on the quiet, expenses are made on the quiet, they do not even render accounts.

245 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Mopti, Mopti Region, February 2014.

246 Regional Restitution, Ségou Region, September 2014.

247 The PDSEC is a document for planning of activities at the local level, mostly covering a five- year period. It prioritizes the needs of the people and covers all sectors namely: health, education, culture, administration, water, etc.

> Thus, the people are right not to respect the proposals made by the elected representatives. This also goes for the government, we don't know anything."[248]

Looking closely, the sense of failure on the part of public officials on one hand, and the unethical behaviour of the people on the other, is based on the perception of impunity. According to the people, the actions of public officials are known and seen by everyone, even State authorities in high office, yet they do not pursue the complaints of the people. Public officials believe that they do not have the means to punish the unethical actions of people who often rely on personal relationships or cite their ignorance of the law to shirk their responsibilities. In this environment of constant mistrust, the relationship between the people and the authorities is greatly compromised. The authority of local and traditional leaders is weakened to the point that they are powerless when people engage in unethical acts. Under such conditions, the State's authority is also undermined.

> "In the past, the power village chiefs wielded in administering the village, today, I think they do not have the same authority in managing the village. As a result of this lack of authority on the part of chiefs, it is not possible to resolve some problems at the village level."[249]

According to some participants during our consultations, "*majority of these practices and attitudes are far from new, whether on the part of State officials [corruption] or on the part of the people [lack of civic spirit], they had already been denounced before 1991*"[250] when the country was under single party rule. The desire and expectation that they were going to "*do away with these practices which had kept them in a state of poverty and deprivation*"[251] was even a motivating factor in the people's involvement in democratic movements. Thus, the advent of democracy and the multiparty system was welcomed even by people in the remotest corners of Mali. Later on, news of decentralization generated a lot of hope among the people that they were going to do away with these kinds of practices and have access to good quality services adapted to the needs of the people.

248 Regional Restitution, Kayes Region, September 2014.
249 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kadiolo, Sikasso Region, March 2014.
250 Heterogeneous Focus Group of Bamako, Rive Droite, Bamako District, June 2014.
251 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Mopti, Mopti Region, February 2014.

3.3 Decentralization: a solution and its challenges

The challenge of access to public services and the related issues of legitimacy and accountability that have been highlighted by the people in these consultations are not new to Mali. Since the democratic transition, the government of Mali put in place a decentralization process as a means of addressing these issues. Decentralization was also presented as one of the key solutions to the various rebellions that Mali had experienced. If very few Malians consulted cast doubts on the good intentions of decentralization, it appears obvious that the problems that it was expected to resolve are still cited nowadays, twenty years after its introduction.

3.3.1 Context, objectives and achievements of the decentralization policy

Mali's decentralization has a long history. Decentralization has been the concern of all leaders who have ruled in Mali since the time of the great empires to the kingdoms, the colonial system, the 1st and 2nd Republics and the 3rd Republic. All searched for a management model which more or less resembled a form of decentralization, adapted to the socio-cultural realities of their time. The quest for democracy followed a series of failed meetings between political leaders who wanted to remain indefinitely at the helm of public affairs and a people in search of freedom who wanted to participate in the management of public affairs. This persisted for the first three decades after independence. In March 1991 democracy was finally established in Mali, when the participatory ideology of the new political elite became aligned with major popular aspirations which had been restrained under the regime of General Traore.[252]

3.3.1.1 Background to the implementation and objectives

The history of Mali is one of the oldest and well known in Africa, thanks to documents written in Arabic since the 9th century.[253] Various kingdoms and empires ruled until the colonial era. (See Chapter 1.) The mode of administration and organization of these societies, whose relics still exist in some areas, shows that decentralization is not new to the Malian culture but rather that institutional reform has been a distinct part of the country's history.

Even before colonial rule, decentralized power characterized the manner in which the

252 KASSIBO, Bréhima (2006), *Mali:une décentralisation à double vitesse ? Ka mara la segi so ou le lent et délicat retour du pouvoir à la maison.*

253 SIDIBE, Nouhoun (2011), *Décentralisation en Afrique de l'Ouest: Apprendre des expériences locales et sectorielles (éducation, eau, santé) – Cas du Mali, Final Report,* West and Central African Network for Educational Research.

kingdoms and great empires were governed. The empire consisted of vassal provinces that acknowledged the king's power and owed him allegiance. The vassal provinces managed the internal affairs of their territories with some degree of autonomy. Some have described this system of administration, which persisted until colonization, as a form of decentralization,[254] however, others have disputed this interpretation.

An examination of the forms of governance throughout the various Malian eras finds times of centralized systems, times of decentralised systems and other times of simultaneous systems. "*It is observed that during the periods of expansion and contraction of States, the hinterlands could come together and have a kind of autonomy by maintaining privileged ties (alliances, pacts, etc.) with the central government.*"[255] This was the case in the 19th century in the Kénédougou kingdom, which had segmented societies with largely decentralized and autonomous structures devoid of the coercive power of the central government. On the other hand, during the same century, it can be noted that many other States functioned with highly centralized structures: for example, the Peulh Empire of Macina (Dina) forcibly regrouped the people in order to ensure that the empire had control, and this included the Toucouleur sovereigns of the same period. Similarly, the large precolonial groupings, notably the Mali Empire, had the hallmarks of a centralized system with hierarchical functions and roles. The emperor exercised his sovereignty by delegating powers to his close associates by means of coercion.[256]

> These States thought that it would be difficult to have real democracy within this highly inequitable and hierarchical society. They believed that the constant reference to history to legitimize the present, as attractive as it may be, as shown by those in power at the beginning of the 3rd Republic, was a very controversial endeavour in which myth overrides logical analysis of facts and where objectivity poses a problem, since these interpretations emanated from dogmatic logic characterized by ideologies inherent in the collective archetypal systems of representation.[257]

Following the colonial penetration, the colonists quickly realized that it was necessary

254 C. TOE
255 KASSIBO (2006), op cit.
256 FAY, Claude, Yaouaga Félix KONÉ et Catherine QUIMINAL (2002), *Décentralisation et pouvoirs en Afrique, En contrepoint, modèles territoriaux français.*
257 KASSIBO (2006), op cit.

for the adminstration to get close to the people. This was the reason why the Governor-General of French West Africa (FWA) decided in 1917 to delegate decision-making power to reconcile the interests of the ruling power with those of the people.[258] This acknowledgement of the need to decentralize the colonies led to the creation of mixed townships in Bamako and Kayes in French Sudan in 1919. This was followed by the creation of mixed townships in Mopti and Ségou in 1954. In 1958, the townships of Gao, Kati, Kita, Koulikoro, Nioro, San Sikasso and Timbuktu were created.[259]

The post-colonial history of Mali was characterized by the desire for decentralization, which hardly materialized. Although implemented by the 3rd Republic, decentralization appears to be an aborted project or a project which is unsatisfactorily achieved throughout the various stages in Mali's political journey, during which it was used to achieve the diverse objectives of the two preceding multiparty regimes. It appears that the emergence of decentralization is largely linked to external factors such as the conditionalities of the Bretton Woods institutions and other development partners. It is however also true that internal factors such as the Tuareg revolt in the north, the insurrection of 26 March 1991 and the national conference held in the same year affected the advent of decentralization. External conditionalities worsened the internal contradictions and undermined the basis of a regime threatened by deep structural crises. Social, political and corporate protest movements came together to present a united front to fight for their demands to be met.

After the departure of the colonialists in 1960,[260] and the country's accession to sovereignty, the authorities demonstrated their interest in decentralization as the form of management of public affairs by stipulating it in Article 41 of the first Constitution of the 1st Republic. It is thus stipulated that *"the collective territory of the Republic of Mali shall be freely administered by the elected organs*."[261] As a result, various laws were passed including Act *No. 66-09/AN-RM* of 2nd March 1966 of the municipal code, in which thirteen townships became full-fledged municipalities. These constitutional provisions were adhered to by the 2nd Republic with the transformation of Bamako into a District and the creation of Bougouni Township. In 1977, administrative reform was launched in a bid to transform all the localities into townships, and to hold a regional and national debate on the issue in 1988,[262] however, the authorities of the day did not

258 SNV/CEDELO (2004), La décentralisation au Mali: du discours à la pratique, Kit Development, Policy and Practice – Decentralization and Local Government Series, bulletin 358.

259 SIDIBE, Nouhoun (2011), op.cit.

260 Decentralization Summit, Terms of Reference, Bamako, 21 to 23 October 2013.

261 Constitution of the first Republic of Mali, Art.41 of 22 September 1960 on Mali's local government.

succeed in implementing a decentralization programme. The inability and/or infamous refusal of the regime to respond to society's demands to put in place necessary reforms (political liberalization, rotation of power, fight against corruption, improvement in the standard of living of workers, etc.) led to violent protests consequently followed by suppression on the part of the State. The combination of external pressures and the worsening internal contradictions led to the popular uprising of March 1991 which brought General Traore's regime to power.

The democratization process following the events of 1991 included a National Conference which assessed weaknesses identified in the central government's managerial abilities, following successive structural adjustment programmes and politico-military problems. The conference gave a new lease of life to the decentralization process.[263] Contrary to the opinions of other countries, decentralization in Mali was considered as a moral commitment to which the political class and civil society present at this national conference subscribed. The implementation of constitutional provisions (1992)[264] following this recommendation confirmed that the will of the people and that of the political class on decentralization were the same.[265] The 3rd Republic came into being in 1992 after a brief period of transition for a year. Drawing lessons from the failures of the previous regime, there was a rush to ensure the realization of promised reforms and satisfy the various demands. It upheld, as its founding principle, the adoption of good governance, one of the key conditionalities of the development partners, thus capitalizing on popular aspirations expressed during the 1991 national conference. Economic and political liberalization and decentralization were thus identified as priorities by the new regime in an environment that was favourable to the implementation of new reforms.[266]

The 1992 Constitution identifies in Articles XI and XII respectively the basis for implementing decentralization, with the creation of regional authorities and the creation of the Supreme Council of Regional Authorities, while Act No. 93-008 as amended by Act No. 96-056 of 16th October 1996 sets out the conditions for free administration by regional authorities. The advent of Acts No. 96-59 of 4th November 1996 and No. 99-035 of 10th August 1999 respectively, led Mali to create townships and regional authorities for the towns and regions. Besides the District of Bamako

262 West and Central African Network on Educational Research/ Final Report on Transnational Research (2011), op. cit.
263 SY, Ousmane (2010), *Reconstruire l'Afrique: « vers une nouvelle gouvernance fondée sur les dynamiques locales*.
264 Mali's National Decentralization Policy Framework Document, November 2006.
265 POULTON et AG YOUSSOUF (1999), *op.cit.*
266 POULTON et AG YOUSSOUF (1999), *op.cit*

and its 6 townships, the Republic of Mali can today count 8 regions, 49 counties and 703 townships under the leadership of the following: The Bamako District Council, the Regional Assemblies, the County and Township Councils. The leaders identifed are represented at the national level by the Supreme Council of Regional Authorities. Thus the Regional Administration, which was previously responsible for local and regional development, has been replaced. Laws relating to State representation within the country have been amended such that oversight responsibility for regional and local development has been transferred to those elected at the decentralized level.[267]

3.2.1.2 Status of the decentralization policy

The long and difficult institutional reform process with a focus on decentralization, which began in Mali some twenty years ago is now at a crossroads. Decentralization entered into its active phase in 1999[268] after its development phase during which the following were undertaken: baseline studies, development of legal instruments and methodological tools, awareness creation, communication of information relating to the reform, implementation of provisions required for the commencement of newly created municipalities.[289] The active phase was characterized by municipal elections, the implementation of three rungs of decentralized municipalities with their own decision-making and enforcement bodies[270] as well as their own instruments of representation.[271] The municipalities benefitted from a technical and financial support facility which helped them promote local development[272] with the establishment of various infrastructure and capacity development for the elected, particularly for the staff. The creation of a Ministry in charge of local governments[273] is also noteworthy. The ministry aims at initiating cooperation in terms of economic development among the regional authorities, at the local and regional levels. The creation of the National Directorate of Regional Authorities (DNCT), provides this Ministry with the vehicle for ensuring the promotion, support and monitoring of regional authorities.

267 SY (2010), op.cit.

268 Mali's National Decentralization Policy Framework Document. November 2006.

269 703 communes, 49 counties and 8 regions, in addition to the Bamako District.

270 Mali's decentralization can not be reduced a simple communalization. The decentralized areas comprise the communities (703, out of which are 46 urban and 657 are rural communities), the counties (49), the regions (8) and the District of Bamako (1). Each of these levels have decision-making bodies (community and county councils, regional assembly, etc.) and executives (office) all of whom are elected.

271 Among these instruments are the Association of Municipalities of Mali (AMM), Association of Communities, Counties and Regions of Mali (ACCRM), and the Council of Local Government Authorities of Mali (HCCT).

272 FNACT (National Support Fund for Local Authorities), ANICT (National Investment Agency for Local Authorities).

273 At the time of publication of this report, it was the Ministry for Local Government.

Box 3.1 | After 20 years, Mali's decentralization in figures

The National Directorate of Regional Authorities (DNCT) works to implement the transfer of power and corresponding resources from the State to the local governments. A first round relating to administrative power (civil status, polls, police administration, hygiene and sanitation, archives and documentation) was transferred from State representatives to elected officials as soon as local government bodies were established.

In June 2002, two years after the national workshop, the government signed decrees transferring power in the health, education and water sectors. In addition:

- 5 municipal elections were held (1992, 1998, 1999, 2004 and 2009). In 2009, 895 of the 10,777 locally elected officials were women,[274] highlighting the frequency with which local government bodies are reshuffled;
- 15,409 projects were carried out under the supervision of the regional authorities from 2001 to 2012, out of which 6,348 were in education, 1,720 in health and 298 in the water sector;
- 49,775 public officials were recruited by the regional authorities, 9,143 of whom went into general administration, 35,050 to education, and 5,602 to health and social development.

In the light of these few achievements, Malian leaders of the 3rd Republic[275] considered themselves as champions of democracy and decentralization in Africa, with the Malian model being cited as an example within the sub-region. However, behind this rosy picture in which the decentralization reform project was considered to be deepening democracy, are various hidden problems which affect its implementation to the point that some say that "*decentralization, far from resolving the problems [that existed before its advent] has become a source of frustration and deception*."[276] Among these difficulties that are both structural and institutional, one may mention the problem of

274 Report on key strategic direction for deepening decentralization through regionalization by Séni TOURE, Deputy Director General of the Regional Authorities, October 2014.

275 The presidential and legislative elections of 1992 and 1997 were largely won by the Alliance for Democracy of Mali. (Adema). This was the party of Alpha Omar Konare, who was president of the country for ten years. The National Assembly was placed under the ambit of the party which held an absolute majority. The changeover took place in 2002 with the victory of Amadou Toumani Touré, a candidate who did not belong to an official party.

