

WOMEN PEACE AND DEMOCRACY IN MALI

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WOMEN PEACE AND DEMOCRACY IN MALI

1. Introduction

1.1. Context: Mali

Since the military régime was ousted in 1991, Mali has developed a reputation both in Africa and the West as a stable democratic state and one of the few African countries recognised to host a free press. Women in the north of Mali are recognised to have played a key role in preventing the escalation of conflict between the touaregs and the new government in 1992.¹ President Alpha Oumar Konaré's own handling of this conflict won widespread admiration: this was through the withdrawal of military units in order to enable civil society to take the lead in the process of reconciliation and become the architects of their own peace.² Konaré went on to champion pan-African confidence building, becoming President of the African Union in 2003. This regional role in promoting peace and collaboration has continued since Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) was elected president in 2002.

Under Konaré one of the most important moves for national unity was the process of consultation with citizen groups to develop the constitution and begin decentralisation.³ To further distance the new government from the previous period of military rule, the army has been rebranded as 'an army for peace and stability'.⁴ Although the majority of the population are Muslim, the new Mali was established as a secular state and in general Muslim leaders have been supportive of the state.⁵ The political climate before the elections in 2002 was generally optimistic as regards the road to consolidating the democratic gains already made⁶.

Mali thus presents an interesting case study in relation both to general strategies for conflict prevention and to the opportunities for democratic involvement of women in particular. As the country successfully concluded presidential and legislative elections in July 2007, this briefing is a timely review of social development in Mali from the women's perspective.

1.2. Framework: Equality, peace and development

The United Nations' 1995 Beijing Platform of Action for women highlights the three main tenets of equality, peace and development and their interconnectedness. The implication is that future sustainability in the world is dependent on women playing an equal part in all areas of life and work. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (October 2000) emphasises the need for women to be involved in all decision-making processes, especially relating to peace and conflict. INSTRAW has carried out research on integrating a gender dimension into the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) framework which was endorsed by the UN Reform Summit in 2005. Guidelines have also been developed for national policy-makers to draw up a 'women, peace and security plan', involving the whole range of stakeholders - including

¹ See chapter IV in Ousmane Kornio, Abdoul Aziz Diallo et Fatimata Sow (2004) *Recherche à finalité pédagogique sur la prévention et la gestion des conflits communautaires au Mali, Manuel de Formation*, Bamako: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

² Robin-Edward Poulton et Ibrahim ag Youssouf (1998) *La Paix de Tombouctou : Gestion démocratique, développement et construction africaine de la paix*, Genève: UNIDIR

³ (2003) *Lois et Décrets de la Décentralisation, 5^{ème} édition*, Bamako: Ministry for the Administration of the Territorial Collectives (MATCL)

⁴ Colonel Abdoulaye Coulibaly, Directeur, Direction de l'Information et des Relations Publiques des Armées, Ministère de la Défense et des Anciens Combattants

⁵ Stephen A Harmon (2005) 'Religion and the Consolidation of Democracy in Mali', in *Democracy and Development*, Vol 5, No 1. However, the situation is more complicated since 9/11 as discussed below in 3.2

⁶ Olly Owen (2002) *Mali: Reinforcing the Foundations*, Working Paper, London / Lagos: Centre for Democracy and Development

women and women's organisations – in a joint strategy which represents and addresses the different needs and interests of all.^{7 8}

1.3. Gender as an early warning indicator

Conflict and violence in wider society are reflected in gender relationships within the family (and vice versa). Gender equity tends to correspond to a more collaborative and peaceful society. Increased levels of violence in society tend to equate with increased levels of violence against women (both in the domestic and public spheres). The level of gender equality can therefore be seen as a good indicator for general levels of conflict in society and can act as an early warning sign, illuminating aspects which are normally overlooked or ignored. Similarly, the integration of a gender perspective into responses to increasing instability or insecurity can help to ensure that policies do not simply reinforce existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, which are the root cause of conflict.

While women and children are often the principal victims of conflict, it is important to emphasise that women are also actively involved, both formally and informally, in peace-building initiatives in conflict or post-conflict situations. This may be at a local level or through civil society organisations. However, women's role and capacity in conflict prevention and peace-building is often an under-utilised and under-recognised resource.

This briefing uses the analytical framework of gender as an early warning indicator developed by Alert International / Swiss Peace Foundation in consultation with African civil society organisations, international agencies and bilateral donors.⁹ It firstly categorises the **root causes** of gender conflict in Mali, which relate to inequity in political, economic, socio-demographic or cultural spheres. It then highlights specific examples or indicators of inequity (**proximate factors**), which are related to a potential or actual increase in violence.

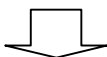
Intervening factors are explored: some of these, such as increased religious fundamentalism, are likely to contribute to an escalation in violence - while others, such as the involvement of women in peace initiatives, may contribute to greater stability. The role of the international community and the predominant development model also needs to be considered: this impacts both on national autonomy and individual women's autonomy to determine the future of peace and human security in Mali.

Fig. 1 Gender and conflict early warning: a framework for action

A. Analysis of the status of women in society (relative equality and inclusion) to identify root causes of conflict



B. Analysis of the immediate causes of conflict



C. Analysis of intervening factors (which contribute either to stability or to conflict)



D. Recommendations for future action in response to the causes of conflict

⁷ Jenny Bond and Laurel Sherret (2006) *A sight for sore eyes. Bringing Gender Vision to the Responsibility to Protect Framework*, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). R2P requires the international community to prevent conflict, react to humanitarian crises and help rebuild societies in situations where national government fails to do so.

⁸ Kristin Vaselek (2006) *Securing Equality, Engendering Peace*, INSTRAW

⁹ Susanne Schmeidl and Eugenia Piza-Lopez (2002) *Gender and Conflict Early Warning: A Framework for Action*, International Alert / Swiss Peace Foundation

2. Status of women in Mali

2.1. Legislation

Mali has ratified the major international human rights conventions including CEDAW (the United Nations convention for the elimination of discrimination against women, 1993) and the key elements of these treaties have been integrated into the written constitution. A number of laws relating to the rights of women and children have been passed and the implementation of these is monitored by independent state watchdogs.¹⁰ The state machinery is the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Children, which, as widely the case, is under-funded and under-staffed in relation to its designated task to promote women and children's rights throughout government and in society. In reality it has limited power and influence and as this briefing highlights, has been unsuccessful so far in bringing about radical changes for women.

In 2004 Mali ratified the protocol of the African Union on the rights of women (known as the Maputo Protocol). This goes further than CEDAW in recognising aspects of cultural tradition such as female genital mutilation as 'harmful practices' to be eliminated. However, women lawyers across the African continent¹¹ have highlighted the fact that ratification of any international or regional convention by a head of state does not automatically equate to implementation on the ground. Even when principles are part of the constitution, changes in legislation are needed before women are able to have recourse to them under the law. These changes depend on the decisions of the legislature, the elected members of parliament, of whom the majority of men, whose attitudes towards women's emancipation are still very much influenced by *shariah* (Muslim) law and customary (traditional) practice. The Association of Women Lawyers in Mali have carried out awareness-raising about these different levels of law arguing that, in fact, international treaties should override national law as well as cultural practice.¹²

However, they have not yet influenced the legislature to introduce change in key areas. One is the Family Code,¹³ a bill fundamental to the legal underpinning of women's rights which has been 'in progress' through parliament for more than 10 years now, annually facing resistance by the legislature. The code covers all aspects relating to marriage, child custody, succession, inheritance, rights and responsibilities within marriage, divorce, parenthood, child protection and domestic violence. Legislation of the Family Code would mean an important practical contribution to human security for both women and children, promoting economic independence for women and thus facilitating their participation in public life.

The second area, closely related, is women's struggle to introduce quotas for elections and equity for male and female candidates in the list system used by political parties¹⁴ in order to facilitate an increase of women in decision-making at local and national level. The proposed bill, supported by President Touré, was rejected by the legislature in 2006 on the grounds that (like the Family Code) it was 'against the constitution' as well as 'offending cultural

¹⁰ See 'Femmes et Droits au Mali: Cinq ans après la conférence de Beijing' on the PRODEJ (Programme pour La Réforme de la Justice au Mali) website <http://justicemali.org/doc013.htm> Watchdogs such as the National Observatory for Women and Children continue but have limited influence

¹¹ Women in Law and Development for Africa (WiLDaF) <http://www.hri.ca/partners/wildaf/prog/adv.shtml>

¹² See communiqué in Journal l'Essor N°15818 du 30 octobre 2006 <http://justicemali.org/divers415.htm>

¹³ The Family Code was passed in neighbouring Morocco in 2006 after 50 years of struggle, see Leila Rhiw (2006) 'La Code de Famille au Maroc: enjeu des luttes des femmes', in *Transversales* http://grit-transversales.org/dossier_article.php3?id_article=141

¹⁴ See Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) (2000) *Women in Parliament in Francophone West Africa* http://archive.idea.int/newsletters/2000_11/from_the_field_2.htm

norms'. This is a clear case of deliberate discrimination against women, despite the fact that gender equality is accepted under the Maputo protocol.¹⁵

2.2. Political participation

In the 2002 national elections, 15 women out of a total of 147 deputies were elected (10%) and 4 women were appointed government ministers in a cabinet of 28 (15%).¹⁶ Ratios were even worse in the 2004 municipal elections: 705 women were elected as community councillors out of a total of 10,733 (6.5%) and only seven women mayors out of 700 (1%) were appointed.

