

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVOLUTION OF SOCIETAL VALUES – (RE)BUILDING OF TRUST BETWEEN THE CIVILIAN POPULATION AND THE DEFENSE AND SECURITY FORCES: DIAGNOSIS AND SOLUTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN MALI

“IMRAP went even into the smallest communities, to obtain the opinion of the least to the greatest Malian.”

A participant at the National Conference

From November 2013 to March 2015, the participatory research that led to the drafting of *Mali's Self-Portrait on obstacles to peace* was a first step towards the change desired and backed by Malians. In accordance with the approach advocated by IMRAP and Interpeace, this change must be determined by Malians, through the identification by the population itself, of the main challenges to peace, and through

their commitment to the development and implementation of sustainable solutions to these challenges.

Thus, at the end of a period of self-reflection on the challenges to peace¹, IMRAP and Interpeace have launched a second phase of research called «participatory action research», aimed at developing and implementing solutions to these challenges, with the support of the Kingdom of Denmark and a contribution from the Kingdom of Norway. This new process targeted two priorities for peace identified by the Malians, namely: (i) the evolution of societal values; (ii) chronic insecurity with a focus on the crisis of trust between the civil population and the defense and security forces (DSF).

In order to ensure large-scale ownership of these solutions by the Malians, particular attention has been given to including and involving in this process all regions of Mali, from Kayes to Kidal, as well as the refugee camps in Niger and Mauritania. In total, more than 2,000 Malians directly took part in the dialogue on those issues. Over 70 dialogue sessions were held, as well as about fifty individual or group interviews. Furthermore, the Mobile Dialogue Unit (PDM) enabled to involve throughout the year nearly 10,000 people as part of the fifty screenings and film-based dialogues on the findings of the Self-Portrait. This included the issues of the crisis of trust between the people and the DSF, and the mutation of societal values. These various contributions became the basis for the development of the solutions, which have been guided by two steering committees of experts and other Malian officials, decision makers, opinion leaders; all concerned about and involved in these issues.

“The entire Malian population is involved in this process, and this guarantees the legitimacy of the solutions which are decided here.”

A participant at the National Conference.

The second National Conference held on the 3rd, 4th and 5th of May 2016 enabled to validate and prioritize those solutions in a participatory and consensual manner. Upon the request of the participants of the Conference, IMRAP will accompany the Malian population in the implementation of these solutions.

¹ Which was made possible thanks to the support of the European Union and the Kingdom of Denmark, as well as a contribution from the Kingdom of Norway.



«The most important achievement resulting from the action taken by IMRAP and Interpeace is the engagement of all of us Malians, males and females, of all horizons and beyond all divide, in a process of dialogue and collective action for peace. [...] The work we just completed together on the development of consensual solutions is not just a series of recommendations doomed to be forgotten: it is a milestone of collective commitment towards change».

Traoré Nènè Konaté, Executive Director, IMRAP.

THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIETAL VALUES



The participatory action research process has shown that the accelerated evolution of Malian values has brutally called into question the existing social consensus around norms codes and standards of living together, which considerably destabilizes the Malian social contract. This phenomenon originates from and thrives on the weakening of traditional institutions of socialization, such as the extended family, the age groups, and the religious platforms, which reduces the impact of the educational role and social control they once exercised. The educational system, which should compensate for this and ensure an education adapted to the socio-economical and cultural realities of Mali, is no longer able to respond effectively.

“[When] I go against what I have been taught, there must be a mechanism to tell me to stop or to sanction me. That does not exist. “

Interview with a key person.

All these rapid and uncontrolled changes reinforce among Malians the mutual ignorance of their respective values and cultures. This growing ignorance is the root cause of many divisions and tensions within and between communities, which is deeply and sustainably weakening Mali’s social fabric.

In order to face these challenges, the Malians gathered at the conference have prioritized some of the solutions which were developed during the consultations organized across the country. They prioritized the solutions according to their sense of urgency, their feasibility and their potential impact on a better management of the mutation of values, in favor of the strengthening of social cohesion in Mali. They have thus committed themselves to:

Strengthen the culture of dialogue for social cohesion

One of the central elements brought to light during the consultations is the existence of significant barriers between different populations on the one hand, and between the populations and their governments on the other hand. In the opinion of the participants, these barriers are born out of a lack of dialogue between Malians. To overcome them, the Malians have stressed the need to continue and expand the dialogue spaces set up by IMRAP and Interpeace as part of its program. Furthermore, they also noted the importance of taking into account the rich Malian culture of dialogue, by strengthening the capacity of existing spaces for discussion. They also suggested among other measures, to create new spaces in communities where they are most needed and to support them.