276 Heterogeneous Focus Group of Koutiala, Sikasso Region, March 2014.

ownership of the concept of democracy and decentralization, the challenges related to effective transfer of skills and the resources required for the implementation of programmes which were described by some elected officials as "*going at a snail's pace.*"[277] In addition to these technical aspects, there are also issues related to lack of a clear mandate between the State, its regions and the decentralised local government authorities on the one hand, and between the local government authorities and the traditional authorities, on the other. [278]

3.2.2 Perceived limitations of the process: decentralization, a problematic solution?

In the opinion of some of the participants in the consultative research, the great expectations that were raised by the advent of democracy seem not to have been met. For many Malians, democracy, far from being an ideal to be attained, has become a means for survival: "*political activism has become a new source of income for survival*."[279] This "abuse" of democracy is not without consequences for political institutions and the reforms that they prescribed as solutions to the challenges of the people. Thus, far from resolving the everyday problems of the people, decentralization is perceived by many Malians as another source of problem that affects the social fabric.

3.2.2.1 Lack of internalization of the process

Regarding ownership of the concept of decentralization, there is a belief in some quarters that poor and inappropriate communication leading up to the implementation of reforms, is the source of the confusion among most of the population, especially rural dwellers, who are often illiterate. Indeed, the political struggle that led to the popular uprising of 1991 was borne out of the yearning for political change and renewal (yèlèma), self-cleansing (*kokadiè*) which translate as fight against corruption and the people's redistribution of political power or democracy (jèmu fanga or bè jè fanga). The rural dwellers added their own touch to it by demanding a «*retour du pouvoir au terroir* » or return of power to the local level (*ka mara la segi so*).[280] This new societal poject which was carrried on the wings of a participatory ideology and the concepts

277 Regional Restitution, Koulikoro Region, October, 2014.
278 For indepth analysis, see: MAGASSA and KONATE (2011), *op.cit*.
279 SOULEY, Abdoulaye Niandou cited by Nangouman SANOU (2012), « La capacité de l'État malien », Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Governance in Mali.
280 Bréhima Kassibo, op cit. 2006.

of democracy and decentralization, is presented by the new political elite as departure from the old order and an attempt to rebuild the State, based on shared powers.[281]

The earliest difficulties emerged right from the creation of communes, which was supposed to be done based on criteria of economic and geographical viability. The initiation of the process soon ran into a series of cultural, financial, administrative and social difficulties. Some of these difficulties were: the lack of agreement in certain localities over the choice of a district capital, and in some cases even refusal to join others to form communes. This quickly signalled the authorities that the initial plan to elevate just the capital towns of the districts to communes would not be possible.[282] The effect of this was that too many communes were created, some of which had no resources to ensure their very survival. This reticence, in the view of some participants, is very often due to "*the fact that the State has given too much freedom to populations that did not have the intellectual ability to analyze the situation*."[283] For others, however, "*the process of creating the communes was not participatory because some of the communes were purported to have been an imposition without regard for the history of the localities*."[284] The choice of capital towns for the communes also contributed its share to the problems because the term used, "*mara*", refers to the fact of being "*governed by*", and is thus wrongly interpreted as a sort of tutelage, even as the memory of times gone by still remains in the collective consciousness. Thus, the battle continues on between certain populations that in the past, tasted the glory of power over others, and who wanted to preserve this historical prestige "*since power returns to the house*" and on the other hand, those who had been under others and who did not want a repeat of it.[285]

These issues of administrative divisions are not without consequences. This is how many non-viable communes came to be carved out (landlocked villages, attached to a distant county, isolated district capital and without infrastructure, etc.) due often to self-seeking, populist and sometimes dubious campaigns and manoeuvres.[286] Still today, the issue of administrative divisions is yet to be settled in many communes. In addition to the complications in terms of political, technical and administrative problems, these issues have become a source of tension among some sections of the population:

281 FÉLIX J. (1996), *L'élaboration de la politique de décentralisation au Mali: des logiques plurielles*. Bulletin de l'Apad.
282 KASSIBO (2006), op cit.
283 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Timbuktu, Timbuktu Region, June, 2014.
284 Regional Restitution, Kayes Region, October 2014.
285 Regional Restitution, Kayes Region, October 2014.
286 Regional Restitution, Kayes Region, October 2014.

> "In the past, there was a solid bond among people. Each resident along the river had his Arab or Tuareg counterpart in Hausa. It is with the advent of decentralization that these bonds were severed. Because with this decentralization, our environment was defined, and with this separation, each person wants to create their own space. Personal interests also came into play. The Tuaregs or Arabs of the commune of Inchadjine no longer have a road to reach their Sonrhaïs in the commune of Sony. Gradually, the trust between the people waned. After the death of the older generation and in the absence of a written record, there is no means of perpetuating or transmitting to the younger ones, the ties between black and white. Now, there are no more ties among the people, this is why we are in this situation."[287]

The territorial delineation exercise was also not accompanied with the needed resources for the local government authorities. The local government entities, especially at the level of the communes, exploit resources, the ownership of which is yet to be defined. For many communes, the limitations relate to villages that inherited the modes of governance of the villages that make them up. In the face of this situation, "*which underlies many of the conflicts among the communities, the State authorities are dragging their feet and are being cautious not to exacerbate an already bad situation*." In the view of certain people interviewed, "*the problem of territorial delineation could be deferred for a while, but must inevitably be dealt with someday, because the problems are piling up and will one day blow up in our faces*."[289]

Although the idea of decentralization is for it to be shared management of local affairs, some people seem slow to understand and trust the concept. During the interviews, a key issue that kept coming up as problematic was resource mobilization and management at the local government level.

The Malians interviewed believed that applied to both the populations and local elites. Thus, when this issue was discussed during the focus group sessions, in almost all cases, at least one participant said: "*people did not understand decentralization*."

287 Group Interviews, Jeunes Patrouilleurs, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.
288 Regional Restitution, Koulikoro Region, October 2014.
289 Regional Restitution, Sikasso Region, September 2014.

3.2.2.2 Limitations in the transfer of powers

As part of the decentralization implementation process, the central government has ceded certain powers to the local government authorities. Existing legislation on the matter stipulates that "*any transfer of authority to a local government authority shall be accompanied by the concomitant transfer by the State of the means and resources necessary for the normal exercise of its powers*."[290] Yet, in the view of most local officials that we spoke to "*the State has effectively transferred powers in certain jurisdictions [administrative competence, water, education and health] without actual transfer of the resources*."[291] For them, it seriously affects the ability of local authorities to provide quality services that people are entitled to expect. This contributes to eroding trust between local officials and their constituents.

Meanwhile, according to some officials of government departments, given that there is a policy of division of powers and administrative responsibilities between the State and local authorities, realism requires compliance with the principles of gradual transfers. They believe that "*some administrations are struggling to perform their functions and discharge their responsibilities arising from the exercise of the powers already ceded to them*"[292] and that this problem is essentially due to a dearth of human resources, in quantity and in quality:

> "Not all the communes have general secretaries and/or coordinating directors. Yet these are positions that must necessarily be filled to ensure minimum management of administrative and financial functions."[293]

In terms of quality, administrative staff of local authorities do not seem adequately equipped technically to carry out management tasks assigned to them. Meanwhile, according to administration officials, "*the State and the technical and financial partners regularly make much effort at training and building the capacity of local officials to enable them carry out those responsibilities*." Others believe that, "*the high turnover of elected officials through elections and the defection of local government officials and staff might explain the continuing deterioration of the quality of human resources of local government authorities, since few elected local government officials manage to get more than two consecutive terms.*"[295]

290 *Act No.93-008 of 11 February, 1993 on the conditions for free administration of local government entities, Article 4.*
291 Regional Restitution, Koulikoro Region, October 2014.
292 Regional Restitution, Ségou Region, September 2014.
293 Regional Restitution, Mopti Region, October 2014.
294 Regional Restitution, Rive Gauche, Bamako District, October 2014.
295 Regional Restitution, Sikasso Region, September 2014.

There is also the problem of management and distribution of tax resources of the State to take care of local and regional development needs. The difficulty in recovering Regional and Local Development Taxes (TDRL in French) has become a crucial problem for decentralized entities and the government, who blame each other. The High Council of Local Government Authorities (HCCT) invokes in its defense the inadequacy of legislation, both in terms of the authority to collect taxes and the means of collection made available to local government authorities to do the collection, the persistent tax avoidance and non-compliance inherited from the democratization of the country, and weakness of the State and local government authorities, who hesitate to resort to means of coercion. For its part, the territorial administration criticizes the slowness in the preparation and implementation of the budgets of local government beyond the legal deadlines, and these budgets are subject to multiple rejections from the regulator because they are inadequate. In addition, the lack of mastery by local authorities of budget implementation procedures focused on the principles of public accounting including the single treasury requirement becomes an obstacle to the disbursement of funds when needed (non-availability of municipal funds for other uses). Some in the administration also highlight the lack of involvement of local officials due to electoral considerations, their objective being to get the votes of their constituents on the day of reckoning.

> "Some politicians prosecute their campaigns based on promises to remove taxes or grant tax reliefs, so they cannot return to the same people to claim the taxes."[296]

This mutual accusation has made for a tense partnership between the State and local authorities, while all agree that relations should be frank and open for the benefit of the people. Feeding this difficulty in collaborating is difficulty in determining the type of partnership that should exist among the various authorities – the State, local government authorities and traditional authorities. In addition to difficulties related to fully understanding the concept of decentralization and its desired outcomes, and those related to the gap in the transfer of jurisdiction and resources, the majority of people thought that another key problem was inadequate legislation governing decentralization, including a weak partnership between the State and local government authorities.

296 Regional Restitution, Ségou Region, September 2014.

3.2.2.3 Jurisdictional disputes and power struggles

In the current state of the decentralization process, jurisdictional disputes exist at several levels. Poorly defined allocations of power and jurisdiction often leads to antagonistic relationships at different levels of government. For example, the principle of subsidiarity as set out in Article 20 of Act No. 93-008 of 11 February 1993, which determines the autonomous administration of local government authorities, is inconsistent with other legislative provisions that counteract its effects, leading to a conflict of jurisdiction at several administrative levels. These conflicts first arise between the devolved administrations and decentralized local government entities that replaced them, as in the case of Act No. 99-035 of 10 August 1999, which created local authorities without repealing Ordinance No. 77-44 / CMLN of 12 July 1977 which had created the administrative units.

Between local government authorities and State representatives

Since the establishment of the executive organs of the decentralized regional and local government authorities, they have continued to claim, based on existing legislation, the transfer of lands, authority and resources to engage fully in the exercise of their function with some powers of discretion which will give them legitimacy and accountability in the eyes of the people who elected them. Indeed, the law establishing local government domains (Act No. 96-050), those on forest management (Laws No. 95-003 and 95-004) among others, promulgated under the 3rd Republic, recommend that the State grant specific lands to local authorities and individuals on which they are free to exercise their skills. These laws make the participatory approach one of the key principles of decentralised management of natural resources allowing for involvement of local stakeholders in decision-making by providing them with substantial discretionary powers. Since the enactment of these laws, no enforcement order has been issued. The non-application of texts has created a situation of mistrust between the State and the decentralized government structures who accuse each other of the delay in effecting transfers.[297]

At the regional level, while some local officials complain that the administration continues to trample on some of their rights, the representatives of the State argue that "*local government officials often arrogate to themselves powers that are not granted to them by any law.*"[298] This ambiguity in the legislation, for example, explains

297 Regional restitution, Kayes Region, September 2014.
298 Focus Group Kadiolo, Sikasso Region, March 2014.

the tense relations between the prefecture and the municipal council of the urban commune of Niono. According to the mayor, "*only the mayor is responsible for zoning, but in our case today, it is the prefect who does the zoning despite the fact that we are an urban municipality, although we are in the Niger Office, hence a delegated management*,"[299] to which the prefect replies "*No community has land, no law grants them lands, anyway, I do not see.*"[300] According to a young man from Niono:

> "People are ignorant about land management, okay, you need up 5 hectares of land, where do you look for that? You do not go to the mayor's office for that… I need 5 acres in the commune of Niono, the municipal council does not have the power to allocate that land, but the prefect has the power. It is necessary that people understand the texts, for example, if you need less than 5 hectares of land, 0 to 0.2 hectares, the prefect cannot allot that land. It is the sub-prefect who can. That's what the texts say."[301]

Between local governments and traditional institutions

In addition to the conflict of competence between the local government authorities and State representatives, there are also conflicts between communities and traditional institutions. According to participants, with decentralization and the creation of communes, traditional institutions are struggling to find their place among the representatives of the State and local elected officials. Beyond their lack of resources, traditional institutions face strong "*competition from modern institutions which have usurped all their powers.*"[302] Some people "*see no more hair on the head of the village chiefs, it is the town and city councilors who decide everything.*"[303] This question came up repeatedly during consultations, including in connection with the management of natural resources (see Chapter 2) and development issues (infrastructure and public amenities).

These conflict situations exist between traditional leaders and elected officials; here too, the relations are not clear.[304] While some traditional authorities believe that "*the mayors should be under the authority of traditional leaders, as they are the representatives of*

299 Individual interview, Niono, January 2014.
300 Individual interview, Niono, January 2014.
301 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Niono, Ségou Region, January 2014.
302 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Kayes Region, May 2014.
303 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Ambidebi, Kayes Region, March 2014.
304 MAGASSA, Hamidou and Doulaye KONATE (2011), *Cartographie des pouvoirs et de leur légitimité au Mali*, Commission for Institutional Development.

the State at the village level,"[305] some elected officials are also rather of the opinion that their own "*authority is above that of the village chief to the extent that the texts give them the responsibility for the whole commune and the village is an entity of the commune*."[306]

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that in practice, conflicts arise from ambiguity. The most common cases often cited are related to land transactions, as well as ceremonies in some localities. In this situation, it must be recognized that the weakening of the powers of traditional authorities contributes to undermining social cohesion insofar as the structures that partially replace them do not always have a strong connection with the population. Often these new institutions – the administration and elected local government officials – do not enjoy the trust needed to maintain the kind of open collaboration among all stakeholders that serves as the basis for social peace.