Prior to both sets of elections, projects were carried out by national and international non-governmental organisations to train women leaders and promote women in politics. For example, WINROCK¹⁷ developed a comprehensive pack of training materials for potential women leaders in the run-up to the 2004 campaign. Activities initiated by CARE-Mali in the Bankass region (*le pays Dogon*) in 2004 included awareness-raising with both men and women; encouragement of women to stand as candidates and use their vote wisely; convocation of all village chiefs and party leaders to place women in the electoral lists; use of the local radio station to remind women to pick up their own voting card. This effort resulted in the election of 32 women councillors and 2 women mayors.

Women have been involved in the democratic process in other ways. Female paralegals trained in the pastoralist development programme in Mopti¹⁸ helped with information campaigns to explain the local tax system prior to the municipal elections in 2004 and also worked as polling station officials. Vice-president of the independent state watchdog for decentralisation¹⁹ at the time was a woman, Nina Walet, and so was the President of the Electoral Commission, Mme Bandiagara.

However, these are independent small-scale and geographically restricted initiatives or exceptional cases rather than being rooted in any kind of sustained, coherent government-led policy and practice, for which legislation is needed. In fact, in the case of Kidal, Nina Walet won the mayoral election in 2004 but her appointment was never ratified by the state because of resistance from the (men of the) wealthy *de facto* ruling family.²⁰ There are at least two other cases where women mayors were forced out of office and anecdotal evidence of the difficulties faced by women both as mayors and as councillors in carrying out their duties because of minority opposition and (male) undermining tactics.

The need for on-going support for women in politics at all levels and at all stages in the process, including after election, has been recognised by women's advocacy groups. In preparation for the 2007 elections, a higher level of coordination was achieved through a cross-party coalition of women politicians, who were successful in bringing the bill on quotas to the general assembly. In January 2007, they organised a national workshop with the

¹⁵ Irungu Houghton (2006) 'Reviewing the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa', in *Pambazuka News*, 24 May 2006 http://www.newsfromafrica.org/newsfromafrica/articles/art_10688.html

¹⁶ This may be similar to other francophone African countries which tend to have fewer women parliamentarians than anglophone neighbours - but with the exception of Rwanda. See 'Rwandan women legislators start revolution from above', *Afrol News*, 17 November 2003 <http://www.afrol.com/articles/15831>

¹⁷ Winrock-Mali (2005) *Manuel de Formation. Femmes et Gouvernance* (Module II Résolution des Conflits, Négociation, Plaidoyer), Bamako

¹⁸ Patricia Daniel (2005) *La participation des femmes dans les activités de Sahel Eco / Eveil*

¹⁹ Le Haut Conseil des Collectivités Territoriales

²⁰ Interview, October 2006

support of donor agencies to review the obstacles facing women's democratic participation and to develop strategies for the future.²¹

In April 2007 there was a woman presidential candidate,²² Mme Aminata Sidibé, a well-known academic and environmental activist, inspired to stand by the activities on 8th March International Women's Day with its focus on 'women's emergent participation as a key factor in development'. As a late contender who was only able to draw on the support of a network of Malian women working for international agencies, her candidacy was not to be expected to be a serious challenge to that of the incumbent president Touré and his well-greased campaigning machine. Nevertheless she did demonstrate that there are competent women willing and able to occupy high positions.

More disappointing were the results from the parliamentary elections in July. There were 227 women candidates out of 1,408 (16%) and none of them were elected in the first round, leaving only 26 to 'save Mali's honour' in the second round. Predictions that the number of female deputies would be halved in the new assembly were found to be too pessimistic: 15 women were finally elected, the same as the outgoing parliament.²³ Despite women's hard work over the five-year interval, nothing had changed.

A number of factors militate against women candidates, not least the ethos of coalition politics in Mali, which voters increasingly perceive to be cynical and corrupt.²⁴ Possibly one reason why men are against more women in government is that "*their presence would bring scruples back into public life and rehabilitate politics in the eyes of citizens for whom 'democracy' has become devalued,*" according to Bintou Sanankoua,²⁵ secretary general of the network of African women ministers and parliamentarians and former deputy in Mali. Indeed, the ombudsman's report for 2006 revealed that 103 billion West African francs (more than £103 billion) had been 'lost' that year through government corruption.

It remains to be seen whether, with longer time for preparation, the women's platform will be more successful in the 2009 local elections.

²¹ Workshop on the political participation of women in Mali, January 2007

http://initiatives.net.ml/article.php3?id_article=786

²² Not the first time this happened. Hawa Sanago Sidibé stood in the previous presidential elections in 2002

²³ Including one independent, Haïdara Ichata Cissé from the northern Bourèm constituency. See 'Mali: The Advice I Give Women Is to Leave Hang-Ups Behind', *Inter Press Service* (Johannesburg) 3 October 2007.

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200710030678.html?page=2>. Cissé is the only independent woman legislator in West Africa

²⁴ See Patricia Daniel (2007) 'Democracy in Mali: the President and the Prostitute', on

<http://patriciadaniel.blogspot.com/2007/07/democracy-in-mali-president-and.html>

²⁵ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/42024743@N00/162880888/in/set-72157594159412788/>

2.3. Socio-economic status

Women's position in the public domain is closely related to their economic status. Almost without exception, women in Mali lack real economic independence. This is because of the continuation of customary practices and the inequitable treatment of women relating to marriage, inheritance, property, especially house and land, which are usually forfeit in divorce along with child custody. The traditional system whereby the family operates as a cohesive and supportive economic unit has certain social advantages. However, it is also a system which treats women (and their children) as the chattels of their own parents, husband, parents- and brothers-in-law. Other abuses of women are closely related to the marriage process. Female excision, still at a rate of 98% in Mali, is executed by women and insisted on by prospective mothers-in-law, as the only real power they have in society. The polygamy rate is estimated at 28%: the practice often involves the marrying-off of young girls (under 16) to a much older husband. The rate of domestic violence is unknown, being tolerated as 'normal practice' although it is against the written law.²⁶

The issue of official land ownership has been widely recognised as a key issue in women's emancipation.²⁷ Yet legal rights start at a much more basic level. Many women in Mali are not legal citizens. Citizenship registration requires a birth certificate, which needs to be paid for and is therefore a process often carried out for boys but not for girls. A birth certificate is necessary for entry into secondary education, registering as a voter or a candidate, and for starting up a business with a bank loan. Most marriages are carried out under *shariah* law but a civil marriage certificate can include a no-polygamy clause, which protects the woman's rights if her husband divorces her (which he has to do if he wants to marry another woman). A will drawn up by the husband can also protect his wife's property rights when he dies.

However, although the written law itself does not discriminate against them, women have to be pro-active in getting to know about and asserting their rights, a process which in turn requires confidence-building through moral and practical support.²⁸ In addition, the legal system is well-known to be slow and expensive and is often cited as a cause of conflict. Women face social stigma over divorce, the decision to remain single, or alternative sexuality and many prefer to stick with the traditional system rather than become social outcasts.

Economic dependence also limits a woman's freedom of movement and expression— she is not expected to speak out in the public domain and has to seek permission to travel outside the village. Before attending a literacy class or checking her rights, she is expected to carry out her 'household duties.' These include her crucial contribution to the household economy: collecting firewood, fetching water, farming, market gardening, work in the informal sector selling produce or services. Statistics are not kept for these activities, but they constitute an estimated 80% of women's labour.

The state has encouraged the formation of women's associations in every community. It is important to highlight the positive short-term gains of this in terms of increased self-confidence, mutual trust and support between women. However, the constitutionalisation process is lengthy, expensive, requires the development of new skills such as literacy and numeracy among the committee and the contracting of a lawyer to produce a document in

²⁶ US Department of State (2005) *Mali, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2004*, Washington: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

²⁷ See 'Problématique de l'accès des femmes à la terre en Afrique de l'Ouest et dans le monde', workshop report from the polycentric World Social Forum, Bamako 2006

http://initiatives.net/ml/article.php?id_article=523&var_recherche=femmes+CSLP Women's lack of property rights also intersect with other problems, such as HIV/AIDS, see International Center for Research on Women (2006) http://www.icrw.org/docs/2006_proprgthsinfobull.pdf

²⁸ Coalition des Droits et Citoyenneté des Femmes (2004) *Recueil de Décisions de Justice 1998-9. Jurisdictions de Ségou, Mopti et Kayes*, Bamako: CECI / ACDI

French, which most members are unable to read. After become legally constituted, the group is left asking 'what now?' since access to funding, loans and grants is severely limited. The micro-enterprise plans which have been drawn up in the process tend to relate to traditional activities (for example, crafts) rather than encouraging more innovative, genuinely enterprising schemes. Micro-credit programmes, if available, have led to a downward spiral of debt so women are now reluctant to use this option²⁹, although an alternative working example is that of a UNV project involving a community-run credit union in *le pays Dogon*.

The original concept behind women's associations was the local management of a government donated community multi-platform (a diesel-operated engine which performs a variety of laborious tasks like grinding and pounding which are normally carried out by women) but lack of funding means this has not become a reality for every community. Often the women's group acts simply as the 'mill committee' in charge of a small hand mill. Both women's advocacy groups and state officials recognise that this association process has been unstrategic, leading neither to economic nor social empowerment for women nor making a marked difference to the community.³⁰

In the much smaller, formal employment sector, UNDP estimates women earn 60% the salary of men. High-profile professional women are still expected to carry out their household duties and are also subject to social stigma, for example around divorce, and to those subtle social restrictions which tell a woman - however smart she is - that it is 'not her place' to be independent and successful.

2.4. Education and health

Key areas identified for women in the Millennium Development Goals, access to education and better health are fundamental for their increased involvement in public life. However, according to the 2006 UNDP human development index, Mali has slipped from third to second bottom place in the world (175 out of 177). The government officially contested the placement, quoting the progress that had been made under Touré's first term as regards the decentralisation process, with communities taking responsibility for their own development planning and the construction of local primary schools and health centres. While these achievements are visible, their impact will take some time to manifest themselves in the statistics – which are still not easy to collect.