Promote citizenship education to strengthen patriotism amongst Malians

The issue of citizenship is a central concern for Malians, who denounce the deviant behavior of citizens and their government, such as corruption or non-compliance with laws and traditional and state authorities. To fight against this lack of civism, Malians require the development of a national citizenship education policy. On this basis, the population propose the elaboration of a national program and sectoral ministerial plans on the issue. They also call for the return of the National Youth Service and the pioneer movement, as tools to “*perpetuate cultural values in the collective consciousness*”² and to “*form a new type of patriotic and engaged citizens.*”³

“Each of us says that they are proud to be Malian. Whereas we have little knowledge of the cultural values of the other [...]. This ignorance creates misunderstandings [...] leading to a partitioning of communities and specific forms of stigmatization. “

Interview with a key person.

Restore the major cultural events held for the intermingling of the population

Malians have extensively called for the reinstatement of major meetings held for the intermingling of population at the local, regional and national levels. Every year, many local cultural events are carried out in Mali by the Malians, to preserve their heritage and promote Malian values. Until 1988, these events were supplemented with events organized annually and bi-annually by the State, at a regional and national level, aimed at “*[promoting] ethnic diversity and the acceptance of each other.*”⁴ The Malians also suggested the promotion of caravans and dialogue forums, to expand the scope of exchanges. The participants finally wished that the different communities be encouraged to promote local cultural events, in order to spread their own values.

2 National Conference, Bamako, May 2016.

3 National Conference, Bamako, May 2016.

4 National Conference, Bamako, May 2016.

(RE)BUILDING TRUST BETWEEN THE POPULATION AND THE DEFENSE AND SECURITY FORCES (DSF)



In a context of ongoing insecurity and armed violence, the protection of the population by the DSF is considered by Malians as the primary role of the State. Yet, the current situation prevailing in Mali and particularly in its Central and Northern regions does not allow the people to feel that their security is ensured. Malians believe that the DSF's inability to fully perform their role is partly both the cause and the effect of the serious crisis of trust between the people and the latter.

While this lack of trust is rooted in a long history of misbehaviors and violent incidents, the current situation is inscribed in a vicious circle. In order to accomplish their mission, particularly in the context of this asymmetrical war, the DSF need to collaborate with the people. However, this collaboration can only occur if a minimum of trust exists between the DSF and the communities. Given the difficulty of the DSF to ensure the security of the population, the latter continue to distrust them and resort instead to other means of ensuring their own security.

«Today, we find ourselves in what we call an asymmetrical war where everyone is a suspect, [...] [with a] new modus operandi that is difficult to understand without collaboration with the civilian population »

Army official at the National Conference.

In order to deal with those challenges, the Malians who met at the National Conference expressed their opinions on the priority solutions to be put in place according to their feasibility, their urgency and their potential impact. They committed themselves to:

Ensuring a common and shared understanding of roles and responsibilities

One of the key issues that came up during the meeting is the profound lack of understanding between the people and the DSF. The Malians who were consulted believe that many tensions stem from misunderstanding of the realities lived by the other, or the challenges faced by the other. That is why one of the solution around which a strong consensus that emerged was to endeavor reaching a common and shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the DSF, but also of the population, in regards to security. This will help establish the basis of a relation on which trust could gradually be built upon. For Malians, such understanding will come from, amongst other: the integration of civic education courses to the school curriculum, the organization of informative events, and the promotion of dialogue.

Developing a concerted management of the security sector

The Malians which were consulted believe that it is necessary to build a better understanding of the roles of everyone, and to initiate a dialogue among all stakeholders involved in the management of their security. Even if a sound consensus has not yet been reached regarding the balance to establish between civil powers and the security forces or the military, all agree on the necessity to define this balance in order to enable everyone to play his/her role in this management. Amongst other, the concerted security management should take place through the development of mechanisms or spaces for dialogue between the DSF and the people – such as the Local Consultative Committees on Security (CCLS) for instance –, the strengthening of supervisory authorities, or the development of instruments for measuring trust and its evolution, facilitating the implementation of early warning initiatives to prevent the future deterioration of relations.

Adapting the capacities of Defense and Security Forces in an evolving security context

The Malians who were consulted recognized the fact that the evolution of the security context in the country requires an adaptation of the methods of interventions, the means as well as the continued strengthening of the operational capacities of the DSF. Besides, these renewed capacities must ultimately render the DSF at the service of the people. For this reason, Malians believe that the current security approach which guides the behavior and the interaction with the civilian population must be reviewed and adapted to the current context. With such measures, the DSF should increasingly be able to deal with the new dynamics they are confronted with.

« We are nothing without the people. At the start, we were part of the population [...]. Do not be afraid of us because we are there for you ».

A member of the DSF who was part of the process.

Establishing a transparent, fair and effective recruitment process

In order to benefit from both the best human resource capacities and a greater trust from the people, the DSF must also review the recruitment process in order to ensure that it is transparent, fair and effective, according to civilians and the DSF. Malians believe that it is necessary to apply the laws already in place, while fighting against corruption and influence peddling. Also, larger and broader communication on procedures are required to enable everyone to apply in an equitable way. In the view of participants, applicants should also be subjected to an investigation on morality, and the results should be made public in a transparent manner.

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