Other surveys have estimated that the low impact of reforms at the political governance and socio-economic levels initiated 50 years ago in the country, including decentralization, is largely explained by the lack of involvement of the populations in the initial formulation of these reforms, the lack of political support for the actions undertaken, the unreliability and lack of legitimacy of the actors responsible for providing the link between the decision-making centres (national authorities) and the grassroots (the populations) in the implementation of the reforms.[307]

While debates on decentralization issues typically revolve around the transfer of skills and resources, according to Ousmane Sy:

> "The big problem about decentralization in Mali today is that territorial decentralization has been undertaken while maintaining the centralized State to exercise responsibilities and control resources, both financial and human. This is why in the discussions that we are engaged in today, we talk more about responsibility for resources than transfer of resources. Transfer, means 'moving'. The idea of devolution means we start with subsidiarity: all that can be done at a lower level is the responsibility of the lower level. It is gradually emerging from the idea of transfer because

305 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kita, Kayes Region, March 2014.
306 Regional Restitution, Sikasso Region, September 2014.
307 SIDIBE, Ousmane Oumarou (2013), « la Déliquescence de l'etat: un accélérateur de la crise malienne ? » in KONATE, D. *op.cit.*

> it is one thing to give responsibility to someone, and another for the person receiving the responsibility to position himself in a manner to exercise that responsibility."[308]

3.2.2.4 Towards regionalization?

For many participants, the events that led to the 2012 coup might be a consequence of the failure of reforms, especially decentralization that the government implemented to address the problems that helped trigger the 1990 events. Some believe that the myriad of challenges facing the Malian government is prompting efforts to improve the decentralization process with new guidelines and reforms. These relate to new visions and strategic directions for "*greater decentralization based on regionalization, putting regional development at the heart of governance, business growth and solidarity, while respecting national, cultural and territorial diversity and preserving unity and territorial integrity.*"[309]

Rather than seeing it as a departure from decentralization, regionalization is seen as an operationalization of it. Yet from the perspective of an informed observer:

> "The term regionalization, like decentralization, embraces concepts and different realities, which do not respond to the same inspirations or the same political or administrative considerations."[310]

For others, this regionalization is perceived as:

> "a response of the authorities not only to critics of decentralization, but also as a response to the request for federation of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), which, having failed in its bid for independence now clings tight to broad autonomy."[311]

So for some, "*just as decentralization was envisaged as a solution to the rebellion of the 1990s, regionalization seems like a coat cut from the same cloth to meet the 2012 rebellion*."[312] While in the view of an officer in charge of the regionalization project,

308 Individual interview, former Minister for Decentralization, Bamako, November 2014.
309 TOURE, Séni, (2014) *Communication sur les orientations stratégiques majeures d'approfondissement de la décentralisation à travers la régionalisation*, Octobre 2014.
310 Regional Restitution, Kayes Region, October 2014.
311 Regional Restitution, Gao Region, October 2014.
312 Regional Restitution, Sikasso Region, October 2014.

it "*is neither regionalism nor federalism, [...] and is set up within the framework of a unitary State, in accordance with the constitutional principle of free administration of local government entities*,"[313] for some other equally knowledgeable participants, "*the concept remains vague and the way it is being implemented, is somwhat reminiscent of decentralization.*"[314] Although it had not been mentioned as a subject in its own right during the consultations, regionalization has been raised as a concern in many focus groups. A former elected county chairman complained about:

> "…hearing about regionalization over the radio and on TV without proper communication from the Government and without the involvement of intellectuals. Sociologists and traditionalists could assist in avoiding problems that have been encountered with the implementation of decentralization, especially [in the creation] of communes."[315]

Generally, people we met during our interviews believe that the intention behind decentralization is undoubtedly good, but its implementation is facing enormous difficulties which today makes it appear to be a source of tension and conflict among the population. Furthermore, the complexity of its structures has created a proliferation of places of authority, combined with overlapping jurisdictions and other grey areas, thereby creating a structure that encourages competition among stakeholders. Seeing it as work in progress, others remain optimistic and believe it is firmly established despite being relatively new and hope that regionalization will undoubtedly contribute to the resolution of the difficulties in the process of decentralization. For Ousmane Sy:

> "Reform is not about texts. It is habits and behaviour that must be changed, and as for that, it takes time! These are real issues; it requires capacity to accomplish it... it is necessary that the group becomes increasingly more important than the individual."[316]

313 TOURE, Séni (2014), *op.cit.*

314 Regional Restitution, Ségou Region, September, 2014.

315 Regional Restitution, Kayes Region, October, 2014.

316 Individual interview, former Minister for Decentralization; for an in-depth analysis of issues related to governance in the decentralization process, see proceedings of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Governance.

3.4 Social perceptions of imbalances and deficiencies in providing public services

3.4.1 Disparities between the advantaged centre and the marginalized periphery

In addition to the disparities between Bamako and other regions in terms of infrastructure and facilities (schools, health, roads, etc.), most Malians in the hinterlands consider Bamako as the centre where "*it all happens*."[317] In their opinion, most of the economic opportunities are found in Bamako. It is also the centre of all decisions, even those that primarily concern other parts of the country, despite decentralization. This centrality of Bamako makes its influence felt at all levels: Thus, some young people in the interior feel that "*to have a job after graduation, it is better to look to Bamako or have a long arm.*" This feeling is even more justified in terms of employment, in the light of the geographical distribution revealed in the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training's 2014 second quarterly newsletter:

> Job creation is higher in Bamako with 2,629 jobs. Koulikoro follows with 859 jobs.[318] In other regions, job creation was less buoyant, and the figures vary between 77 jobs for the region of Gao and 394 for Mopti. There were 422 vacancies, a decrease of 13.7% compared to the 489 recorded in the first quarter. There again, Bamako advanced to first place with 132 vacancies. The region of Koulikoro follows with 68 job vacancies. The region of Mopti has the second lowest level of job vacancies: 12, representing 2.8% behind the Kayes region, which recorded no vacancy.[319]

This disparity in terms of access to employment opportunities is perceived by Malian youth as helping make the youth in other regions even more vulnerable. At the same time, it explains why Bamako has such strong appeal to youth. Rural youth, especially those who do not want to or cannot embrace agro-pastoral activities, are flocking to Bamako or major urban centres in search of non-agricultural employment.

317 Women's Focus Group, Timbuktu, Timbuktu Region, June 2014.

318 It must be noted that the region of Koulikoro surrounds Bamako District, and the the outlying areas of the capital gradually extend to the region of Koulikoro. Thus, a part of the jobs and investments found statistically in this region are therefore directly related to what is referred to as « Grand Bamako ».

319 L'Essor, « Création d'emplois: chiffres positifs, tendances mitigées », 29 July 2014, http://maliactu.net/creation-demplois-chiffres-positifs-tendances-mitigees/.

The feeling of exclusion is also very strong among young people in the North of the country, which is often expressed in terms of exclusion from employment opportunities at home. They believe that "*even the quotas that [they] are granted in recruitment to the army, gendarmerie, and police are filled by people from Bamako or the South.*"[320] It is the same in NGO projects and major construction sites. "*Instead of giving us work in the phosphate plants, they bring people from Bamako, even to work as labourers.*"

3.4.2 From the perception of favoritism to the seeds of the North/ South narrative

The consultations revealed that the perception of inequality in public investment is widely shared in Mali. On either side, people feel that it is the others who are privileged and favoured by the State and its partners. Thus, the people of the South believe that the majority of investments in the country are in the North, while those in the North think the same of the South, thus creating divergent opinions between "*Northerners and Southerners,*" in the centre of which the State remains almost silent on its actions.[321] Similarly, rural populations and those in the regions believe that all the job opportunities, investments and development are concentrated in the urban areas and Bamako, including decision-making: "*While all Malians pay taxes hoping for development, everything is invested in the cities*."[322]

These different feelings of inequality, favouritism and injustice in a climate in which official information gives way to rumours, according to some people, seem to explain "*the foundation of rebellions and [separatist aspirations]*."[323] The lack of visibility and traceability of public action in general and investment in particular, is strongly perceived by people, whether in the South or the North, as the expression of a desire on the part of rulers to hide their preference for one region as compared to another. This feeling is perceived by some people as a source of frustration, contributing to further widening the gap between the people and the elite, between people of the North and the South on the one hand, and between Bamako and other regions on the other, and also between urban and rural areas.

320 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bourem, Gao Region, June 2014.
321 Individual Interview, Coordinator of the Community Development Support Project (PADEC), Bamako, November 2014.
322 Youth Focus Group, Kayes, Kayes Region, April 2014.
323 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bafoulabé, Kayes Region, April 2014.

> "As for us, our forest is destroyed. We, the rural people, we are tired because of Kaysiens [city dwellers]. More than 120 carts leave Kayes to come and cut trees here, whether dry or not. If you question them, they tell you here are my papers! But who gives them all such authorizations to come and cut our trees? Is it not the authorities in Kayes? [...] The mayor has no say, much less the village chief."[324]

> "A large part of the funds meant for projects finds its way back to Bamako for use in the construction of private bungalows for the officials in charge of these projects."[325]

> "Between us, we do not have a problem that can exceed five days without the issue being resolved, the problem we face today does not concern the Fulani or the Tuaregs, it is between the Malian army and rebel groups. I'm not going to go away because I did not know I was Malian and that I had rights before the rebellion, I only realize that I am Malian when they come to claim taxes from me annually, it was only recently thanks to the rebellion of 1990, that I also earned the right to a well and created my village. Previously I was considered a mere nomad."[326]

The allegations of favouritism have often focused on the differences between the North and South of the country. According to most participants in each location, State action is said to favour the other camp. Thus, a widespread feeling among people interviewed in the Kayes region is that "*be it before or with the advent of decentralization, the State has not invested in the region. Whatever has been done in the region are investments by migrants [Diaspora]: health centres, schools, water towers, vegetable gardens, bridges, etc.*"[327] A participant from the same region said, "*the only thing [they] sought from the State, is roads and [they] have been waiting for decades*"[328] whereas "*major bridges and dams are financed for the North without the population there even asking for them.*"[329] This feeling is especially strong among the people of the region of Kayes, to the extent that some believe that "*even if [they] rebelled against the government, [they] would be absolutely right*."[330]

324 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Ambidebi, Kayes Region, March 2014.
325 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bourem, Gao Region, June 2014.
326 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bourem, Gao Region, June 2014.
327 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Bafoulabé, Kayes Region, April 2014.
328 Focus Group Ambidedi, Kayes Region, April 2014.
329 Focus Group Ambidedi, Kayes Region, April 2014.
330 Focus Group Ambidedi, Kayes Region, April 2014.

Conversely, these same feelings of exclusion have been expressed against government officials and technical and financial partners (TFP) by the population of the three northern regions. Regarding investments, some participants felt that "*everything that Mali possesses, has been invested in the South: development projects, infrastructure, amenities, etc.*"[331] It was revealed during consultations that the people of the North have the feeling of "*being forgotten*"[332] by the central government which "*only sees them as Malians when elections are approaching*."[333]

The analysis of these similar feelings that seem contradictory and divide the southern and northern populations raises the question of where the funds announced for investments by the State and its partners go. According to a former State official:

> "There has been a lot of investment in this country, both in the South and North, but people do not actually see the tangible evidence of the investments [because] there is no continuity of action, whereas investments become profitable in the long term. They thus fail to make an impact over time, and the people cannot understand that."[334]

In the southern regions, particularly in Kayes, contrary to what people say, official documents show that a significant amount of infrastructure has been constructed with State support, though often with some contribution from the people. Thus, in the Kayes region, for example, the National Water Directorate, with the support of the National Rural Infrastructure Programme (PNIR), funded the construction of 2,617 boreholes with a budget of about 12 billion CFA between 2003 and 2006. Furthermore, they also funded the construction of 100 modern water points, 18 dug-wells, 72 pumps and 4 solar stations which made it possible to achieve the goal of providing 1 point of potable water for every 400 people.[335]

Similarly, assertions that the State and its partners invest everything in the South is not entirely correct. Indeed, several programmes have been implemented to benefit the northern populations in the last few decades. This includes the Rural Development Investment Programme for the Northern Regions of Mali (PIDRN), jointly funded by the Republic of Mali, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the

331 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Timbuktu, Timbuktu District, May 2014.
332 Heterogeneous Focus Group for displaced women and returnees, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.
333 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Ansongo, Gao Region, June 2014.
334 Individual interview, former minister and first female governor, Bamako, November 2014.
335 National Rural Infrastructure Programme, *La Coopération Décentralisée au Mali*, Bamako, May 2004.

West African Development Bank (BOAD), the Belgian Fund for Food Security (BFFS) and a modest contribution from beneficiaries. Discontinued in 2012 due to the crisis, the cost of the programme was 17.6 billion CFA and was to be spread over a period of seven years (2006-2013). It was part of the objectives and guidelines set out in the Strategic Poverty Alleviation Framework in Mali, expected to contribute to reducing vulnerability and rural poverty and rebuild the economic and social fabric of the northern regions of Mali.[336]

Although the people of the South rather sparingly blame their own fellow southerners for their involvement in the misappropriation of funds meant for development projects in the northern regions, those in the North believe that the major projects that were funded on their behalf were "*partly poorly managed by the very sons of the North and that [they themselves] were complicit in the waste of funds*." This view was rejected by the former Prime Minister Ahmed Mohamed Ag Hamani:

> "For me, it is incorrect to say that the resources that come from outside are for the North, [and] they are embezzled by people, it is not true. First, the resources that come, they come for Mali, it is neither for the North nor the South. It is the Government of Mali, which identifies the priorities with the people, the representatives of the people for development of the relevant areas. But there were many projects that were carried out in the North, the Sevaré-Gao road [...] development of irrigated areas all along the river everywhere, in the Timbuktu region in the area of the great lakes... these are all projects that are done to support the people and allow them to quickly achieve food self-sufficiency." [337]

Generally, people of the North believe that although the State has made efforts to raise funds for the development of the northern regions, it failed to monitor the results and impacts of such projects on the populations, leaving a minority of people to use these funds for their own benefit to the detriment of majority who remain in extreme poverty and are dependent on donations or are compelled to go into exile.

336 Les Echos, « Financement au Nord Mali: De gros projets, peu de retombées », 12 March 2012, http://maliactu.net/financement-au-nord-mali-de-gros-projets-peu-de-retombees/#sthash.oSI7LWPH.dpuf.

337 Individual interview, former Prime Minister, Bamako, January 2015.

> "Anyone you ask will tell you that all the money that Mali receives comes only to the North. The money comes in the name of the North, but it remains in Bamako. And all we thought was useful for the development of the Northern regions, [...] they use it the way they want and there is no monitoring mechanism. [...] and that is our problem with Southerners anyway; because according to them it is we who enjoy everything ... it doesn't happen with us! [...] otherwise the money comes at least, if not immediately, the money that comes to Mali is for the North, but it does not get here, it is not seen, we do not see even its trail."[338]

In the same way, in campaigns accross the country, Bamako would seem to be the only viable space in the whole of Mali, since everything would have been concentrated there in terms of resources and opportunities. This feeling, which is largely shared, reveals in all certainty that Malians are not always aware of issues regarding the distribution of Mali's resources among its component regions and, more practically, about the structural deficits in the provision of public services. In this case, it has been noted that no sector or region has been spared:

> "For three years no rains, especially when we are farming. If the money they are talking about had gotten here, we would not have been like this. But it is difficult to tell you how bitter we are … […] It is heavy sums we have heard about, but have not even smelt it. The money, if invested, you can see traces of it. We don't know if the money is given to the governor, or if it is given to the military… To all those who say the money is invested here in Gao, tell them to come here and see for themselves."[339]

Thus, the structural imbalances and weaknesses in public investments and in the provision of public services are reinterpreted by the people through the lenses of regional favouritism encouraged by the public authorities or the technical and financial partners. This viewpoint has the consequence of consolidating, in people's imagination, a discourse that polarizes North and South as well as a shared feeling of inequality between rural inhabitants and urban dwellers, those in the provinces and those in the capital, between high-society Mali and low-society Mali. Basically, an insidious process can be observed, whereby this bipolar divide is being internalized, with the

338 PH45.
339 PH47.

privileged class on one hand, and the marginalized majority on the other, insofar as individuals and communities are concerned. For the regions, it is the centre on one hand and the peripheries on the other. It is a discourse likely to be fed and manipulated by self-seeking political entrepreneurs.