The adult literacy rate (above 15 years) is estimated at 12% for women and 28% for men. Primary school enrolment has increased, but is still not universal with the recent enrolment rate for girls estimated as 75% that of boys, while only 35% of girls are enrolled in secondary education. Families still do not recognise the value of investment in girls' education and even girls who have studied up to grade six or seven (end of primary) are likely to be sent away from home to work in exploitative conditions as domestic servants, agricultural labourers or prostitutes to save up money for their trousseau, both in Mali and in neighbouring countries like Guinea (or even further afield, in Europe).³¹

Educational attendance and achievement is affected by poor health as well as parental attitudes. Save the Children Fund's survey of the state of the world's mothers in 2005 placed Mali last. Fertility rate is high with 6 to 7 births per woman, reflecting limited use of or access to contraception (in rural areas 5%) and lack of choice by women as regards when and how

²⁹ Interview with Kané Nana Sanou, Présidente, Groupe Pivot Droit et Citoyenneté, December 2005

³⁰ [Interviews with CAFO and DNCT](#)

³¹ Human Rights Watch (2007) Bottom of the Ladder. Exploitation and abuse of girl domestic workers in Guinea <http://hrw.org/reports/2007/guinea0607/>

intercourse takes place. The maternal mortality rate is 1 woman in a 1000 (Mali's own estimate is 6 in 10,000).

Underage pregnancies are common, which, combined with the poor health and limited life choices of young mothers, results in a continuing cycle of vulnerability. Infant mortality rate among the poorest families is 1 in 4. Poor nutrition of the mother normally means poor nutrition for the child in infancy. In addition the practice of rapid consecutive pregnancies means that the mother stops breast-feeding the first child too early: it is the older sibling, not the new baby who dies.³²

The practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) causes problems in childbirth, leading to obstetric fistula and incontinence.³³ FGM has lifelong effects on women's general health and sexuality. It is encouraging to see public debate about FGM in Mali, raising awareness about its impact and alerting young girls to their rights in the matter. There are successful community initiatives led by international NGOs like Plan, local events supported by elected officials, private radio broadcasts and sermons by Muslim leaders. However, this has also led parents to have their baby daughters circumcised before they reach the age of resistance. Additionally, there has been little action from central government (despite a commitment on paper to eradication of FGM). As Equality Now argues, the 'cutting' may be done by women, but it is condoned by men as one means of keeping women in their place.³⁴

2.5. Vulnerability

Like other countries in the Sahel belt, Mali is subject to regular natural shocks. Since 1972, it has suffered acute food and nutritional crises about every ten years, endangering the lives and health of the population and impeding development. This became more extreme in 2004-5 with the plague of locusts. Annually, there is a dry or 'lean' season - which traditional populations used to survive through storing grain, smoking fish and fattening their cattle in advance. The country also sees annual flooding of the river Niger and in 2007 particularly heavy rainfall meant greater flooding than usual. Climate change, as a result of and in addition to encroaching modernity, has tended to exacerbate the problems caused by natural shocks while reducing people's capacity to overcome them. Pastoralism -once a viable livelihood proved to be environmentally beneficial – has been eroded as a way of life.

Structural and cultural factors need to be addressed as well as environmental issues.³⁵ There is increasing recognition that short-term emergency responses mounted by the international community do not equip families to cope with future shocks.³⁶ Such responses tend instead to divert funding away from long-term development initiatives and undermine the existing gains of these programmes. In the process, emergency responses help to promote an image of African inadequacy among western audiences while creating a local culture of dependency. However, as the World Disaster Report 2004 highlights, survival depends on community resilience. In Mali this is compromised by poor access to basic services, lack of economic alternatives and population increase (resulting in large numbers of young children).

³² A United Nations Volunteers (UNV) project has developed a system of training local health workers to support family health. (*Impact assessment workshop report*, UNV, Bamako, January 2006)

³³ A global campaign, led by UNFPA, is helping to prevent fistula, treat affected women, and support women after surgery.

³⁴ Open meeting of the Fund for Grassroots Activism to end Female Genital Mutilation, Nairobi, January 2007 http://www.equalitynow.org/english/pressroom/press_releases/fgmfund_20070122_en.html

³⁵ Oxfam, *2005: Year of Disasters*, ReliefWeb, 18th October 2005

³⁶ Although changes in response do not occur quickly. See François Grünewald (1995) 'From prevention to rehabilitation: action before, during and after the crisis: the experience of the ICRC in retrospect', *International Review of the Red Cross*, No 306, p. 263-281

Food security, access to clean running water and adequate sanitation all impact particularly on women, not only as regards their own health, but that of their entire family.³⁷ Women carry several burdens as the family's well-being is their primary area of responsibility. Now that more households are threatened by food insecurity, women are participating in greater numbers in agricultural production.³⁸ As women invest more labour into crop cultivation for income-generation, this results in decreased child-care at domestic level. Women's status may improve due to their 'indispensable' financial contributions to the household. In contrast, men tend to abandon their social, community and household responsibilities when financial pressures mount, as an inverse coping strategy.

During 2005, women in Maradi, in neighbouring Niger, helped to stave off the worst of the food crisis for their communities through a savings group scheme which enabled members to save money and grain collectively over the previous few years: a good example of integrating development with social capital and traditional emergency preparedness.³⁹

In general, as the Sahel Working Group points out in recent research⁴⁰, the tools used by development agencies to assess poverty and vulnerability tend to focus purely on the economic aspect rather than a more holistic view of livelihoods. *"For example, patronage, a form of social capital rarely measured in any poverty analysis, can be an important strategy to mitigate vulnerability even among the poorest households. Social ties and relationships with other families and patrons render even very poor households less vulnerable than, for example, wealthier migrant households with no ties in the community or claims on patronage."*

This patronage tends to be, within the male-dominated society, a male system, although women do build social capital with each other and also help to consolidate all-important inter-family relations. However, female-headed households tend to be more vulnerable than male-headed households, not only based on their tangible assets but also on access to wage labour and alternative sources of income. *"Women are typically paid less than men for the same agricultural labour. Women with children to care for may be less able than their male counterparts to migrate to find work elsewhere on a temporary basis."* (op.cit)

Nonetheless, women also tend to be more creative in times of scarcity, apparently more able and willing to diversify economic activities.⁴¹ Although women bear the brunt of natural shocks, emergency planning in Mali (such as it is) is not based on any gender analysis - neither taking gendered needs into account nor considering the specific contribution that women can or do make to survival and recovery. In addition, women's general interests as regards the habitual conflicts over scarce natural resources between farming, herding and fishing groups - which become exacerbated in times of crisis - are also ignored.⁴²

³⁷ See the European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) Humanitarian Aid Decision 23 02 01, January 2006, which provided 1,250,000 euros for the prevention in West Africa of communicable diseases before they reach epidemic proportions in times of natural disasters

³⁸ See the study on Mali published by the African Women Leaders in Agriculture and the Environment <http://www.winrock.org/leadership/files/Newsltr00FINAL.pdf>

³⁹ See the report on the project set up by CARE at <http://interaction.org/newswire/detail.php?id=4260>

⁴⁰ Sahel Working Group (2007) *Beyond any drought. Root causes of chronic vulnerability in the Sahel*, London: International Institute for Environment and Development www.iied.org/mediaroom/docs/Beyond%20Any%20Drought.pdf

⁴¹ See Daniel, P. Blench RM and Hassan, U. (2003) Access Rights and Conflict over Common Pool Resources in Kebbi, Imo and Plateau States (Nigeria), unpublished report to the World Bank Post-Conflict Fund

⁴² In northern Mali, control over public wells is often dominated by armed groups. Conflict over grazing land and access to forest and water in the Mopti region has been exacerbated by large-scale (World Bank) development projects which favour settled farming communities over nomadic pastoralist groups.

3. Potential and actual conflict

3.1. Increase in inequality and its impact on youth

Despite the institutional reforms introduced through the decentralisation process, it is clear from statistics on health, education and vulnerability that conditions of life for the majority of the Malian population have not improved. Poverty, especially linked to limited natural resources subject to regular shocks, is a root cause of conflict.

Socio-economic changes since 1991 have depended on the espousal of the western liberal economic model of development, as characterised by World Bank and IMF conditionality for loans to government and inward investment of US, French and multinational companies. There was an increase in GDP from 2,222.7 million francs CFA in 2002 to 2,892.9 million in 2005.⁴³ This process has brought the semblance of prosperity to Mali with an influx of consumer goods such as vehicles and computers, enabling a lifestyle for some that lies outside the grasp of everyone else. Thus, while poverty defined narrowly in economic terms may not have got any worse, **inequality in general** has increased with a widening gap between the rich minority and the poor majority. In addition, there is a programme of large-scale infrastructure development in evidence in the capital, while progress of community-based plans in rural areas is much slower and less obvious.

This situation has also resulted in the erosion of social capital, in particularly the traditional social order, once Mali's stock in trade for conflict prevention. Malian society is based on a complex hierarchy taking in family name, age, education, occupation or profession, level of responsibility and comparative wealth. Traditionally it is important for every Malian to be able to locate themselves within this hierarchy in relation to other individuals, in order to identify the level of deference due (either to self or to the other) and thus maintain peaceful relations. Under this system, the traditional village chiefs, however poor in economic terms, were treated with respect by all. Increasingly this order of social respect is being lost, in particular among young people who are seduced by unrealistic aspirations of material gain in a modern consumer society and motivated by a 'get rich quick' mentality.