The structural deficit in the delivery of public services is interpreted as unequal treatment and injustice on the part of the State, and sometimes even by international donors, leading to divides between the "privileged" and "excluded," North and South, city and village, Bamako and the rest of the country. Decentralization, conceived as the solution to these problems, has so far failed to deliver the right results, notably due to the exploitation of its grey areas by various stakeholders and authorities. Where do we start an effort to achieve governance that is more transparent and legitimate? How do we guarantee minimum access to quality public services so that all can benefit from the resources of development?

- **Failures in the management of public affairs**
  How do we guarantee more transparency in the disbursement of public resources and development projects? How do we ensure that individuals and institutions tasked with managing and mediating public action do so impartially and equitably, protected from external pressures and/or their own interests? What types of reform should be madein order to boost people's confidence and trust in their justice system?
- **Inadequate traceability, accountability and consultation framework**
  How do we ensure more traceability and monitoring, as well as greater control of governmental action? How do we promote transparency and accountability in governmental action?
- **Little involvement of the people in policy formulation and development projects and lack of citizens' participation**
  How do we deepen empowerment and citizens' participation in the management of the public good?
- **Decline in level of civic education**
  How do we develop and encourage a better culture of citizenship?
- **Persistent gaps in the implementation process of decentralization**
  How do we ensure better ownership of the decentralization process by the people, those at the various levels of authority and elected officials? What will it take to ensure that decentralization achieves its objectives?

CHAPTER 4
Mechanisms for the management and resolution of local conflicts and armed rebellions

Like many African countries that obtained independence in the 1960's, the socio-political history of Mali is marred by a succession of conflicts, at local and national levels. For Malians, the inability of the local authorities or even the communities to put an end to it is one of the obstacles to peace. Indeed, beyond the conflicts per se, it is their almost cyclical recurrence that seems more problematic.

Most of these conflicts, be they local or national, are rooted in the tangle of feelings of inequality within and among the communities. Their persistence, as seen in an uninterrupted cycle of local conflicts, has been disturbing the social peace of the country for at least five decades. It thrives on the feelings of inequality among communities, which is a breeding ground for socio-political radicalization.

Their recurrence, however, as revealed by the consultations, is explained by the inherent limitations of the mode of resolutions that have been proffered. Whether it is the use of legitimate violence by law enforcement or negotiations, the methods used in an attempt to resolve the conflicts seem to bear the seed of survival of the crisis. Indeed, when the State opts for repression, a cycle of deep resentment and a desire for vengeance develops, as a result of the excessive brutality of the violence often deployed and the excesses committed by either side, thus perpetuating an environment of constant physical and psychological insecurity. When, on the contrary, more peaceful paths are chosen by way of negotiation and mediation, the citizenry deplores processes that are not inclusive enough and that are driven by people of doubtful legitimacy. In any case, the lacunae in the mechanisms used generates a deep feeling of abandonment among the people, sometimes leading to forms of withdrawal or profound defiance towards the State. In some cases it can create a poisoned atmosphere of perpetual tension between the people and the State. The situation is aptly summarized by someone in Ber: "*We want to say the truth, because, honestly, we are fed up with this problem. There's no peace, there's no war, one does not know which way to turn. […] We must admit that rebellions were poorly managed, that's the truth*."[340]

340 Focus Group of opinion leaders and leaders of the Arab community, Ber, Timbuktu Region, June 2014.

4.1 Mali, a land of conflicts

By its very history, Mali is a melting pot of encounters: between cultures and ethnic groups, among social and professional practices, etc. Although these encounters are a source of mutual enrichment for Malians, they are sometimes a risk factor for conflicts. As we have seen throughout this report, the sources of tension and the risks to the social cohesion identified by the population are multiple and multiform, and together weave a tangled web. The types of conflict, open or latent, of high or low intensity, that stem from it are not all that different – they range from conflicts over pastures to rebellion against the State, land litigations and intra-community power struggles.[341]

Conflicts in Mali fall into two broad categories: local and national. Local conflicts are those that occur among members of the same community (intra-community conflicts) or between at least, two communities (inter- commununity conflicts). National conflicts include armed conflicts that are characterized as rebellions against the State. The latter are more structured and are more often driven by political, identity and territorial demands.

Nevetheless, it turned out during the consultations that these somewhat theoretical categorizations are a lot more nebulous than they would first seem. Indeed, the two types of conflict are intertwined. First are rebellions that grow out of more localized conflicts built around national issues with a national agenda and are manifested in violent contestation of the political space.[342] Several inter-community and intra-community conflicts also take advantage of the atmosphere of crisis generated by rebellions to reactivate, kindle and grow, and thus partially weave into the national conflict. This is the case of the competition between certain Tuareg and, to a lesser extent, Arab factions, fighting for power and control over certain territories, clashing violently in the wake of huge rebellions.[343]

Though some of these conflicts are resolved satisfactorily through existing mechanisms from conflict prevention and resolution (traditional, State, or a combination of the two or through the involvement of civil society), there are many others for which a sustainable solution remains elusive.

341 For a list of the major conflicts in Mali, see Friedrich Ebert Foundation (2014). *Les conflits communautaires et les mécanismes de médiation et de réconciliation au Mali* ; et/ou PSGSP/UNDP (2014).

342 POULTON and ag YOUSSOUF (1999) *op.cit*.

343 For more in-depth analysis, see: LECOCQ, Baz (2003), "This Country is Your Country: Territory, Borders, and Decentralisation in Tuareg Politics", *Itinerario*, Vol. 27, N°1, 59-78.

Conflicts over the control of access use and management of natural resources are the most frequently discussed conflicts during consultations across the length and breadth of the country, including refugee camps. These conflicts, which mainly break out at the local level, are also present within and among communities. The conflict between Sossobé and Salsalbé, in the Mopti region (see box 4.1 below) exemplifies this type of conflict that endures over time. Such conflicts over the use of pasture and farm lands are recurrent, especially in areas where the physical conditions (erratic rainfall and pasture) make pastoralist movements over vast stretches of land one of the best strategies for herdsmen to adapt to a fragile environment. These zones have witnessed centuries-old transhumance movements of livestock which affect the socio-economic lives of sedentary or settled communities. Although many people argue that climate change is the cause of these conflicts, many studies have proven that, without denying that lower rainfall patterns can trigger tensions, this type of conflict has always existed in the sub-region.[344] Though the clashes have often been between transhumant herdsmen and sedentary populations, participants in the survey also mentioned many cases of competition within sedentary groups over access to resources, be they land-related, goldwashing, etc. For example, "*since 1988 peasants and herdsmen of two villages in the Nioro county (Kayes region) have been fighting over the ownership of a forest separating their respective villages: Gassa and Boulouyel. This conflict, after several outbreaks in 1998, 2003, and 2008, took a deadly turn on 22 July 2013*."[345] These are all examples of persistent conflicts that have remained unresolved over time and to date, alternating between latency and violent outbreaks. "*These clashes are almost a constant feature with the onset of each rainy season*." Far from being isolated cases, recurrent local conflicts are found all over Mali, in the North, South and centre. The recurrence of these conflicts contributes to the severing of social ties and a perpetually poisoned atmosphere between and among many communities.

344 Indeed, diverse studies have criticised the vision of a more symbiotic or less violent interaction between farmers and herdsmen in the past: Mark MORITZ, "The politics of Permanent Conflict: Farmer-Herder Conflicts in NorthernCameroon", *Canadian Journal of AfricanStudies*, 40 (1), 2006, p. 101-126.

345 Maliweb, « Conflit foncier entre deux villages du cercle de Nioro: Affrontement mortel entre Sarakolé de Gassa et Peuhl de Boulouyel », 21 August 2013, http://www.maliweb.net/habitationsparcelles/conflit-foncier-entre-deux-villages-du-cercle-de-nioro-affrontement-mortel-entre-sarakole-de-gassa-et-peuhl-de-boulouyel-165275.html

BOX 4.1 | Salsalbé and Sossobé Opposition: illustration of a never-dying conflict

Some Toucouleurs, marabouts and herders, whose family name is Sall, and originally from Fouta Toro, arrived in the N'gourema area (present day Youwarou) about four centuries before the Dina,[346] in the 14th century. They were hosts to the Malinké farmers whose family name was Traoré. The two clans had such excellent relations that the Traorés who are farmers, decided to leave the management of the bourgou pasture lands as well as chieftaincy to their hosts, on condition that the latter changed their family name. Following this agreement, the Salls became Traorés, and occupied the agreed functions. This good cohabitation continued untill 1768 when the first incident broke between the Ardo (the traditional chief from the Sall lineage turned Traoré) and a marabout from Sossobé over a piece of pasture land when the Ardo sought to deprive the latter of his "right of occupation" by asking him to leave the place. This incident was amicably settled. After 1818, when Amadou Sékou[347] seized power, the right to pasture lands was again granted to the marabout by the Jowros[348] of Sossobé by decree of the King, Amadou Sékou.

Since that period, however, the cohabitation of these two communities has been very uneasy. These difficulties arise because the Sossobé group, who belong to the Leydi[349] of Salsalbé, was only granted a right of usage, rather than actual ownership. The remote cause of this conflict lies in the difficulty associated with interpreting land-related customs, the difficulty of access to the Tarikhs,[350] and the frequent confusion between the right of usage and ownership. The nature of relations initiated by Sékou Amadou (king of Ségou and head of the Dina) provided fertile ground for conflicts, since the Salsalbés consider the right of usage granted them by Amadou Sékou as an amputation of their land, whereas the Sossobé group takes advantage of it. Added to this is the inability of modern laws of the colonial era and those of Mali in later years, to find a definitive solution.

346 Dina refers to the Muslim State founded by the Fulanis of the Bari clan in the Niger Delta, at the turn of the 18th century, under the leadership of Sékou Ahmadou (1818-1862).

347 His reign lasted from 1818 to 1845.

348 Administrators in charge of pasturelands.

349 According to (J.GALLAIS, 1984), Leydi refers to the extremities of transhumance spaces near the two rivers and regularly used by cattle in the dry season which come to feed off the surplus plants from recession crops, especially at Fuuta Tooro, or to the recession pastures (burgu) especially at Macina. The pastoral spaces are different in the two cases: they spread over parallels strips, in a transversal manner vis-a-vis River Senegal in the first zone, while they flourish in the concentric space of the inland Niger delta, in Macina.

350 Legal documents from the Dina era.

These conflicts over ownership of grazing lands led to a break in economic and social relations – through divorces – the prohibition of marriage and several bloody confrontations between the two communities.[351] Thus, on 15 January 1936, a bloody conflict erupted between the Sossobés and Salsalbés, over a recession pasture zone called Towndé-Djolel. The colonial administration then attempted to resolve this conflict through an administrative decision of 11 March 1936, which decision was confirmed by a court ruling on 11 May 1939 in the form of an agreement. The agreement regulated the order of access to the bourgou lands, without taking a decision on their ownership. But this agreement would later be contested by the descendants of the signatory chiefs, with each of the communities deeming themselves rightful owners of the disputed lands.

This division further widened after independence when the two major parties, the Party for Solidarity and Progress (PSP) and the African Democratic Convention (RDA) found themselves in the majority in the two camps. During the military regime from 1968 to 1991, the Djolel area was declared a buffer zone. Hence, upon nearing the crossing, the security forces were positioned in that section, at each sensitive moment, to avoid any clashes. This measure remained in place until March 1991, the date on which General Moussa Traoré's regime was overthrown. This may have helped avoid confrontations, but the conflict remained latent.

Only two years following the interruption of this measure, on 8 December 1993, a fatal conflict erupted once again between Sossobé and Salsalbé, claiming 29 lives with 42 injured.[352] Since then, the confusion between the two communities over the right of usage and ownership of the area became perennial. Each period of animal crossing to graze on this pasture land brings its share of concerns, despite the various mechanisms put in place that have proven ineffective. Some of these mechanisms are the various agreements and conventions signed but never complied with, the regional conference on "Bourgo plains" (agro-pastoralists) of Mopti that determines the periods of access to the strip at the end of December each year in early January.

351 BA, Boubacar (2010), Pouvoir et Ressources de Développement dans le Delta central du Niger.
352 Figures provided during television news of ORTM of 8 December 1993.

Though it is commonly acknowledged that Malians know how to manage their conflicts by drawing on traditional conflict management mechanisms,[353] the country "*is replete with conflicts today, some of which date back to colonial times [and even way before] and which have remained without a lasting solution*."[354] Thus, today, numerous local conflicts are unable to be resolved using these mechanisms. Conflicts may be an inherent part of human nature, but the mechanisms that contribute to preventing and managing them should facilitate social cohesion. But as respondents from all regions repeatedly pointed out during the consultations, Mali's conflict resolution mechanisms are another source of problems that contributes to the recurrence of conflicts.

4.2 Conflict management and resolution mechanisms

One way that existing conflict management mechanisms are a part of the problem is by extending conflicts in the long term. The use of force feeds a cycle of vengeance that is perpetuated even across generations and contributes a permanent atmosphere of insecurity that is kept alive by militias and self-defense groups. On the other hand, the negotiation often leads to processes believed not to be inclusive enough, or led by actors with little or no credibility at all, on the part of the State and the other forces involved. In these ways, some conflict resolution mechanisms sow seeds of conflict. As participants in the consultation have reminded us, lasting peace cannot be built on a poor foundation: "*a wound does not heal on pus*."[355] Or, in the words of a participant in the Mberra camp in Mauritania: "*one shouldn't plait the hair on lice!*"[355]

4.2.1 Use of force

Whether the issue touches on addressing the rebellions that have punctuated the history of Mali, or on inter-community conflicts at the local level degenerating into armed confrontations, the recourse to legitimate force has rarely led to a final settlement of any issue. Armed conflicts have generally been linked with heavy losses of human life, through different rebellions, the clashes have caused their share of excessive use of force and extortion on either side, among the warring factions and the civilian population. This is equally the case during local armed conflicts.

353 Doulaye Konaté, *Les fondements endogènes d'une culture de paix au Mali: les mécanismes traditionnels de prévention et de résolution des conflits* ; for surveys of the different modes and tools used in conflict resolution currently, see also: Friedrich Ebert Foundation (2014) op.cit. ; and PSGSP/UNDP (2014) op.cit.

354 Friedrich Ebert Foundation (2014) *op.cit.*

355 Focus Group, Bamako, june, 2014

356 Focus Group, Mberra refugee camp, Mauritania, September 2014.

4.2.1.1 The use of repression: when violence begets violence

In dealing with rebellions or local conflicts, the State has in the past resorted to the use of crackdowns. In the case of intra and inter-community conflicts, the deployment of the armed forces has very often had the dual objective of dissuasion and intervention. However, in the case of armed rebellion, the armed forces are engaged in combat to either respond to attacks or prevent them. Yet, the crackdowns are not without consequence. As the participants pointed out, the strong feeling of injustice, resentment and the desire for vengeance linked especially to the excessive use of force, extortion and war crimes, starts a cycle of violence that builds over the years. Although some people across all the regions are still in favour of the use of force to end the recurrent rebellions, for many others, history has proved that crackdowns are counter-productive. To quote a Malian army officer during a focus group discussion: "*How do you achieve peace with war!*".[357]

In terms of security, repression through the intervention of the armed forces has shown its limitations, according to a significant number of those consulted, including people who live in the most affected regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Mopti,[358] as well as participants from the southern regions and even among uniformed men. As said above, the use of force still enjoys support from a sizeable part of the population, as expressed by a participant from Gao: "*People keep talking about rebellion 'in the North' […] is everyone a rebel? they are the bandits, they should be treated [as such]. […] The State should not even recognize them as rebels*."[359] During the rebellion of the 1990s, President Moussa Traoré thought he could crush the rebellion as his predecessor had done with the revolt in the 1960s. But it soon dawned on him that it would not be possible for the army to be victorious in a guerrilla war; he then opted for negotiations.[360] At the local level, the year-after-year interposition by the security forces between communities has helped to avoid deaths, but has done nothing to actually settle the conflict (see Box 4.1). At best, such interventions put a freeze on the situation for a period; in the worst-case scenarios, it has occasioned excesses, leading to resentment and the urge for vengeance, stoking up the conflict in the short term or making it to simmer for years.

357 Regional Restitution, Kayes Region, September 2014.

358 Kidal was the only region where in situ consultations were not held, owing to security concerns and/or volatile political situation. Nonetheless, the team has a local researcher and mobilisers engaged in the process. Some natives of Kidal were however interviewed in Bamako and in refugee camps.

359 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.

360 Poulton and Ag Youssouf (1999) *op.cit*.

During the Tuareg revolt in 1963, the government of Modibo Keita chose repression as a means of forestalling any secessionist aspirations.[361] The following words of a young man from Kidal in Bamako illustrates the survival of past extortion in the collective memory of people:

> "Regarding […] the origins of this crisis, of this rebellion in Mali, the Tuareg rebellion, it means you have to go a back to history. […] Even before the birth of Modibo Keita's Mali as a State, the Tuaregs lived peacefully with different communities: Songhay, Bambara, Fulani, Arab, etc. […] But what happened later? When this man, this great man, Modibo Keita, came to power, he came with a dictator policy. […] Since then, since this rebellion that I would call a total massacre of the Tuaregs, today, we, the grandchildren of these people, we the Tuareg children, today they have inculcated the idea of rebellion in us, revolutionary ideas. And that is how it is, and will always be."[362]

This idea of frustration and vengeance was also shared by a deserter from the National Guard, who has taken refuge in Mauritania, "*some children made orphans by previous rebellions cannot love the country*."[363]

This type of resentment and desire for vengeance is also found among other sections of Mali's population, including the children of soldiers who fell on the battlefield who believe that their parents die in vain: "*a soldier that dies on the battlefield is like an animal: his family is thrown out of the camp a few months later, and the children are left to their own devices. […] Very often they try [later] to join the army by any means possible to avenge their father*."[364]

4.2.1.2 Militias and self-defense groups

Facing the rebellion of the 1990's - which was better structured than the previous one -, together with negotiations, the State of Mali engaged the national army to settle the conflict but also mobilized militias to support it in its fight against the

361 Boilley, Pierre (2012), *Les Touaregs Kel Adagh. Dépendances et révoltes: du Soudan français au Mali contemporain* ; Doumbia, Fakoly, Hamidou Magassa, Ciré Ba et Boubacar Diagana (2012), « L'occupation du Nord du Mali », *Regards sur une crise*, La Sahélienne.

362 Focus Group of senior executives who are natives of Kidal in Bamako, Bamako, August 2014.

363 Youth Focus Group, Mberra Camp, Mauritania, September 2014.

364 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kayes military camp, Kayes Region, April 2014.

365 International Crisis Group (2012), Mali: *avoiding an escalation*, Africa Report no.189.

rebels.[365] According to some participants in the consultations, the Malian Army and the government would have "*supported and equipped*" them.[366] "*Some shepherds even had ID cards as State Security members!*[367] Some of the cases cited are the Arab militia of the Timbuktu region,[368] the Imghad militia of General Gamou (which has become today's Touareg Imghad and Allied Self-Defense Group,or GATIA)[369] and the Ganda Izo and Ganda Koy self-defense groups,[370] which played a role in balancing the power relations between the State and the rebels at the time.[371]

Similarly, during the 2012 rebellion that saw the withdrawal of the Malian army from the northern regions, as the armed groups made their advance, the militias and the self-defense groups took over from the army, almost replacing them.[372] Still today, the latter,[373] whose existence seems to be tolerated and even encouraged by the State, often engage in combat with the armed groups, especially the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), sometimes among themselves.[374] In the face of the national army's difficulty in standing up to the armed groups and in fulfilling its sovereign role to protect lives and property, the involvement of the militia finds its justification in their deep knowledge of the regions in which they operate, of the socio-cultural organization of the communities that live there and/or of internal rivalries and leadership struggles.

Some communities that feel abandoned by the State and are at the mercy of the armed groups and ethnic militias, have formed self-defense groups. The most notorious examples are the Ganda Koy and Ganda Izo movements. For a number of participants, "*the formation of these groups is perfectly legitimate*."[375] Yet, these groups quickly

366 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Timbuktu, Timbuktu Region, July 2014.
367 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Timbuktu, Timbuktu Region, July 2014.
368 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Timbuktu, Timbuktu Region, July 2014.
369 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.
370 Ganda Koy and Ganda Izo are often erroneously presented as Songhay groups. Though they are predominantly Soughay and Fulani, these groups have representatives from all the communities present in the Northern regions of Mali – with the exception of the "red skins." For more details, see ICG (2012) op.cit.; POULTON and AG YOUSSOUF (1999) op.cit.
371 University students' Focus Group, Bamako, Bamako District, July, 2014; Mixed Focus Group, Gao, Gao Region, June, 2014.
372 Le Point, « Mali: Timbuktu défendu par des miliciens arabes, les militaires fuient », 1st April 2012, http://www.lepoint.fr/monde/mali-Timbuktu-defendu-par-des-miliciens-arabes-les-militaires-fuient-01-04-2012-1447216_24.php; for further analysis, see: ICG (2012), op.cit.
373 Added to those already mentioned are, among others, the Movement for Liberation of Azawad Loyalist in the region of Timbuktu.
374 RFI, «Mali: le MNLA mis en échec par le mouvement touareg Gatia à Ntililte », 18 November 2014, http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20141018-mali-gatia-mnla-mis-echec-ntililte-abdo ulaye-diop/.
375 Individual interview, prominent figures of the Mberra camp, Mauritania, September 2014.

follow a similar path to that of the militias.[376] This trend of community militiarization pushes other groups to arm themselves. Some participants mentioned the case of herder groups of the inland delta of Niger who armed themselves in order to be able to continue with their transhumance activities in the face of the threat of cattle rustling by some armed groups.[377]

What is more, the fact that the militia have organized themselves along ethnic lines also implies some significant consequences for the social fabric, because its effect on inter-group trust is irreparable, and itself contributes to widening the inter-community cleavages.

4.2.2 The path of negotiation

In the face of a conflict situation, Malian communities, no matter the zone, often resort to numerous types of conflict resolution mechanisms, from social regulation to lawsuits. The former is, however, the preferred choice through "diplomatic" action such as traditional mediation.[378] It is an ancient and essential practice in Malian social relations and is understood as "*the involvement of a neutral third party between two or more parties so as to reconcile them*."[379] It can be led by either a member of the extended family, a traditional chief, the imam, friendly banter kinship, or a *Niamakala*.[380] It should be noted, however, that each conflict is managed by an appropriate body, depending on its nature and scope.[381]

Generally, mediation by the State is resorted to when traditional mediation does not offer the expected outcome. In urban areas, where family links among the population are much less significant than in the rural areas, direct recourse to the public authorities or the law courts is much more frequent. This is done through representatives of public authority and law courts. Although this approach to conflict resolution has the advantage of ensuring enforcement by the police, the disadvantage is that it imposes

376 ICG (2012), op.cit.; POULTON and AG YOUSSOUF (1999), *op.cit*.

377 Focus Group, Youwarou, Mopti Region, May 2014.

378 Traditional mediation is a dynamic approach based on community, humanistic values and traditional codes to ensure conflict prevention and resolution. It may slightly differ from one community to the other, but its basic principle and objective remain the same everywhere in Mali: sustain peace through conflict and dispute prevention and management: Birama Sidibé, "Afrique: Résolution traditionnelle des conflits au Mali", La Revue, Paris, juin 2008, accessible sur: http://larevue.squirepattonboggs.com/AFRIQUE-Resolution-traditionnelle-des-conflits-au-Mali_a641.html.

379 KONATE, Doulaye (1999), *Les fondements endogènes d'une culture de paix au Mali: les mécanismes traditionnels de prévention et de résolution des conflits*, UNESCO.

380 *supra* note 20.

381 KONATE, Doulaye (1999), op.cit.

its decisions on the parties, stops the conflict without resolving the dispute and even sometimes worsens it (see Chapter 3, section 3.1.4.).

In a country such as Mali, which is deeply rooted in traditional and religious culture, the involvement of traditional and/or religious authorities in establishing dialogue between the State and armed groups has prevailed whenever the public authorities have deemed it necessary. Following the rebellions Mali witnessed in 1990, 2006 and 2012, in addition to the recourse to legitimate force, the Malian authorities have often involved several national and international stakeholders in the negotiation process aimed at arriving at peace agreements. (Peace was not negotiated in the rebellion of 1963.) Several peace agreements have thus been signed between the Malian government and rebel groups. With the exception of the National Pact signed in Mali on 11 April, 1992, all the agreements preceding that of Ouagadougou (18 June, 2013), were part of a mediation process under the auspices of Algeria and were signed in Algiers. For example, on 6 January 1991, Algeria sponsored the signing of the Tamanrasset agreements by the government and rebels through Iyad Ag Ghaly. The process leading to this agreement brought together stakeholders from several backgrounds: military officers, politicians, civil society representatives, including the international community, among others, the Chief Iman of the holy Mosque of Mecca, Mohamed Abdallah Al Subeil, as well as eminent persons and traditional rulers of Mali.[382] On 23 March 2006, a third Tuareg rebellion broke out. This was once again dealt with by the Algiers agreements, following negotiations under the auspices of Algeria.[383]

In the 2012 crisis, national mediators like the HCI and the Gina Dogon Association[384] travelled to the North to successfully negotiate with the armed groups the opening of a humanitarian corridor, thereby ensuring the transportation of humanitarian assistance to people in the regions and areas under their control. This was well before the involvement of international stakeholders, including Burkina Faso, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU), as well as western countries.

382 MAGASSA, Hamidou (2012), «The Touareg rebellion in Mali », Searchlight on a crisis, La Sahélienne; cf. POULTON et AG YOUSSOUF (1999), *op.cit*.

383 XINHUA, «Mediation in the crisis in northern Mali: Return of Algeria appreciated differently », 21 January 2014, http://www.afriquinfos.com/articles/2014/1/21/mediation-dans-crise-nord-mali-retour-lalgerie-diversement-apprecie-241664.asp.

384 Ginna Dogon is a cultural association for promoting Dogon culture. The Dogon community has strong but easy-going relations with communities of the northern regions (Songroi, Tuareg); this makes it easier, in difficult periods to ensure smooth communication between groups in conflict. This was the case in 2012, for instance, when the northern regions were occupied by armed groups.

Despite the strong mobilization and level of involvement of international mediators to end the crisis, particularly following the mediation efforts of 1991[385] and that of 2012, the relatively limited importance participants accorded the Algiers negotiations revealed the serious difference in the understanding of the conflict by the local people and external stakeholders. In the light of the consultations, it is clear that while no one doubts the need to reach peace agreements and a permanent cease-fire between the State and the armed groups for peace to prevail, the attention of the international community and, to some extent, a section of the national elite, seems to be rather focused on short-term stabilization.[386] In contrast, a majority of the people have their minds set on the past (even distant) and on the long term, with regard to both their analysis of the obstacles to peace and approaches to possible pacification.

4.2.2.1 Inclusivity and legitimacy challenged by representatives

In a peace process, the issue of the inclusivity and legitimacy of representatives often comes under sharp scrutiny, whether it has to do with local agreements or even national peace agreements between the State and the armed groups.

The most important complaint people have against the modes of conflict resolution is the strong feeling of exclusion. While they believe they are worst affected by the consequences of conflicts and their recurrence, irrespective of the "camp" they belong to, people feel ignored and adversely affected by the crisis resolution process. "*Instead of taking care of those who stayed behind, in spite of everything, and did not take up arms, the State is reaching out to those who took up arms in order to coax them.*"[387] This was confirmed by a participant from Timbuktu: "*When we talk about negotiation, reference is only made to the State and rebels; the people are left to their fate.*"[388] And yet, as explains the former High Representative of the Head of State for Inclusive Inter-Malian Dialogue,[389] special attention is being paid to the notion of inclusivity in the on-going process:

385 For an in-depth review of the peace process of 1991 which led to the National Pact; see, among others: POULTON et AG YOUSSOUF (1999), *op.cit*.

386 The National Pact of 1991 entailed an ambitious plan of programmes and reforms for the medium and long term, in which the international community was deeply involved, as well as other UN Agencies - programme of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants, infrastructure programmes among others. Follow-up mechanisms were, however, gradually abandoned, and this greatly affected implementation, achievements and impacts; Individual interview, former officer in charge of Governance Programme of UNDP Bamako, December 2014.

387 Heterogeneous Focus group, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.

388 Statement by a participant, taken from the focus group of Goundam in the region of Timbuktu.

389 President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita appointed former Minister Modibo Keita, High Representative of the State for Inter-Malian inclusive Dialogue in April 2014. He held this position until 8 January 2015, when he was named Prime Minister.