Since an estimated 47% of the population is under the age of 14, the impact of socio-economic changes on Mali's youth is a particular cause for concern. There is disillusionment with the decentralisation process, linked to a lack of understanding of the process and what gains it may bring. The under-resourced education system, still based on the French model and geared to employment in the civil service, is inappropriate for Mali's needs.⁴⁴ Young people tend to leave school without the necessary qualifications for a palatable profession and at the same time have become too arrogant to go back to work on the land. Unemployment in rural areas results in urban drift (known locally as 'the exodus')⁴⁵ and migration further afield of young people in search of new economic choices, since Mali still lacks an adequate system of vocational training and apprenticeships.

The traditional social order may not have advantaged girls and women, keeping them socially separate, economically dependent and creating divisions between them through the practice of polygamy. However, the current socio-economic climate provides no better opportunities for most. Due to urban growth, modernisation and the erosion of social capital, girls are now unprotected when they go to the city to work, whereas before they would stay

⁴³ See Vérificateur Général du Mali, *Rapport Annuel 2006*. [CFA is the regional currency tied to the French franc.](#)

⁴⁴ See John Wood (2005) *Evaluation of UNESCO support to national planning for Education for All (EFA) Synthesis Report*, London: Education for Change. Also Patricia Daniel (2005) *Burkina Faso Country Case Study*. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001451/145188e.pdf>

⁴⁵ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=74772>

with relatives or community contacts. When they migrate (often illegally trafficked) to neighbouring countries and to Europe (Spain and France) as girlfriends, wives, servants, low-paid service staff or prostitutes, they live even more isolated lives, unaware of their rights, subject to abuse and exploitation.^{46 47}

3.2. Factors contributing to potential conflict

3.2.1. 'Le pays transfrontalier'⁴⁸

The ECOWAS protocol for the free movement of peoples aims to promote harmonious and mutually beneficial social, cultural and economic relations across West Africa.⁴⁹ Given that Mali shares borders with seven of its neighbours, the concept of a region without national boundaries can have both positive and negative aspects. Mali has established cross-border committees with the dual aim of preventing conflict and promoting communal development in cross-border zones. There tend to be close ethnic, social and family ties which women are actively involved in maintaining – through regular attendance at markets (to buy and sell) births, weddings and funerals.⁵⁰ However, lack of money for any development of these denuded and isolated potential 'economic zones' means that in times of environmental crisis, cross-border conflict over scarce resources is likely. And in between times, cross-border herder-farmer disputes regularly occur, even though similar groups share common needs and interests.

Despite cross-border collaboration between civil authorities and security forces, there are clearly problems in overseeing the 7,420 kms of 'porous border' - which allows ease of transit for a range of semi-legal and illegal activities. In other words, while maintaining neighbourly contact, Mali has become both a backyard and a corridor for traffickers, mercenaries, terrorists and other opportunists. The increase of cross-border truck-stops adds to the problem as these tend to encourage a rise in prostitution, alcohol-related violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS.⁵¹

In the attempt to develop a coordinated approach to common problems, Mali has promoted a number of bilateral or trilateral agreements with neighbouring countries, for example to address child trafficking or control access rights for pastoralists. There are also sub-regional initiatives to develop locust emergency preparedness⁵² and common strategies for dealing with drought and desertification (CILSS).⁵³

As a landlocked country, Mali needs agreements with her neighbours to enable access to sea-ports for the import and export of goods. This can sometimes mean using access

⁴⁶ Emily Delap, Boureima Ouedraogo, and Bakary Sogoba (2006) *Developing alternatives to the worst forms of child labour in Mali and Burkina Faso*, Save the Children

⁴⁷ There has always been a tradition of migration, for example from the region of Niore, and in fact Mali's GDP depends on migrants sending home money to families and communities on a regular basis. Legal migration to France, the former colonial power, has now become more difficult due to the introduction of restrictions by the French government. This has led to an increase in illegal migration through the Canary Islands and fatalities on the route.

⁴⁸ The cross-border country: see the WABI Initiative (West African regional integration) of ECOWAS http://www.afriquefrontieres.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=53&lang=en

⁴⁹ Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) Protocol A/P. 1.5.79 See <http://www.ecowas.int/>

⁵⁰ Cross-border field visit carried out by the author to Bayes, Oula (Mali) and Di (Burkina Faso)

⁵¹ See work in Ghana by Tim Auracher et al (2006) *Enhancing district strategic HIV/AIDS plans. Experiences, lessons and recommendations*, GFA Consulting Group/ Garifa Development Associates

⁵² With the support of FAO and the World Bank

⁵³ Comité Permanent Inter-états de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel See <http://www.cilss.bf/>

through neighbouring countries currently subject to internal conflict - and the desirability of finding new, more secure routes. Furthermore, conflicts and crises occurring next door can easily overspill into Mali and have a destabilising influence.

This has been so particularly with the case of Côte d'Ivoire where conflict between rebels and government continues. Since a large number of Malians are resident in Cote d'Ivoire for work, many of the refugees of the conflict are actually Malians by descent returning to communities in Mali, placing even greater demand on limited resources.⁵⁴ Whether refugees or returnees, the children need to be (re) integrated, fed, housed, clothed, educated, inoculated. Because of their experience of living in a conflict situation they are often seen as a disruptive influence on local children, showing lack of respect, bad behaviour, violence and susceptibility to crime. At the same time, these children can more easily become victims of abuse and exploitation.

3.2.2. Islam

Similarly, religion can have positive and negative effects. Islamic leaders and teachers are traditionally held in high respect and seen to have substantial influence in conflict situations, for example in cases of domestic violence. They are perceived as speaking the truth and so people listen to them; their intervention is accepted whereas that of politicians is mistrusted. Religious leaders have a strong presence at the grassroots as well as a well-established network of communication at local and national level. Religious leaders thus have an important role to play in informing gender attitudes. Through community radio, the numerous Islamic radio stations, debates on TV and during the Friday sermon, they have the opportunity (which some use) to raise awareness about key problems such as FGM, HIV/AIDS, prostitution and key solutions (including education and employment for women and girls). Grassroots leaders also take part in local and national events organised by women's and youth NGOs on issues such as FGM. Because of their representation of *shariha* law, often heavily influenced by customary practice, when religious leaders choose to uphold national legislation on women's rights, this sends a powerful message to men (and women) in their community.

Religion (notably Islam) can also be the cause of conflict (eg building a new mosque, electing a new leader). Research at community level in Mali⁵⁵ indicates that religious conflict may be more violent and more difficult to solve, sometimes requiring state intervention. One reason for this is the proliferation of Islamic sects and the migration of Muslims from outside Mali (eg Senegal, Sudan), some more fanatical than others. Another is the financing of schools and mosques from all over the Arab world and as far as Pakistan. There are political and material interests at play here rather than purely spiritual. There is also an interplay between external forces intent on leveraging control and internal actors taking advantage for political manoeuvring. Both women and men see this interplay as a (deliberate) cause of destabilisation and increased violence in Malian society.

In this context, the establishment of the independent para-statal body the *Haut Conseil Islamique* is a key conflict prevention strategy. The council aims to facilitate debate and discussion, promote intra- and inter-religious collaboration and raise awareness among the

⁵⁴ For example, an estimated 150,000 Malian refugees returned to Mali as a result of the 2004 violence, according to the Country Report on Human Rights Practices released by the US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, February 28, 2005

⁵⁵ Fondation Friedrich Ebert (2004) *Recherche à finalité pédagogique sur la prévention et la gestion des conflits communautaires au Mali*, Bamako: FES

population. Similarly, the creation of the **Imamat** aims to coordinate the leaders of all Islamic sects in Mali. The *Haut Conseil Islamique* represents Muslim interests in the development of government programmes, but the council operates on a shoe-string budget making it difficult to fulfil this remit. In addition, the lead representative runs the risk of being lobbied from all sides: not an easy position to be in. USAID has provided support for the council's activities—in fact the only bilateral partner to do so.

Mali has also led an inter-denominational initiative, a 3-day sub-regional workshop for religious leaders from seven neighbouring countries (supported by the American Cultural Centre) on the role of religion in conflict prevention and the fight against HIV/AIDS. The resulting declaration calls for greater collaboration with the media, state and other actors.^{56 57}

Nevertheless, certain Islamic influences continue to pose a threat to peace in Mali and this can be particularly seen in the Sahel.

3.2.3. The Touareg question and the north of Mali

Despite the legendary pact signed in 1992 and the annual celebration of the 'flame of peace', which commemorates the end of the northern rebellion in 1996, there remain conflicts between the Tamashek (Touareg) peoples of the north and national government.⁵⁸ After months of complaints about the marginalisation of the north, rebel army officers Fagaga and Moussa Bah, supported by the President's advisor Iyad Ag Ghaly, mobilised Touareg rebels in May 2006 to seize control of the northern garrison town of Kidal. The action over several days involved civilian casualties along with the capture of soldiers and, importantly, weapons. An agreement was mediated by Algeria in July 2006 and a commission for implementation established in September 2007.⁵⁹ However, there was another minor uprising in August 2007 led by Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, with the capture of forty soldiers, eleven people killed by anti-personnel mines and an official delegation from the ministry of Agriculture attacked.