> "A number of things have to be clarified. You know that in the quest for peace and reconciliation, there are two sequences. The first one is what people call inclusive discussions […] basically, the population is not involved in this […]. The second one has to do with inclusive dialogue for national reconciliation, which is open to the entire population."[390]

As a prelude to the on-going talks, a listening session was dedicated to civil society.[391] This session brought up the concerns of the grassroots communities, a first in the country's history. Similarly, government's efforts at organizing regional report-back sessions throughout the country are also a notable action which needs to be stressed. Although they are imperfect and have sometimes been subjected to criticism, these initiatives have widely gone down well with most of the people.

However, according to a participant in the Gao regional restitution, just as we are witnessing the emergence of armed groups from nowhere to take part in negotiations,[392] the Malian government's acceptance of inclusivity in conducting talks among Malians has resulted in the emergence among the civil society of organizations and individuals who are there just to take advantage of the process:

> "Participation in peace talks has become a source of income for many stakeholders."[393]

This statement is confirmed by several community members, who, while accepting the principle of representation, question the legitimacy of those who speak on their behalf. For these communities, the negotiation processes have, crisis after crisis, been monopolized by the same small elite group. Indeed, for many people who took part in this participatory research, "*during peace agreements, negotiation processes, some people do not have the requisite mandate to make commitments on behalf of groups they claim to represent.*"[394] For some others, in their eagerness to quickly achieve peace, the "*authorities do not take their time to consult the population to know those who can legitimately represent them. They get carried away by the first smooth-*

390 Individual interview, High Representative of the Head of State for inter-Malian inclusive Dialogue (today it is Prime Minister) Modibo Keita, 13 October 2014.

391 In August 2014, representatives of the civil society were at the negotiations in Algiers, independently of the State and armed groups.

392 ICG (2014), *Mali: last chance in Algiers*, Briefing Afrique no.104.

393 Regional restitution, Gao Region, September 2014.

394 Regional restitution, Timbuktu Region, October 2014.

tongued person they encounter; that is why no agreement can be respected."[395] According to the people, all these things partly explain why people do not abide by the agreements. Apart from limiting oneself to the peace agreements between the government and the armed groups alone, this issue of legitimacy could also be the basis of the recurrence of several conflicts undermining cohesion. Thus, some participants rightly wonder: "*How do you expect people to abide by agreements signed by people in whom they have no confidence?"*[396]

4.2.2.2 Breach or unresolved implementation of agreements

From the first rebellion to the last one, agreements have been concluded to silence arms.[397] However, some have been accepted by stakeholders, particularly the State, without prior analysis of their capacity to keep their promises within the prescribed timeframe. This is how after the National Pact, the government, in spite of the democratic transition, was not able to mobilize enough financial resources to successfully implement the ambitious agreement in its entirety.[398]

However, apart from the lack of funding, there is also the lack of monitoring of the implementation of the agreements,[399] which a large section of the population attribute to laxity on the part of those in charge of implementation.[400] Although monitoring mechanisms have been developed, they have not been properly implemented. Besides, stakeholders have made compromises at their own convenience. According to the people, development projects and programmes arising out of the said agreements were often made to serve objectives other than those meant to develop the Northern regions.

> "Why do we have resurgence? It is because each time an agreement or pact is signed, ingredients of a future budding rebellion are always left. We were all full of praise for the signing of the National Pact. It was to benefit all of the Northern populations. The question is this: did the Northern populations really benefit from it? Did it benefit the Songhai of a small village somewhere? Or a Tamasheq of a small camp somewhere?"[401]

395 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Timbuktu, Timbuktu Region, June 2014.
396 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Kenieba, Kayes Region, April 2014.
397 Though those relating to the crisis of 2012, as of the time of release of this report, were only partially observed.
398 National Pact is the peace agreement following the 1990 rebellion. See: POULTON et AG YOUSSOUF (1999), op.cit.
399 Interview, a former official of a Malian International Organisation, Bamako, Bamako Region, December 2014.
400 University Focus Group, Bamako, Region of Bamako, October 2014.
401 Focus Group with elders, Camp of Mberra, Mauritania, September 2014.

Therefore, the general feeling of Malians who were interviewed is that, despite the perceived lack of legitimacy of the negotiation process, when these agreements make provision for clauses aimed at improving the quality of life of the people, the said agreements are not properly implemented or are, worse still, hijacked by some stakeholders of the process. A former elected representative put it this way:

> "I personally touched a bit on the reasons which rekindle the rebellion each time […]. The former rebels who are not happy with how a first rebellion is managed, find a way to incite another rebellion because they were not happy about what happened in the past. The second issue is the incentive to wage a rebellion, as I have just said. How many people were appointed project leaders because they were rebels? It is a reward, and this is what I called the reward of rebellion. How many of them joined the army without knowing why they joined the army? Who went on to leave the army in order to once again turn the arms of the State against the State? That is the reward of rebellion. All these are factors which explain why the rebellion resurfaces"[402]

For a young elected representative of the town of Kidal, this manner in which agreements are managed, coupled with the low interest politicians have in the people of certain regions in times of peace, encourages the recourse to violence as the means through which political demands are channelled:

> "Minority groups in Mali have to be managed, [but to date] they are not being managed. Management is with the wand: you must hit the Malian State! We learnt our lesson and came to the conclusion: for them [Malian State] to hear you, you have to hit it. All those working for Mali are labouring for nothing.... For the Malian State to hear you have to hit it."[403]

It is, therefore, clear from the consultations that, while the peace agreements are desirable and acknowledged to be of utmost necessity by the majority of Malians, they risk undermining social cohesion in the longer term due to lack of inclusivity and legitimacy of the processes behind them.

402 Focus Group of top civil servants of Timbuktu and Gao, Bamako, August 2014.
403 National Conference, Bamako, January 2015.

4.3 Impact of management mechanisms on society

People tend to develop self-defence mechanisms when State and traditional institutions are not able to resolve disputes sustainably, when decisions are not implemented, and where there is a pervasive sense that the State is incapable of ensuring the personal security of its people. In cases such as these, people tend to be attracted toward identity-based fallback. This phenomenon exacerbates the cleavages within society and widens horizontal distances between individuals, communities, etc. Whereas the people feel they have been neglected by a government, which is unable to assume its sovereign duty of protection, the authorities on their part see the process of militiarization as defying their authority. All these further weakens the trust between the people and State, a situation which widens vertical distances.

4.3.1 Crumbling of social cohesion and trust

The impact of this inability to properly manage conflicts and the various attendant dynamics engenders major consequences for the trust between the State and the people as well as trust between the national army and the people. This trust crisis seems to affect relations within the army itself, and also between the army and the State.

For most Malians, and especially for those in the northern part of the country, the 2012 crisis considerably dented their trust in the State. Indeed, during confrontations with armed groups, what the government and the army referred to as a retreat was experienced by the people as a "*flight of the security forces*"[404] who were abandoning them to their fate. "*The State fled; it fled from the people without even saying good-bye*."[405] The loss of confidence of the people in the State develops mistrust and, indeed, fear of the armed forces and security forces. Thus, participants made mention of abuses committed in the past, for instance when the Malian army returned from the North in 2013 after the military intervention by France.

> "During the early rebellions, we saw the reaction of the Malian army who gunned down the people without distinction. We say: a person who has already been bitten by a viper no longer trusts a rope."[406]

404 Heterogeneous Focus Group, Diré, Region of Timbuktu, June 2014.

405 *« Djondedo? Ayinindedo, nin bala, nin tala »*, Focus group of elders, camp of Mberra, Mauritania, September 2014.

406 Focus group of elders, camp of Mberra, Mauritania, September 2014.

This resentment against the army goes a long way to add to the tense relations and the socio-political radicalization of some stakeholders or groups of stakeholders. Thus, according to an executive member of the MNLA:

> "The Malian authorities show their stubbornness by trying to maintain the status quo in an Azawad where Mali has gained notoriety for the behaviour of its army. Specifically, in all the proposed agreements, it wants to send the same army en masse to the Azawad Region; the same army, which by its behaviour and massacres carried out from 1963 to date, and which made Mali completely unpopular in the eyes of the people […] We have absolutely nothing against the people in the south; the problems we have are against the Malian State; the Malian State is the obstacle."[407]

As the State gradually returns to the Northern regions, a section of the population, which did not flee and lived under the rule of armed groups, feels stigmatized because they are accused of having collaborated with the enemy, instead of being seen as victims. "*We are not rebels; we are the civilian population of Mali; we were in our homes, in our towns when the rebels came […] we were without governors, and so we left to seek refuge*."[408] This feeling is shared by the refugee populations, many of whom do not want to return for fear of being accused.

According to young person from Gao participating in the National Conference:

> "When we were informed of the arrival of the army in Gao in 2013, we were highly elated, only to be surprised thereafter by the way the security situation in Gao was management; we understood from then on that we were in danger… with regard to our army. We are not talking of rebels! We had already spoken to the rebels; we have met them and know who they are. We know that many of them committed atrocities, and this is the reason why some of us want to go to Algiers or to the big meetings: to talk to them, because we know each other, for that matter. But our army, which should have come to protect us, rather made us unsafe, and we lost more men, civilians in Gao upon the arrival of the Malian army than during the occupation. […] It is the army which caused this

407 Individual interview, Member of the political bureau of MNLA, February 2015.
408 Focus group of elders, camp of Mberra, Mauritania, September 2014.

> insecurity; it is the police which caused this insecurity. When a policeman thinks he needs 1,000 francs for tea, I believe he is not worthy to be a policeman. For me, it is clear. And yet one has seen and continues to see this happening in Gao, at the Bourem checkpoint, at the Kidal checkpoint, and that of Ansongo, and as you enter Bamako."[409]

For some participants, this crisis of trust in relation to the army did not start with the 2012 upheavals, and cannot be limited to the northern regions. A young person from Kati in the Koulikoro region said that, "*It was when the rebellion started that soldiers calmed down a little bit; otherwise, before then, between the soldiers and civilians, it was the soldiers who had power […]. Whatever the situation, they were always right; that is how we lived with them.*"[410]

For their part, many soldiers feel that the top authorities have abandoned and left them to their fate. They say that they are not adequately equipped to face the enemy, while the latter have more sophisticated arms. They add that the country's authorities have encouraged demilitarization by refusing to equip the army with modern arms to protect the country. Moreover, they claim that they are only provided with basic supplies – a uniform, a pair of shoes and a belt once a year – and those whose supplies are worn out must procure new ones themselves: "*we are forced to buy them in order not to tarnish our image*."[411] "*People are saying 'soldiers are like this, soldiers are like that'… Personnel do not win the war. It is the equipment. Let us look for the equipment and face these armed groups*."[412] This view is shared by a section of the population, who generally blame the army for their inability to ensure security: *Our security personnel retreat any time they feel there is insecurity; they retreat, and this is due to the inadequacy of their equipment and poor staffing.*"[413]

There is extreme loss of trust between the government and the people due to the latter's unhappiness about the way these conflicts and rebellions were managed, as well as the "tactical" retreats by the State during the occupation of regions in the north.

Besides, it is clear from the consultations with the people on the obstacles to peace, that the breach of trust is not limited to the people and the various state institutions,

409 National Conference, Bamako, January 2015.
410 Homogeneous Focus group of the youth, Kati, Region of Koulikoro, May 2014.
411 Focus group, military barracks, Kayes.
412 National Conference, Bamako, January 2015.
413 Focus group, Youwarou, Region of Mopti, May 2014.

but equally affects relations between the State and its army. State representatives at a post in the North during the events from January to April 2012 felt they had been abandoned by an army "*in disarray*". Indeed, a public administrative officer who sought refuge in Mauritania described how, from the beginning of the crisis, officers "*responsible for the security of the country [were] the first to run away; they were 300… the representative of the President of the Republic, whose office flies the Malian flag,"* was without protection in the middle of the town at the time of the attack.[414]

The aftermath of the 2012 coup d'état and the attempted counter-coup revealed serious rifts within the army with regard to the political authorities, a situation which further brings to the fore the serious loss of trust in those in authority. The feeling some interviewed soldiers have is that, they were sacrificed on the altar of political power, which has very little to do with reasons put forth to justify the fighting.[415]

This triangular crisis of trust between the Malian population, the State and the army therefore poses considerable political, security and social cohesion risks.

During the National Conference, an officer of the regular army observed that the lack of trust of the population in the security forces was largely justified: "*I am a field officer […], at a point in time, when people began to insult the Malian army I applauded: you fled and abandoned the North leaving it in the hands of opportunists.*" She stressed the need to rebuild this trust: "*the armed forces and security agencies cannot chalk up any successes without the involvement of the population, and without a shared understanding between the people and their army. We need this now."*[416]

4.3.2 Between a feeling of abandonment, ethnic polarization and socio-political radicalization

In some areas, the population's feeling of being abandoned is deepened by the presence of armed groups, thus creating a strong feeling of insecurity, both physically and psychologically. Against this background, people are attracted toward identity-based fallback, which is defined as a return to the group within which social links and trust are strongest. These groupings are formed on the basis of identity, either along the lines of ethnic belonging or attachment to a socio-professional group. This

414 Focus group of elders, camp of Mberra, Mauritania, September 2014.
415 Focus group, military barracks, Kayes, Kayes, May 2014.
416 National Conference, Bamako, January 2015.

polarization in itself directly affects social cohesion, while reducing intra and inter-community trust by deepening the differences between them. According to a survey conducted by Afrobarometer in December 2013, following the 2012 crisis, in all the regions of Mali except the district of Bamako and the Kidal region,[417] respondents generally, indicated that they had a less favourable opinion of other ethnic groups.

As mentioned above, in some areas in Mali where the level of personal insecurity is high and where people are threatened by armed groups and individuals, self-defence strategies may extend to militiarization, i.e. arming a community. The aim is to to ensure the community's own defence and to enable it to carry out its survival activities. These militiarization trends are facilitated and buttressed by the circulation of a huge quantity of arms from various sources. They are also strengthened by organized cross-border criminal activities.[418] Various illicit activities in the area, including the trafficking of all kinds of arms, have been made possible by porous borders, the State's lack of resources to enable it to exercise control over the region and socio-economic and cross-border dynamics. For a participant at the Mopti regional restitution: "*We have arms everywhere in our midst. People buy them in Mauritania; 12-round and 36-round ammunition rifles; everyone has them here […] Sooner or later, people will buy arms at FCFA 2,000 here.*"[419] An individual interviewee at Mondoro in the Mopti region said:

> "Arms are circulating too much because in the past, even hunting guns were rarely seen in the village, and one could not possess them without authorization; but now, we realize that even war arms are everywhere, with ammunition […]. It is because of the occupation of the area over the last two years that we have begun to see these arms; otherwise we had never seen them before!"[420]

Though it may appear to some as justified in the short term, owing to the imminent threats, the gradual arming of some groups based on identity referents can largely and irremediably affect cohesion and confidence among these groups. Statements by a participant during the Gao focus group meeting illustrates the issue of arms race and that of the breakdown of these processes along identity referents: "*There*

417 Figures vary between 51% (Sikasso and Koulikoro) and 81% (Ségou), with 37% & 42% for Bamako and Kidal respectively: Afrobarometer (2014), *Malians want a united country, and so may justice prevail after the conflict*, General Policy Document no.13.

418 LACHER, Wolfram (2012), Organised Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region, Carnegie Papers.

419 Participant, Regional Feedback session, Mopti, October 2014.

420 Focus Group, Mondoro, Mopti Region, February 2014.

is something people are gradually realizing: somehow, we see some clouds forming; after the Tamasheq rebellion, we also have our rebellion. I do not know whether we shall take up guns or knives; all the same, something will happen."[421]

421 Heterogeneous Focus group, Gao, Gao Region, June 2014.

CHAPTER 4 | Mechanisms for the management and resolution of local conflicts and armed rebellion

From the pre-colonial era to date, the history of Mali is fraught with unresolved conflicts which are revived in an almost cyclical fashion. Their causes are diverse and complex, with roots in various dynamics which have been discussed throughout this study, as well as in feelings of inequality and injustice. In the opinion of the people, apart from the conflicts per se, it is their recurrence that seems to be the main obstacle to peace. This recurrence is mainly due to limitations of and failures in the mode of conflict resolution and management. Thus, whether repression or negotiations are opted for, the chosen processes tend to bear the seed engendering the next conflict. Some conflicts stem from a desire for vengeance as a result of extreme confrontation-related violence. In other cases, people cite abandonment by the State, exclusion from the peace processes and the diversion of the processes from their objective as factors that force communities into identity-based fallback. These factors further widen distances between communities, different populations, the State and the army. What is the entry point for ensuring security and sustainable peace in Mali?

- **Ethnic polarization and inter-community tensions**
  How can the dynamics of ethnic/community polarization be stopped and trust restored among communities and between the State and the population?
- **Chronic insecurity**
  How can militarization dynamics and effects be mitigated and controlled? How can trust be restored between the population and security forces?
- **Conflict resolution and management mechanisms**
  How, and with whom, can one build a more legitimate, inclusive and consensual peace structure in Mali to effectively manage and resolve conflicts at all levels of society?

CONCLUSION
What are the opportunities for peace?

The various components of this report are known to Malians or to the informed observer. In the past, several issues that have come up have been subjected to in-depth research. Nonetheless, this report allows some nuances to be made as a result of its participatory and inclusive approach which places the viewpoints of Malians from all walks of life at its center. It also gives perspective to the seriousness of certain cleavages of society that are often exaggerated by observers or by Malians themselves, such as the North-South divide. This Self-Portrait establishes a common, consensual and shared understanding of the obstacles to peace by the entire Malian society. This is an important step forward, and it constitutes the basis of a wider and more in-depth process aimed at contributing to peacebuilding in Mali.

At the end of the research and dialogue process on the obstacles to peace in Mali, 180 Malians from all the social strata, communities, regions and all shades of opinion met to validate the outcomes. At this National Conference, which was held in Bamako from 27–29 January 2015, the conclusion came that the identified obstacles are complex, interrelated and raise divergent points of view to the extent that there is no turnkey solutions solution to address the situation. Consequently, there is an acknowledged need to consider new, more participatory, inclusive and change-oriented approaches to ensure the development of solutions that are not only operational, but, more importantly, consensual and sustainable.

These approaches, which include those of IMRAP and Interpeace, compelled the representatives of the Malian society present at the National Conference to mandate IMRAP to assist Malians in their quest for answers to the major challenges they identified.

In order to provide direction and focus, the National Conference prioritized one entry point for each obstacle. The entry point is an angle of attack or a specific question that Malians will be called upon to address in pursuit of solutions that will be agreeable to every Malian.[422] They took into account the potential for positive change for peace

422 Participants at the National Conference were called on, through secret ballot, to classify by order of priority the most relevant and urgent entry points for each of the four obstacles to peace.

and social cohesion; the magnitude, complexity and urgency of some issues; the preparedness and resolve of the society to address them; as well as the added value of the methodology used by IMRAP.

The process of this participatory quest for solutions, which will follow the publication of the *Self-Portrait of Mali: on the Obstacles to Peace*, will seek to determine solutions through academic research and through inclusive dialogue. IMRAP's role will be to assist in the process through the creation of conditions for free, safe and informed dialogue around these issues, during which Malians will determine solutions that could subsequently be given concrete expression through the commitment of major stakeholders who will be able to put these recommendations into action to ensure change.

Entry points for search of solutions

Challenges relating to management of socio-political diversity and crisis of societal values –

PRIORITY: EROSION OF SOCIETAL VALUES, or how to redefine living together in harmony and how to redefine rules of community life and shared values?

Mali is rich in its diversity, from the perspective of religion, identity and politics. However, some self-serving exploitation and manipulation of this diversity generates risks to social cohesion. With respect to the socio-identity aspect, the insufficient knowledge of others and strong intra- and inter-community stratifications equally constitute rifts that weaken social cohesion. A political arena characterized by the plurality of political parties in a weak democratic cultural context, projects the political game as revolving around diverse manipulations, especially that of identity, rather than issues based on political programmes and societal projects. Finally, religion, which is the binding force of the Malian society, has been disrupted by rivalry among various religious factions that are manipulated by those promoting specific socio-economic interests (cf. section 1.2 *Destabilizing dynamics related to socio-political diversity*). For a great majority of Malians, these acts of manipulation and tensions that affect the Malian society are mainly due to the erosion of consensus on social values, which form the basis of the Malian social contract.

Historically, the Malian society has always been strongly hierarchical and codified, based on cardinal values. The weakening of social institutions, coupled with an ever-growing influence of external factors, namely, through information and communication

technology (ICT) (cf. *section 1.2.1.5. External factors*), has greatly affected transmission of these values, thereby eroding the social control these institutions previously held. While traditional institutions and structures are no longer able to structure the social order as in the past, the modern State finds it difficult to develop consensual standards for regulating harmonious cohabitation. The Malian society today is, therefore, losing its benchmarks and finds it difficult to reconcile the part of the population that seeks to return to a somewhat idealized traditional past with the part that is turning to what is commonly termed "modernism." This divide is marked by a generational gap that keeps expanding.

In line with what many Malians thought during the consultations conducted throughout the country and in refugee camps as well as at the January 2015 National Conference, this reports concludes that achieving sustainable peace in Mali will require the development of new tools. These new tools or mechanisms must enable Malians to redefine a framework for living together in harmony. They must help Malians redefine rules of community life and shared values, and in short, create the basis of a new Malian social contract. The National Conference participants expressed support for an inclusive dialogue, concluding that IMRAP could contribute to this far-reaching endeavour.

Challenges relating to regulation of competition around resources and socio-economic opportunities –

PRIORITY: LIMITATIONS IN ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH, or how to ensure youth employability and processes of equitable recruitment?

In Mali, there is strong competition for economic resources and opportunities, and this continues to grow due to, among other things, high population growth and climate change. Additionally, citizens are of the view that these resources are not equitably distributed. Consequently, access to livelihoods is not guaranteed for all, and this creates tension at the local level with respect to cohabitation and within communities, as well as between the population and regulatory institutions.

In this context of perpetual precarity, in which heads of families find it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of the extended family (cf. *section 1.2.1.1. Weakening of extended family structure*), pressure on the youth will keep mounting, yet they are gravely affected by difficulties in accessing employment.

A good percentage of Malian youth – be they from the mainstream Malian schooling system, madrasas or Koranic schools – finish their education without being neither properly equipped or having any real future prospects. This thus generates and nourishes their feelings of inequality with regards to access to socio-economic opportunities. In as much as lapses in the educational system are partly to blame, (cf. *section 1.2.1.3. An incoherent and segmented education system)*, in somewhat counterintuitive manner, it might seem that having good quality education in Mali does not guarantee one better employment opportunities. On the contrary, the ANPE data on employment seem to indicate that the rate of unemployment increases with the level of education, which suggests that the type of education offered does not match the job market needs. Recruitment processes, be they in the public service or in the army or private sector, have been decried by several Malians for being inequitable as a result of nepotism and corruption (cf. *section 2.1.2. Other disputed economic opportunities*).

Apart from the economic aspect, this dire situation that youth find themselves in, particularly in a context where societal benchmarks are seriously destabilized, makes them vulnerable to manipulation of all kinds (see *Chapter 1*) or to choosing personal avenues that are risky to society – dubious economic activities, armed struggle, etc. On this basis, the National Conference mandated IMRAP to address the issue of limited access to employment for youth, given that the issue has a potential positive impact that cuts across a broad number of factors of instability in Mali in the short, medium and long term.

Challenges relating to governance of access to public services –

PRIORITY: FAILURE IN GOVERNANCE, or how to conduct transparent, equitable and legitimate public management?

Mali has structural difficulties in public service delivery. Lack of reliable information on the management of treasury and public services, as well as the citizen's basic knowledge of the realities of the rest of the country are such that, these lapses in State services are interpreted by the population as segregated treatment between social strata, regions, towns and villages, and even between the capital and the rest of the country (cf. *section 3.4. Social perceptions of imbalances and failures in public service delivery*). Sentiments of inequality and injustice may even extend to forming the basis of certain ideas and talk that could cause challenges to social cohesion and peace, particularly with regards to the North-South narrative.

Decentralization, which was believed to be a solution to these governance issues, citizens' participation in governance and accountability of public action, has to date not offered adequate solutions, due mainly to its incomplete implementation and to the exploitation of grey areas by various authorities and actors in question (see *section 3.3. Decentralization: a solution and its challenges*). Moreover, for some participants well-versed in the issue, structural reforms cannot achieve the expected impact, as long as they are limited to structural issues and not carried out at the level of the culture of governance.

The National Conference decided that in view of governance-related challenges, it was of utmost importance to determine how to guarantee more transparency in the allocation of public resources and development projects, and ensure that individuals and institutions in charge of managing and deciding on public action do that equitably and fairly, without any external pressure and/or devoid of personal interests. Given that the participatory and inclusive approach of the IMRAP process has, in the past months, contributed in a unique manner to bridge gaps between the population and some authorities and the elite, the Conference was of the view that this type of process could contribute in bringing about a positive change with regard to governance.

Challenges relating to mechanisms for the management and resolution of local conflicts and armed rebellion –

PRIORITY: CHRONIC INSECURITY or how can trust be restored between the population and the army?

The history of Mali – from the pre-colonial era to date – is fraught with unresolved conflicts, which relapse in an almost cyclical fashion. Their causes are diverse and complex, having roots in various dynamics that have been discussed in this study as well as in feelings of inequality and injustice. However, apart from the conflicts per se, their recurrence seems to be the main obstacle to peace, in the population's opinion. This recurrence is mainly due to limitations of and failures in the mode of conflict resolution and management. Thus, be it resorting to repression or using negotiations, the processes chosen tend to bear the seed triggering the next conflict. Several factors push communities into identity polarization, further widening the distances between communities and various groups of people, and between the State and the army. These factors include feelings of being abandoned by the State, being excluded from the peace processes, and seeing the latter diverted from their objective.

While it appears that conflict management and resolution mechanisms are critical

issues so far as conflict recurrence is concerned, the current situation of chronic insecurity prevailing in some regions of Mali, particularly Kidal, Gao, Timbuktu and to some extent, Mopti, must be resolved as a matter of priority in the opinion of Malians. "*When the hut of Bourama is on fire, instead of looking for who has let it, the fire has to be put out first,*" said a participant at the National Conference.[423] It is difficult to think of securing the Malian territory without the input of security forces; and yet the crisis of confidence and trust between the population of the afore-mentioned regions and their security system – and especially the Malian army – partly explain the current inability to address the urgent security situation as well as the current impasse and the crisis of 2012.

Whether it was justified or not, clamping down the 1963 revolt left unhealed wounds in the collective memories of some Malian communities, thus creating conditions for a cycle of vengeance, which has since then brought about excesses and atrocities committed by all sides during subsequent uprisings (*4.2.1.1 The use of repression: when violence begets violence*). This crisis of trust was the reason why, in the aftermath of the National Pact of 1991, a great number of military personnel were withdrawn from the northern part of the country.[424] The security void thus created compelled a section of the population to assume their own safety through arming themselves or by setting up self-defence groups or militia, which today are taking part in destabilizing the situation. Some also look for protection from existing militia, armed groups, or even criminal ones (see *section 4.2.1.2. Militia and self-defence groups*). All this is done against a backdrop of impunity. Withdrawing Malian troops as armed groups advanced in 2012 only widened the gap and worsened mistrust.

Nevertheless, the mere presence of security forces would not be able to end the spate of chronic insecurity, as illustrated by the tension that mounted upon the return of the Malian army to the previously occupied regions during the French intervention in 2013, the serious problems encountered by the UN peacekeepers (MINUSMA) in exercising their mandate, as well as testimonies given by participants from the southern regions (see *section 4.3.1. Crumbling of social cohesion and confidence*). A senior officer of the Malian army at the National Conference strongly brought this point home: while citizens refuse to trust because they are "abandoned," it becomes impossible for security forces to assume their role in such a context, just as it is when they collaborate with "rebel" groups.[425]

423 National Conference, Bamako, January 2015.
424 Poulton et Ag Youssouf (1999) *op.cit.*
425 National Conference, Bamako, January 2015.

The National Conference therefore determined that the immediate priority is to put an end to the chronic insecurity. In its view, to accomplish this, the IMRAP methodology of inclusive dialogue could assist in identifying mechanisms of management and resolution of local conflicts and armed rebellion. Serious thought will need to be given to ending militiarization dynamics, and to restoring trust between the population and security forces tasked with their protection; these are essential for actual safeguarding of the country. The Conference noted the openness demonstrated by some personnel of the Malian army. The involvement and participation of the population in managing security, as well as their interaction with the security system, will be critical.

Annexes

1. Criteria for selecting Actors/Stakeholders in consultations

The participation and consultation of all these citizens and State and non-State entities ought to be done in accordance with carefully pre-determined criteria, notably, gender, age and geographical context. Firstly, the choice of these stakeholders and participants is made on the basis of their legitimacy and representativeness within the social groups they represent, and their ability to influence the behaviour and actions of the groups they belong to. With regards to the research undertaken, special attention was paid to the aspect of reducing horizontal distances (between the population and socio-political groups) and vertical ones (between the population and local, regional and national authorities) in Mali. Using this approach enables the analysis and identification of obstacles to peace by stakeholders themselves, thereby facilitating, in the long run, the emergence of a shared analysis endorsed by all and which could serve as basis for participatory and inclusive research for consensual solutions to identified problems.