The rest of Mali is incensed, each time an uprising occurs, by the sight of touareg lords harassing and humiliating the national security forces. However, the fact remains that a number of ordinary soldiers and officers are complicit in these forays. For the latter the motive may be power-brokering but for the former the issue tends to be economic: since soldiers' pay is poor, they have been known to relinquish their own arms for money. Additionally, Konaré's strategy of integrating the original rebels into the army has not been entirely successful, because of continuing linguistic and socio-cultural differences and the perception of favouritism.⁶⁰

The root cause of the Touareg conflict is long-term marginalisation that dates back to colonialism and the subsequent carve-up of Africa into nation states, drawing boundaries across ethnic groups. The first touareg uprising was in 1960 when the republic of Mali gained

⁵⁶ Declaration de Bamako, 06 avril 2006, Atelier des leaders religieux sur la prévention et gestion des conflits, le dialogue inter-religieux et la lutte contre le VIH/SIDA

⁵⁷ Other (civil society) coordination groups include l'**Association des Femmes Musulmanes au Mali** and l'**Association Nationale des Jeunes Musulmanes**

⁵⁸ As early as 1999 see Sophie Boukhari (2000) Mali: a flickering flame, *UNESCO Courier* http://www.unesco.org/courier/2000_01/uk/dossier/txt06.htm

⁵⁹ *Accord d'Alger pour la restauration de la paix, de la sécurité et le développement dans la région de Kidal*, signed 4th July 2006 Despite the agreement to jointly guard the border against banditry and (drug) trafficking, Ibrahim Ag Bahanga, Iyad Ag Ghaly and other ex-war lords from the 1990s are allegedly responsible for running those very activities.

⁶⁰ Lieutenant Ibrahim Diarra (2006) *La flamme de la paix du Mali, 10 ans apres: bilan de la reinsertion des anciens rebelles*, Bamako: Centre de Documentation des Opérations pour le Maintien de la Paix

independence.⁶¹ Since then, the concept of an independent tamashek state cutting across the sahel belt has been regularly aired – not least in 2006 by President Gaddafi, whose short-lived consulate in Kidal was seen by some observers as a first move towards that goal. During the same period the tamashek declaration for indigenous rights was presented to the UN, arguing for the preservation of the language, culture and other rights. In August 2007, the as yet officially unrecognised Niger-Mali Touareg Alliance (ATNM) was born in conjunction with the ambushes on the military in northern Mali. As Abdoulahi Attayoub says: *“The fundamental problems are the same for all of us. Each touareg movement has discussions with its own state, but that doesn’t prevent the issue having a global dimension over and above national importance: it’s a problem tied to the survival of the touareg people.”*

At national level, their primary complaint is the slow progress of the decentralisation process, which aims to transfer resources and decision-making to community level. The considerable geographical distances between Bamako and the cities of Goa, Timbuktu and Kidal has contributed to continuing marginalisation of the north. Since Fagaga started complaining in 2005, President Touré had already expedited considerable infrastructure development in the north, including the bridge across the Niger at Goa and telecommunications in Kidal.

Some touaregs also lay claim to what they see as a fairer share of political and economic power in general. This is closely linked both to the (putative) mineral resources of the desert as well as to the Sahel’s strategic position as regards security. This is where neo-colonial interests come into play. A number of concessions for oil prospecting have been granted to western companies by the Malian government⁶² while the US run regional military manoeuvres in defence against terrorism: everyone wants a piece of the north of Mali.⁶³ Gao has become a centre for the movement of economic exiles from West Africa to Europe through Libya (via Malta or Lampedusa) Morocco or Mauritania (via the Canary Islands). And while rebel chiefs complain about encroaching modernity, they are also the first to profit from its economic opportunities, thus widening the gap between wealthy and poor.⁶⁴

This complex range of factors in the north contribute to the threat of conflict and increasing vulnerability in a region where it is already difficult to deliver humanitarian aid in times of natural crisis. The majority of the population would prefer to live in peace, especially the women. Despite their celebrated role in brokering peace in the 1990s, it seems that tamashek women’s involvement in decision-making has decreased with decentralisation rather than the inverse. Jeremy Keenan has observed over time that the strong public role of tamashek women in traditional culture has been eroded.⁶⁵ In really remote nomadic communities the culture continues⁶⁶ but nearer to the regional capital it is now common for women only to speak up in the absence of men.

Within the formal political process, women in the north have a particularly difficult time in being taken seriously as electoral candidates. Those who do succeed face opposition and discrimination.⁶⁷ Over these last two years of uprisings, women – for example those in local branches of the national organisation MNFPUN - complain that they have not been consulted

⁶¹ Abdoulahi Attayoub, president of Temoust, which represents the touareg diaspora in Europe, interviewed in Afrik.com, 31st August 2007 <http://www.afrik.com/article12377.html>

⁶² Valentine Lescot (2005) *Mali, Producteur de pétrole en 2008 ?* AfrikEco.com http://www.afrikeco.com/articles/economie.php3?id_article=8079

⁶³ Daniel, P. (2006) Mali: everyone’s favourite destination, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/XXX>

⁶⁴ However, bent on their own vision of autonomy, the touaregs have resisted overtures from Algerian and Moroccan Al-Qaeda groups

⁶⁵ Jeremy Keenan <http://www.huss.ex.ac.uk/iais/staff/keenam/index.htm>

⁶⁶ As one young French aid worker described his surprise: ‘it was the women who held the floor in the group discussion, they even criticised, even laughed at, their husbands’ contributions!’

⁶⁷ Although Nina Walet was elected mayor with a large majority in 2004 (consisting mainly of women voters) she was never confirmed in the position by the state governor because of pressure from Kidal’s ruling families: in the end she had to accept the role of councillor

or invited to take part in the negotiations. The commission set up to administer the 2006 treaty – a process on paper committed to consulting the whole range of stakeholders - had no women members. This is not for lack of interested women: a workshop held in Timbuktu had around 100 women leaders discussing the need for a peace and development network in the north.⁶⁸

NGO workers observe that increased fundamentalism has affected the freedom of girls and women, with a decrease in school attendance and more limited social mobility. At the same time, poverty impacts more on women and one of Gaddafi's (short-lived) initiatives in 2006 was funding for women's income generating enterprises. The garrison town of Kidal is home to hundreds of girls from the Dogon country working as servants and prostitutes. The result is a high number of street children, along with cast-off army wives with no means of support. Women and children were wounded in the crossfire in Kidal and Menaka in 2006. Well aware of the chain of corruption, the proliferation of small arms and gun-running, women are worried about the future, but have no way to influence the outcome. In the end, from the lords of the desert to national leaders, from north to south and east to west, from causes to consequences or motives to rewards – the story of the rebellion of the Sahel is purely a male agenda. If any women benefit from the agreements, it will be entirely by accident.

3.3. Early warning indicators

In Bamako, November 2005, Marie Tamoifa Nkom, a young lawyer from Cameroon was chosen as the spokesperson for the first ever African Youth Forum. The manifesto she presented to the Heads of State of Africa and France in December 2005 highlighted the urgent need to address the issues of youth unemployment, HIV/AIDS, migration and the involvement of young people in democratic processes. Her address ended with the following warning: '*There is a clear relationship between neglect of youth issues and increasing conflict. If politics don't take care of youth, the wind of change will lead youth to take care of politics.*'⁶⁹

Indications of unrest among youth (young men) are of concern to women's and human rights representatives in Mali. Riots after an international football match in 2005, including violence and rape were unprecedented: "something must be bubbling underneath, unless these were deliberately provoked". Strikes and demonstrations by university students have been met with force rather than firmness, indicating a deterioration of relations between state and youth. In another case in 2005 when youth in Bamako used violence to protest against the local authorities taking away their football pitch, both army and police were brought in, escalating the situation. After the 2006 attempt at rebellion in the north, commentators in the Malian press took the opportunity to criticise the middle class members of government 'making sure they are comfortable at the expense of youth, who are without present and without future.'⁷⁰ Indeed, women in Kidal also held a demonstration to protest against the lack of opportunity for their sons (sic) in the army.

Student representatives do participate in discussions on government programmes, though this is limited to one or two individuals from the main student organisations.⁷¹ So far, discussions have not been able to address in practical terms the importance of the socio-economic integration of young women and men into the modern state of Mali, although there

⁶⁸ 10th July 2006, organised by the Soroptimist Club, Timbuktu

⁶⁹ *L'Observateur*, 5 Dec 2005. See also the official website of the 23rd France-Africa Summit at http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/pays-zones-geo_833/afrique_1063/sommets-afrique-france_326/xxiiieme-conference-bamako-3-4.12.05_23786.html

⁷⁰ Mme Camara Fatima Sissoko, 'Un pays mal parti' in *Le Populaire*, 4 September 2006

⁷¹ For example, *le Conseil National des Jeunes de Mali*

is general awareness of the problem. The key issue is the need for development of work-related skills. Some initiatives have been tried, including a national volunteer corps (involvement of young women was limited because of the need to mobilise out of their own community). President Touré also initiated the programme to set up young men in micro-enterprise with telephone kiosks. There has been notable success in developing kitchen gardens in the Dogon country where harvesting onions three times a year has raised prosperity and encouraged young people to stay on the land. Small-scale tourist projects in the area have also provided employment for both young women and men.⁷²

The national tourism sector⁷³ already does offer opportunities for young women and men to gain training and take up interesting and responsible jobs. This includes a cadre of tourism guides (all male with a few exceptions in the capital) who undergo annual retesting to check their competence. However, (not-for-profit) investment is needed by donors for both the private and public sector to create employment and apprenticeships on a sufficient scale. The need for collaboration with koranic schools and Islamic leaders at each level in key areas of development - girls' education, women's participation, FGM, youth employment, behaviour of young men – is strongly indicated.

Fig 2. Summary of early warning indicators

1. Increase in prostitution
2. Increase in child labour
3. Increase of young men involved in criminal activity
4. Increase in violence, especially against women and girls – at home, at 'work', in the street
5. Erosion of social capital, breakdown in traditional social relations
6. Increase in natural resource-based conflict (and its impact on women and children)
7. Conflict between youth and the police
8. Increase in fundamentalism
9. Increase in (illegal) migration
10. Increase in circulation of small arms
11. Increase in inter-ethnic tensions
12. Increase in refugees

⁷² Both these initiatives promoted by development agencies, for example DED and UNV

⁷³ developed by Mme Aminata Barry Touré, former minister of Culture and Tourism, now leader of the Coalition for Alternative Development

4. Factors contributing to stability

Despite the problems identified in the previous section, stability in Mali is maintained at present by a number of factors: these relate in some way to social capital and traditional mechanisms for conflict management. As mentioned above, mechanisms can have both positive and negative impacts.

4.1. Civil society involvement is encouraged by government

Women's associations at grassroots level have been encouraged by the state and there are a number of officially recognised women's umbrella organisations working to promote women's status at a national level. These include CAFO⁷⁴ which coordinates the grassroots associations; AMJ⁷⁵ the association for women lawyers; GPDHC⁷⁶ which promotes human rights for women and children; an umbrella organisation for NGOs opposing violence against women; MNFPUN⁷⁷ which has a focus on the role of women in peace building; and the national chapter of FEMNET.⁷⁸ Such organisations are regularly invited to participate in multi-stakeholder events to discuss national strategic planning and progress, along with leading Islamic coordinating groups, trade unions and youth organisations. Through these events civil society groups also develop links with bilateral donors (known as PTF or technical and financial partners) and multilateral agencies such as UNDP. Civil society was involved, for example, in the 2005 national agreement for "peaceful and achieving schools"⁷⁹. At the end of 2006 the same range of organisations were represented in the national review of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (see section 5).

However, in reality it is a small number of educated middle-class professional women, based in the capital, who are able to take part in dialogue at national level and in general, civil society tends to be represented by 'the usual suspects.' Women's organisations continue to feel frustrated in their efforts to become more strategic politically, because of insufficient, insecure funding. So far they have been unsuccessful in 'changing the rules of the game' in favour of women.⁸⁰ Overall, civil society does not play a strong united oppositional role vis-à-vis the state since the majority of groups are dependent on (and in competition for) government and donor funding. Additionally, despite the good intentions of multi-stakeholder dialogue and the resulting written and signed agreements, there are still major problems as regards implementation and monitoring, due to a general lack of strategic, financial and technical capacity. In fact, more energy seems to be taken up by discussions of new programmes than in putting them into action - one reason why citizens are still awaiting radical changes.

A prime example is the national programme for justice, set up through multi-level consultation in 1999, which still has to prove itself. The Ministry of Justice holds the annual democratic space EID⁸¹ where civil society has the opportunity to raise questions on the administration of justice and human rights in the country. In 2005 watchdog groups for women and children took an active part in the debates, after which the jury recommended the abolition of the death sentence. However, for the rest of the year, there is widespread

⁷⁴ la Coordination des Associations Féminines

⁷⁵ l'Association des Juristes Maliennes

⁷⁶ le Groupe Pivote pour le Droit et la Citoyenneté

⁷⁷ Mouvement National des Femmes pour La Paix et l'Unité Nationale.

⁷⁸ FEMNET is the pan-African women's advocacy group, its current President is Malienne. It contributes to debate and is recognised at regional level by the African Union as well as by national government.

⁷⁹ L'Accord de Partenariat pour une Ecole Apaisée et Performante

⁸⁰ See discussion of this concept in Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay and Shamin Meer (2004) *Creating voice and carving space: redefining governance from a gender perspective*, Amsterdam: KIT

⁸¹ L'Espace d'Interpellation Démocratique <http://www.justicemali.org/divers372.htm>

dissatisfaction with the judicial system, which is slow-moving and expensive for plaintiffs. The system appears to favour police (and politicians) in bed with criminals (traffickers, pimps, gun-runners, black marketeers) rather than being concerned with the rights of ordinary citizens. With bribery among all parties a commonplace, “society is held to ransom” by the judiciary, as one informant put it. These are additional difficulties for women attempting to take advantage of the rule of law to establish their rights and, indeed, women are in the forefront of campaigning against corruption.⁸²

4.2. Peace organisations are involved in national human security initiatives

Women’s peace groups such as MNFPUN and AFIP⁸³ participate in national and regional forums, for example the ECOWAS civil society forum in December 2006 and the WDF? workshop on the R2P framework. Women are also key drivers in other organisations such as RANCPAL and CONASCIPAL⁸⁴. The fight to curb the supply of **small arms**⁸⁵ has been particularly a focus for women peace activists, as they have seen the impact of increasing social violence on their own family and community, among their own sons and daughters. Mali has officially fronted the UNDP moratorium on small arms in sub-regional level forums but this has not been sufficient to solve the problem on the ground. Although women’s historic role in peace-keeping is always highlighted officially, especially as regards their work in the north, women in these organisations still feel that their potential for intervention is not taken seriously and that structures are lacking for them to be properly integrated into peace-building processes. In fact, from evidence of the events in the north during 2006, women’s active involvement in these processes has actually dramatically decreased. Local chapters of women’s collaboration frameworks⁸⁶ - which were so effective in helping to resolve earlier conflicts - are no longer called on for mediation skills. Lack of reliable resourcing also impedes their pro-active engagement.

The Malian Red Cross is the main national civil society organisation which provides support in emergencies (natural or human). The Red Cross has a participatory process for evaluating the vulnerabilities and capacities of communities and for subsequent development of local contingency plans as regards action by the state and the community itself. At the time of emergency, the state and the decentralised authorities are responsible for coordination of activity, although the numerous international organisations tend to oversee the delivery of their own humanitarian aid. Unlike the Red Cross, the state does not have its own contingency plans nor an early warning monitor and the result tends to be a lack of coordination between national and international non-governmental organisations. The latter have come under criticism for a too narrow focus on humanitarian support, creating a culture of dependency and undermining long-term development programmes which could help to alleviate the worst effects of natural emergencies.

Women Red Cross volunteers tend to play a traditional role through ‘mothers’ clubs’ providing welcome, food and lodging for refugees – or raising money through activities such as soap-making, tie-dyeing cloth or kitchen gardening. They also carry out awareness-raising on FGM and HIV/AIDS with young (displaced) people. Activities are normally carried out in

⁸² See ‘Vingt mesures pour contrer la corruption’, report in *Les Echos*, 12 January 2005, of the WAODEG-Mali seminar which drafted twenty anti-corruption measures to deal with wayward politicians and financial delinquency, including training for magistrates and judicial police, according to the local president, Mme Diallo Oumou Traoré

⁸³ MNFPUN - Le Mouvement National des Femmes pour la Paix et l’Unité Nationale; AFIP – L’Association des Femmes pour Initiatives de la Paix

⁸⁴ RANCPAL -Le Réseau d’Action National contre la Prolifération des Armes Légeres; CONASCIPAL - La Coalition Nationale de la Société Civile pour la Paix et la Lutte contre la Prolifération des Armes Légères

⁸⁵ See also *Le Volontariat*, la Croix Rouge Malienne, No 8, 2005

⁸⁶ *cadres de concertation*

the locality, given the social restrictions on mobility for married women, which means that very few female volunteers are to be found on any national emergency task groups.⁸⁷

4.3. Regional initiatives contribute to confidence building

Because of a relative lack of security problems, Bamako has become a popular conference venue for 'talking peace' and 'talking development'. To name just a few events: the African Forum of Parliamentarians for Education 2004, the former African leaders initiative 2005, the first African youth summit 2005, the France-Africa summit 2005, the World Social Forum polycentric event 2006. There are few women in these official activities though more are involved in regional or international civil society events like the youth summit, alternative summits, the social forums, including the World Food Sovereignty Forum (Nyéléni) 2007.

Additionally, Mali has become a centre for regional peace-building and security initiatives. These include the Peace School now relocated from Koulikoro to Bamako. The school, supported by a number of bilateral donors, is a regional centre for training for African peace-keepers and UN mission observers, with input from both Canadian and French military trainers. Because of the problems with porous borders in West Africa, Mali has also been the location for annual military training run by the US involving armed forces from nine neighbouring countries.⁸⁸ This could also be a cause of rising tensions in the Sahel, as discussed above. Women play only a small part in military collaboration because of their limited numbers in the sector.

4.4. The decentralisation process aims to promote collective decision-making

Decentralisation aims to promote participatory democracy, providing the structures for grassroots representation and planning through which decisions about local development are taken and implemented by community members themselves. There are still problems in the decentralisation process, especially in the implementation phase, which involves the transfer of power, financial resources and competence from central government to the people. While communities begin to develop an understanding of their rights as citizens, they also have to adjust to new roles and relationships, as well as new areas of responsibility for which transparency and accountability are essential. A key example being the payment and use of local taxes: people need to see the system working through concrete results. Especially in isolated communities where it is more difficult to see the early benefits of decentralisation and this can be a cause of the conflict between community members and their elected officials. The current system, whereby the mayor is elected indirectly by the newly elected municipal council rather than directly by the people's vote, is also a cause of conflict as it tends to encourage bribery.

In the north, inequitable development was the cited reason for the conflict between Touareg groups and central government – and government response was on these terms (telecommunications, infrastructure). Technical support for the decentralisation process continues to be provided by donors: at some point central government is supposed to take this over. However the general perception is that the process which was initiated as a national cohesive mechanism in the early days of the post-military regime, is now a largely donor-driven process for which the present government has no real commitment. There are implications for future conflict between the people and the state. There was already evidence

⁸⁷ Discussions with Bouréma Téréta, Croix Rouge Malien

⁸⁸ In June 2005, for example, 700 US military and 3000 African military were deployed in the Flintock manoeuvres in Timbuctou

of this in the low turnout in the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2007 and in bye-elections in Mopti and Bamako the previous year.