The following stakeholders were at the heart of the process and were consulted at all the stages.

Criteria for selecting participants in focus groups
Natives/ allochthonous/non-natives
Administrative authorities
Elected representatives
Traditional authorities
Religious authorities
Elders /Youth
Security Forces (military, police etc.)
Political parties
Displaced persons
Persons in refugee situation
Civil society organizations
Women
Youth
Notability intellectuals and experts
Persons with disabilities

2. Participants at consultation sessions

Total number of participants and focus groups		
Regions	**No. of participants**	**No. of focus groups**
Ségou	642	17
Mopti	710	13
Sikasso	654	19
Koulikoro	454	11
Kayes	537	14
Gao	363	10
Timbuktu	225	11
Kidal	30	3
Bamako	558	19
Niger	75	3
Mauritania	243	4
National Conference	179	-
Individual interviews	72	-
TOTAL	**4470**	**123**

Ségou Region				
N°	**Date**	**Area**	**Type of focus group**	**No. of participants**
1	16/01/2014	Baroueli	Heterogeneous	30
2	17/01/2014	Dioro	Heterogeneous	35
3	19/01/2014	Niono	Homogeneous youth	34
4	18/01/2014	Niono	Homogeneous women	30
5	14/01/2014	Niono	Heterogeneous	30
6	21/01/2014	Macina	Homogeneous youth	34
7	21/01/2014	Macina	Heterogeneous	29
8	15/01/2014	Sokolo	Heterogeneous	32
9	23/01/2014	Sibila	Heterogeneous	31
10	22/01/2014	Sansanding	Heterogeneous	34
11	23/01/2014	Séribala	Heterogeneous	32
12	22/02/2014	Bla	Heterogeneous	32
13	25/01/2014	Tominian Yasso	Heterogeneous	35
14	26/01/2014	San	Heterogeneous	35
15	23/04/2014	Zanfina	Heterogeneous	57
16	24/04/2014	Komola	Heterogeneous	38
17	26/04/2014	Sokolo	Popular	35
18	16-17/09/2014	Ségou	Regional feedback	60
TOTAL				**643**

Mopti Region				
N°	Date	Area	Type of focus group	No. of participants
1	15/02/2014	Mopti	Heterogeneous	28
2	17/02/2014	Douenza	Heterogeneous	30
3	17/02/2014	Konna	Heterogeneous	30
4	19/02/2014	Mondoro	Heterogeneous	34
5	19/02/2014	Djenné	Heterogeneous	42
6	20/02/2014	Sofara	Heterogeneous	31
7	22/02/2014	Koro	Heterogeneous	29
8	24/02/2014	Bankass	Heterogeneous	34
9	25/02/2014	Goundaka	Heterogeneous	34
10	25/02/2014	Bagnangara	Heterogeneous	30
11	29/04/2014	Douenza	Heterogeneous	259
12	01/05/2014	Tennekou	Heterogeneous	31
13	03/05/2014	Youwarou	Heterogeneous	34
14	22-23/10/2014	Mopti	Regional feedback	64
TOTAL				**710**

Sikasso Region				
N°	Date	Area	Type of focus group	No. of participants
1	13/03/2014	Sikasso	Heterogeneous	34
2	15/03/2014	Nièna	Homogeneous youth	40
3	15/03/2014	Nièna	Heterogeneous	34
4	18/03/2014	Garalo	Heterogeneous	28
5	17/03/2014	Bougouni	Heterogeneous	37
6	19/03/2014	Koutiala	Heterogeneous	34
7	17/03/2014	Yorosso	Heterogeneous	35
8	20/03/2014	Yanfolila	Heterogeneous	33
9	22/03/2014	Kolondiéba	Homogeneous women	28
10	22/03/2014	Kolondiéba	Heterogeneous	29
11	22/03/2014	Zégoua	Heterogeneous	39
12	24/03/2014	Kadiolo	Heterogeneous	32
13	29/05/2014	Koury	Popular/grassroots	50
14	28/05/2014	Koutiala	Heterogeneous	32
15	30/05/2014	Placer de biya	Homogeneous	10
16	31/05/2014	Messeni	Heterogeneous	37
17	02/06/2014	Kolondieba	Heterogeneous	20
18	03/06/2014	Bougouni	Homogeneous youth	11
19	03/06/2014	Bougouni	Homogeneous women	32
20	24-29/09/2014	Sikasso	Regional feedback	59
TOTAL				**654**

Koulikoro Region				
N°	Date	Area	Type of focus group	No. of participants
1	22/04/2014	Souban	Heterogeneous	35
2	23/04/2014	Banamba	Heterogeneous	34
3	24/04/2014	Mourdiah	Homogeneous women	34
4	24/04/2014	Mourdiah	Heterogeneous	39
5	26/04/2014	Nara	Heterogeneous	31
6	28/04/2014	Dogofry	Heterogeneous	34
7	27/04/2014	Gombou	Heterogeneous	35
8	30/04/2014	Kolokani	Heterogeneous	34
9	24/04/2014	Kangaba	Heterogeneous	34
10	01/05/2014	Kambila	Heterogeneous	34
11	04/05/2014	Doila	Heterogeneous	35
12	08-09/10/2014	Souban	Regional Feedback	75
TOTAL				**454**

Kayes Region				
N°	Date	Area	Type of focus group	No. of participants
1	23/03/2014	Ambidebi	Heterogeneous	36
2	22/04/2014	Kayes	Heterogeneous	35
3	24/04/2014	Tringa Marena	Heterogeneous	37
4	25/04/2014	Diéma	Heterogeneous	32
5	25/04/2014	Diéma	Homogeneous youth	35
6	27/04/2014	Nioro du Sahel	Heterogeneous	33
7	28/04/2014	Kayes	Homogeneous youth	23
8	29/04/2014	Bafoulabé	Heterogeneous	33
9	30/04/2014	Kénieba	Heterogeneous	29
10	03/05/2014	Kita	Heterogeneous	36
11	03/05/2014	Kita	Homogeneous women	31
12	27/10/2014	Kayes	Homogeneous women	37
13	27/10/2014	Kayes	Homogeneous men	33
14	28/10/2014	Kayes	Heterogeneous youth Heterogeneous	34
15	30/09 au 01/10/2014	Kayes	Regional feedback	73
TOTAL				**537**

Gao Region				
N°	Date	Area	Type of focus group	No. of participants
1	12/06/2014	Gao	Heterogeneous	29
2	13/06/2014	Gao	Heterogeneous	24
3	14/06/2014	Gao	Homogeneous youth	41
4	14/06/2014	Gao	Homogeneous women	38
5	15/06/2014	Bourem	Heterogeneous	29
6	15/06/2014	Gao	Homogeneous displaced	21
7	16/06/2014	Gao	Homogeneous returned refugees	20
8	16/06/2014	Gao	Heterogeneous	24
9	17/06/2014	Ansongo	Heterogeneous	37
10	18/06/2014	Kadji	Heterogeneous	32
11	27-28/09/2014	Gao	Regional feedback	68
TOTAL				**363**

Timbuktu Region				
N°	**Date**	**Area**	**Type of focus group**	**No. of participants**
1	11/06/2014	Timbuktu	Heterogeneous	32
2	11/06/2014	Timbuktu	Heterogeneous	23
3	12/06/2014	Ber	Heterogeneous	15
4	12/06/2014	Timbuktu	Homogeneous youth	15
5	13/06/2014	Ber	Heterogeneous	07
6	13/06/2014	Timbuktu	Homogeneous Socioprofessional categories (CSP)	09
7	14/06/2014	Nianfunké	Heterogeneous	14
8	14/06/2014	Timbuktu	Homogeneous women	07
9	15/06/2014	Bambara Mouedé	Heterogeneous	12
10	15/06/2014	Timbuktu	Homogeneous returnees and displaced	29
11	16/06/2014	Timbuktu	Homogeneous heads of suburb	08
12	13-14/09/2014	Timbuktu	Regional feedback	54
TOTAL				**255**

Kidal Region				
N°	**Date**	**Area**	**Type of focus group**	**No. of participants**
1	05/02/2015	Kidal	Homogeneous community leaders	10
2	06/02/2015	Kidal	Homogeneous Women's Association of Azawad	10
3	06/02/2015	Kidal	Homogeneous pro-Mali	10
TOTAL				**30**

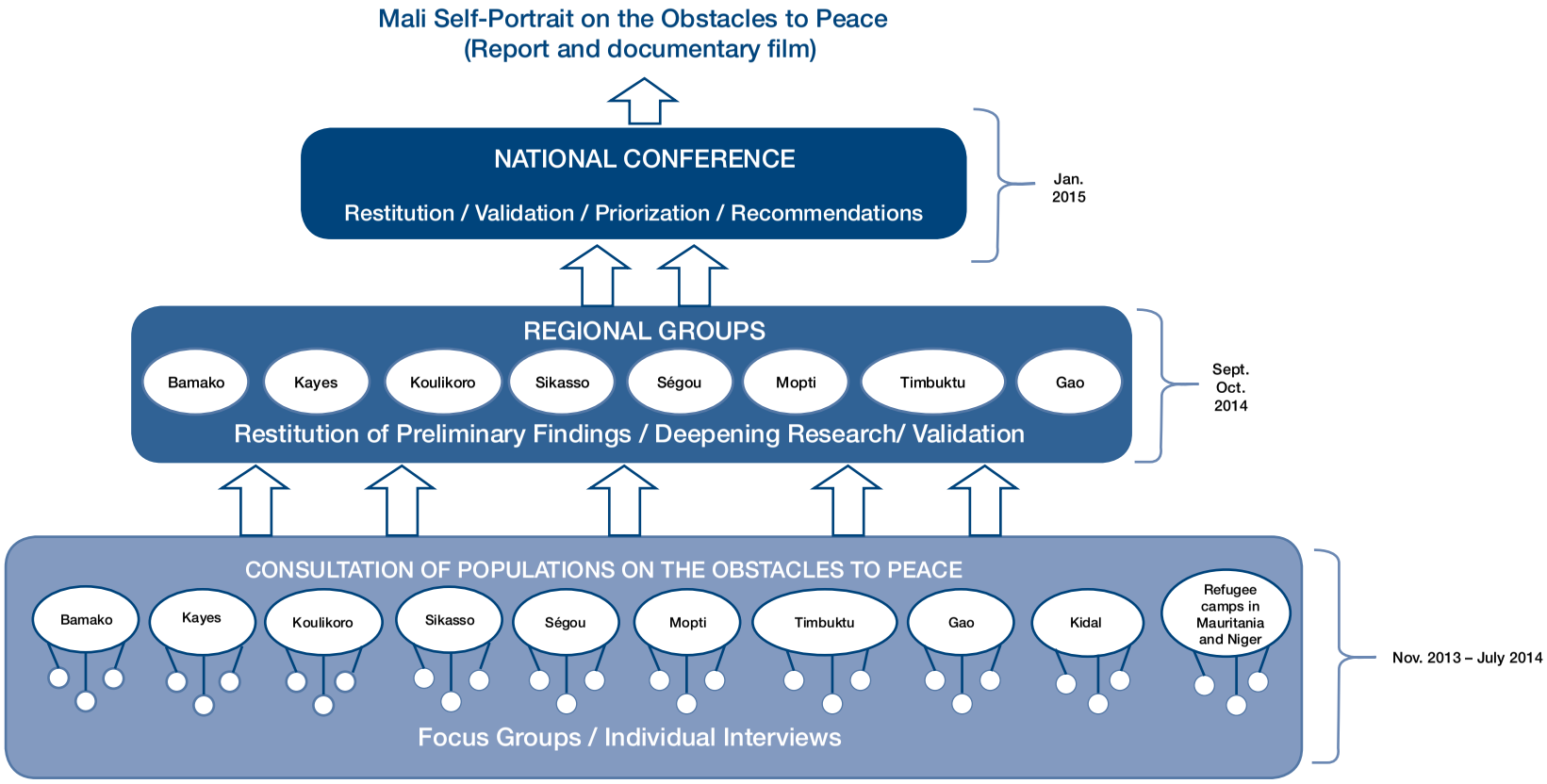
Bamako District				
N°	Date	Area	Type of focus group	No. of participants
1	07/06/2014	Bamako (médina-coura)	Homogeneous elders of 6 communes	17
2	10/06/2014	Bamako (commune II)	Homogeneous Médina-Coura Youth	20
3	12/06/2014	Bamako- Doumanzana (commune I)	Focus test women of Doumanzana	35
4	14/06/2014	Bamako (6 communes)	Homogeneous youth	33
5	21/06/2014	Bamako (6 communes)	Homogeneous women	30
6	25/06/2014	Bamako (rive droite commune V et VI)	Heterogeneous	31
7	28/06/2014	Bamako	Heterogeneous of displaced from the North	27
8	03/07/2014	Moribabougou	Heterogeneous	34
9	05/07/2014	Bamako (6 communes)	Homogeneous youth university students	26
10	06/07/2014	Bamako rive gauche (communes I to VI)	Heterogeneous	30
11	27/08/2014	Executives from Kidal in Bamako	Heterogeneous	18
12	27/08/2014	Teachers in Kati, mixed youth	Homogeneous youth	25
13	28/08/2014	Cadres from Timbuktu and Gao	Heterogeneous	18
14	18/10/2014	Moribabougou	Heterogeneous	35
15	25/10/2014	Bamako	Experts/university	12
16	03/12/2014	Bamako	Member Board of Gov.	4
17	16/12/2014	Bamako	Civil society women	10
18	18/12/2014	Bamako	Military personnel spouses	34
19	11/12/2014	Bamako	Male of culture	04
20	22-23/10/2014	Bamako	Regional feedback	52
21	21-22/10/2014	Bamako	Regional feedback, Left bank	62
TOTAL				558

Camps in Niger				
N°	**Date**	**Area**	**Type of focus group**	**No. of participants**
1	22/06/2014	Niamey	Heterogeneous	20
2	23/06/2014	Mangaîze	Heterogeneous	20
3	24/06/2014	Ayourou	Heterogeneous	35
TOTAL				**75**

Camp in Mberra (Mauritania)				
N°	**Date**	**Area**	**Type of focus group**	**No. of participants**
1	01/09/2014	Camp of Mberra	Heterogeneous elders and leaders	68
2	02/09/2014	Camp of Mberra	Heterogeneous women	105
3	03/09/2014	Camp of Mberra	Heterogeneous youth	70
TOTAL				**243**

Individual interviews	
Category of person	**No. of interviews**
Administrative authorities	9
Traditional authorities	3
Religious authorities	5
Elected representatives	11
Forces	16
Resource persons	12
Civil society	5
Persons with disabilities	1
TOTAL	**72**

3. Diagram of participatory research process



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Thanks to the financial support of:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
DANIDA | International Development Cooperation

As well as the institutional support of:

Kingdom of the Netherlands

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

ISBN9 789 9661 6667 8