Modern decentralisation structures have tended to erode traditional mechanisms of conflict prevention, whereby herder, farmer and fisher chiefs would sit down to discuss the use of common property resources (water, land, forest) which many perceive as being more democratic than concentrating power in one man (sic) in the role of mayor. At the same time, the new system has not substantially changed gender relations in terms of promoting a public role for women. As discussed above, only around 6% of elected local councillors are women - and, while on paper women are included in community development planning processes, in reality this is unlikely to occur without positive action being taken. However, alternative or intermediate 'third way' models have been developed by national and international organisations in an attempt to bridge the gap between traditional and modern systems. Severally known as 'frameworks of understanding', 'peace commissions' or 'natural resource management frameworks' these draw on traditional mechanisms but are also recognised under written law.

One example where this has led to greater involvement by women is the Comic Relief funded project 'Strengthening capacity for pastoralist participation' in the fifth region.⁸⁹ As part of the education arm of the project (literacy and citizenship) newly literate women went on to be included in the programme for training up local community members as paralegals - to work with villagers, village chiefs and elected officials in the non-judicial resolution of community level conflicts. Women's subsequent competence in carrying out the paralegal role was recognised publicly by their inclusion both in the communal development planning process⁹⁰ as facilitators or rapporteurs and in peace commissions or other local frameworks. They also took part in the 2004 local election process as advocates, explaining the new tax system to potential voters - or as polling station officials.

It is important to point out that women are also involved in local development in other roles, as members of the primary school parents committee or the community health brigades, actively promoting education, inoculation and information. The level of real voice or decision-making in such mechanisms may vary between communities depending on personalities. There is also the aspect that these are volunteer service positions that attract no perks. But in certain communes visited, male leaders and community members highlighted the importance of this work. While resistance by husbands and village chiefs to women's emancipation is still the norm, there are examples where the advantages for all have been recognised.⁹¹

⁸⁹ A collaboration between two national NGOs, Eveil and Sahel Eco, combining an education focus with natural resource management

⁹⁰ Plan communal de développement social, économique et culturel, PDSEC

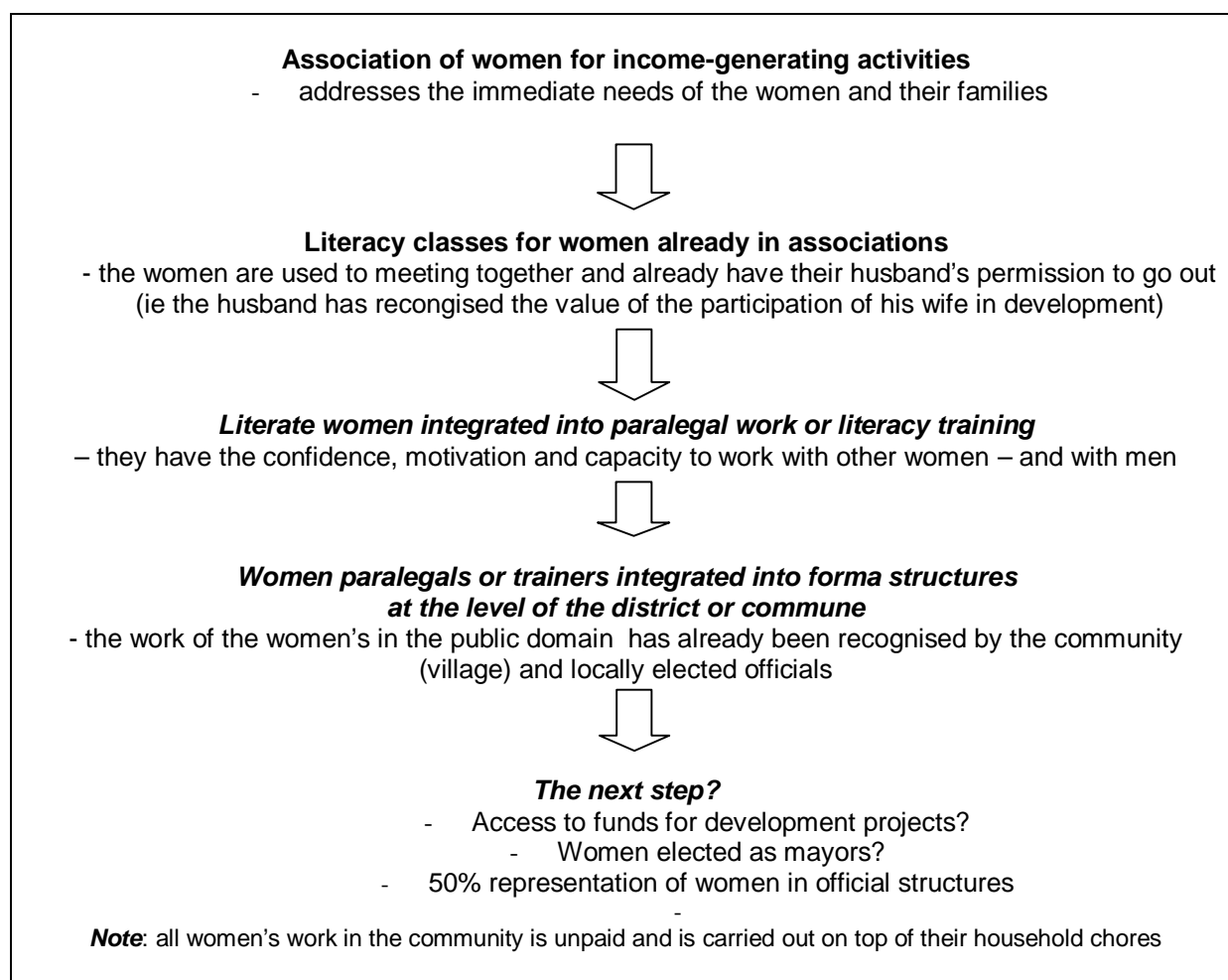
⁹¹ Also see the new Swedish funded project '*Bonne gouvernance et participation des femmes dans sept (7) pays de l'Afrique de l'ouest*' which also includes the commune (10 villages) of Yorosso where the mayor and council welcome the opportunity for women to play a full role in decision-making, to redress discrimination against women, 'right the wrongs of poverty' and have a positive impact on the community.

http://www.wildaf-ao.org/fr/article.php3?id_article=1195see

Fig. 3 Impact analysis of women's participation in literacy classes⁹²

Level	Type of impact
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Command of health and hygiene measures - Knowledge of activities such as l'embouche et le maraîchage - Ability to recognise different legal documents - Understanding of the importance of documents
Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability of women to hold meetings with men - Taking into account women's opinions
Commune	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women are members of ASACO - They have become community health volunteers - Involvement in election activities (assessors)

Fig. 4. On the road to participation⁹³



⁹² From fieldwork in Region V, discussions with women and men in Diambacourou, see Daniel and Dicko (2006)

⁹³ Patricia Daniel (2005) *La Participation des femmes dans le dans les activités de Sahel Eco / Eveil*, Research report

4.5. Education and research programmes for peace and conflict prevention

4.5.1. School level

A philosophy of peace education (perhaps related to the thinking behind the traditional conflict management mechanisms) has been developed by leading academics in Mali since the 1990s. With support from UNDP a national curriculum project 'education for a culture of peace, human rights and democracy' (ECPDHD) worked to design teaching activities and materials for primary and secondary level teachers to use in class.⁹⁴ This initiative suffered from lack of financial and human resources, taking from 1998 to 2005 to complete. Although training took place in late 2005 to develop a national cadre of trainers who could then multiply the approach, resourcing problems have so far prevented the programme from being properly rolled out.

The project aims to raise awareness and promote concrete action towards peace and democracy among young people. Materials include information on the rights of women and children⁹⁵ and the other international human rights declarations which form part of the Malian constitution. Activities include observation surveys of indicators of violence in school and in the street. Discussion topics pose fundamental questions about the challenges of development: *'Does a definition of democratic governance exist? What actions link democratic governance to political and economic planning?'*

However worthwhile the materials may be, this is clearly a long-term project which depends on teacher training for national implementation. While encouraging young people to consider their own role as citizens and as players in conflict prevention, there is also the need, as discussed above in section 3, for rapid solutions to youth unemployment.

⁹⁴ Moussa Fama Diarra et Moussa Batchily Bâ, 2004/5, *Production de Modules de Formation du Maître de l'Enseignement Fondamental / Modules de Formation en Education à la Culture de la Paix, aux Droits Humains et à la Démocratie à l'Intention des Professeurs de l'Enseignement Secondaire*, Bamako: Ministère de l'Education Nationale / Programme Des Nations Unies pour le Développement, Programme d'Appui au Système Educatif Décentralisé (PASSED-PRODEC)

⁹⁵ It is noteworthy that teaching materials used for the 2nd grade curriculum already include awareness raising about FGM

Fig 5. Observation grid for young people⁹⁶

OBSERVATION	OUI / NON NATURE / DEGRE
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Les personnes observées sont violentes dans le langage 2. Les personnes observées détruisent autour les fleurs les parterres et les objets sur leur passage 3. Les personnes observées donnent des coups à leurs camarades 4. Les personnes observées se moquent de leur camarades 5. Les personnes observées harcèlent elles leur camarades (mettre mal à l'aise en poussant hors des rangs, mots désagréables, caricature) 6. Les personnes observées intimident d'autres 7. Les personnes observées repoussent d'autres 8. Les affrontement physiques sont fréquents 9. Les bagarres opposent les personnes observées 10. Les personnes observées sont rejetées 11. Les personnes observées se moquent des autres 12. Les filles sont regroupées à part, les garçons sont regroupés à part 13. Les garçons tapent les filles, les filles tapent les garçons 	

Furthermore, Islamic leaders and teachers were not involved in the development of the ECPDHD methodology but would clearly need to be fully engaged in rolling out the programme. **Islam** itself means 'peace' and the basis of koranic education, according to the prophet Mohammed, should be the process of bringing up children to contribute to a peaceful society through respect for the rights of others and recognition of their own duties to society. In other words, the thesis is that Islamic education provides a basis for stability in the country. There is a large number of privately financed koranic schools (*medersa*), often kept open through the support of parents and communities, who make a conscious choice to have their children educated in spiritual as well as material values. Though financially autonomous, the koranic schools form part of the state education system in that they follow the same curriculum, use the same textbooks, sit the same exams and are assessed by the same Inspectorate. In addition they provide koranic instruction and Arabic.

Schools like the *Institut Islamique* in Bamako aim to promote modern technical-scientific enquiry and skills at the same time as Islamic studies. '*Religion shouldn't be a negative influence in society, to keep people down; young people need qualifications in order to become independent.*'⁹⁷ This school, which may be an exception, promotes the education of girls through sensitisation of parents. There are 50/50 girls and boys studying together in the primary section, but this ratio diminishes further up the school, in the same way it does in state schools all over Mali. Girls are encouraged to stay on to do technical training for 2 years in the Islamic Centre for Professional Training (CFPI) after which they get their diploma and are able to set up their own business and continue working even when they get married. 33% of current students in the CFPI are female.

However there are signs that elsewhere, especially in the North (where level of female literacy is even lower than the rest of the country) fundamentalist attitudes are curtailing girls' attendance at school and thus their independence and livelihood chances.

⁹⁶ Source: *Modules de Formation en Education à la Culture de la Paix, aux Droits Humains et à la Démocratie à l'Intention des Professeurs de l'Enseignement Secondaire*, Bamako: Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 2005

⁹⁷ Abdoul Aziz Yattabaré, Principal of the Islamic Institute and Islamic Centre for Professional Training

4.5.2. University and other research institutes

Dissertation topics, along with other practical research assignments, reflect a focus on stability, democracy, development and active citizenship, indicating that young people are encouraged to address issues of national importance in a creative and individual way.⁹⁸ For example, a pioneering dissertation by a female student on dysfunction within the armed forces 1991-2000 (revolts, mutinies, complaints) highlighted the problem of under-resourcing.⁹⁹ This is a key issue affecting soldiers' **rights**, that is, welfare and conditions of service, as well as the amount of training available, which also affects their **responsibilities** - in the area of human rights and international law. Another assignment, produced by a male student, looked at the perceptions of the effects of schooling on boys' and girls' behaviour and aspirations.

Other significant research has been carried out by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) using a participatory approach with a range of stakeholders in five regions¹⁰⁰ to develop a comprehensive typology of **community level conflicts** and methods of conflict resolution. Four main conflict types were identified as 1) *interest* (natural resources) 2) *instrument* (legal codes; process of decentralisation) 3) *value* (religion, conjugal, class) 4) *rule of law versus tradition*. Intra- and inter-community conflicts were included and the role of different actors was analysed (the State; decentralised authorities; communities; NGOs, agencies, projects; religious institutions). Key recommendations included: *Training* of key actors (including regional authorities¹⁰¹) as the best strategy for conflict prevention; *Translation* (vulgarisation) of key legal texts; Translation of the training manual; *Role of NGOs* both in early warning systems and training; *Coordination and networking* between different stakeholder groups especially NGOs/ CSOs.¹⁰²

However, the gender aspect is not integrated into this analytical framework. Similarly, in the follow-up training workshops, neither impact on women of conflict in general nor women's (potential) role in conflict prevention is highlighted. Conflicts around marriage customs were raised and discussed by participants in the north (Timbuktu and Gao) where conflict prevention measures suggested include: suppression of polygamy; literacy and income generation projects for women as well as vulgarisation of the Marriage Code.

The FES research perpetuates stereotypical attitudes by suggesting that women are less involved in natural resource conflicts because they do not own land. In contrast, action research carried out by local NGOs¹⁰³ presents the argument that women are both affected by and interested in natural resource conflicts but are prevented from taking part in public mechanisms for cultural and practical reasons. Confidence-building, awareness-raising and practical support (childcare, transport) are measures which enable women to participate. Natural resource networks have further highlighted the need for a proactive approach to gender equity, power-sharing and joint decision-making: '*une transformation progressive des relations sociales afin de faire disparaître les rapports de subordination, l'oppression et la*

⁹⁸ This work is carried out in FLASH: la Faculté des Langues, des Arts et des Sciences Sociales. Wider dissemination of some of the dissertations would be a useful contribution to national dialogue.

⁹⁹ Aissata Niaré, 2003, *Essai d'Analyse des Causes de Dysfonctionnement au Sein de l'Armée Malienne de 1991 à 2001*, Mémoire de Maîtrise, FLASH, Université de Bamako

¹⁰⁰ Niolo/Kayes; le Nord; Segou and Sikasso; Mopti (Delta Central); and Bamako

¹⁰¹ Préfet, sous-préfet

¹⁰² Fondation Friedrich Ebert, 2004, *Recherche à finalité pédagogique sur la prévention et la gestion des conflits communautaires au Mali*, Bamako: FES. A training module was developed and applied in 7 multi-stakeholder workshops around the country in 2004. Abdoul Aziz Diallo et Ousmane Kornio, 2004, *Synthese des Ateliers Régionaux de Formation sur la Prévention et la Gestion des Conflits Communautaires au Mali*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung / Association pour le Développement Global.

¹⁰³ Hamilton, L. et Dama, A. (2003) *Genre et gestion des conflits liés aux ressources naturelles à Niolo du Sahel, au Mali*, London : IIED Drylands Programme

violence.’¹⁰⁴ In addition, more detailed analysis of women’s role in farming and herding is needed: how do they contribute? What problems do they have? And what do women do in times of crisis as regards diversification and livelihoods?¹⁰⁵

Research on women’s rights and citizenship¹⁰⁶ indicates that most conflicts brought to court by women are related to marriage customs, divorce and property or inheritance rights. The law itself does not discriminate against women on these issues, nor do court decisions, but most women are ignorant of their rights under law and lack legal advice. Literacy, training of paralegals and support from women jurists have all been seen to help with this problem.

In fact, there is very little research carried out about women in conflict prevention and management at local community level. Women’s groups would like to see the development of indicators for this. However, funding to develop and coordinate research by a range of local actors and partners remains problematic¹⁰⁷ while national NGOs need to budget specifically in order to underpin gender assessments and carry out regular reviews with staff.¹⁰⁸

4.6. The media contributes to open debate

Freedom of the press and open debate in general are quoted as the most significant changes in human rights since 1992. In fact, freedom of the press is included in the constitution as a human right and Mali is regarded as one of the few African countries where this applies.¹⁰⁹ There are a large number of independent daily and weekly newspapers in Bamako, which freely criticise government, raising controversial social and political issues with impunity.¹¹⁰

Positive coverage of women in the press is a key indicator of attitudes about gender equality and can play an important role in influencing and informing attitudes.¹¹¹ The Malian press reports women in public positions and their activities; women candidates and their potential; women in sport and their successes; national or local events addressing those issues, such as FGM, which particularly affect women. Crimes against women are not reported as if ‘she was asking for it’ but rather focus on the aspect of justice for all. Indeed, there is little evidence of patronising women in the media or the inclusion of beauty and cooking tips: stories are respectful and serious. Although women journalists are in a minority, there are some high profile names and the press commission for the France-Africa summit in late 2005 comprised both men and women. In national television and radio women are more often

¹⁰⁴ M. Diakité et Y. Diallo (2005) *Rapport sur l’atelier de formation sur le genre et la gestion des ressources en eau*, Sévaré: GDRN5

¹⁰⁵ Patricia Daniel (2003) *Gender, Conflict and Livelihoods in Northern Nigeria*, Telford: CIDT URL

¹⁰⁶ Coalition des Droits et Citoyenneté des Femmes, (2004) *Recueil de Décisions de Justice 1998-9. Jurisdictions de Ségou, Mopti et Kayes*, Bamako: CECI / ACDI

¹⁰⁷ For example, Consortium for Development Partnerships (2005) *L’influence de la décentralisation sur la gouvernance locale en milieu rural. Proposition pour un programme de recherche 2005-2008*
CDP research proposals include : gender as a cross-cutting issue; gender-specific themes; and a quota of scholarships reserved for female students.

¹⁰⁸ P. Daniel and H. Dicko (2006) *La participation des femmes dans le développement et la démocratie. Atelier de formation pour l’équipe Eveil / Sahel Eco*, Sévaré

¹⁰⁹ For example see the UK Commission for Africa report 2005

¹¹⁰ For example, coverage of the France-Africa summit at the end of 2005 celebrated Mai’s success as regards organisation and participation but simultaneously expressed deep scepticism as to the concrete impact of the event for African development

¹¹¹ See C. Reimann (2001) *Towards Gender Mainstreaming in Crisis Prevention and Conflict Management Guidelines for the German Technical Co-operation*, Eschborn

found as presenters in the studio rather than reporters in the field or managing the production team. One exception is Lieutenant Mariam Sagaré seconded from the army since 1999 to ORTM the national news channel, as a military specialist, working in a regular news team and covering relevant stories: peace conferences and celebrations (*la Flamme de la Paix à Timbuktu*) and stories about women.

Youth issues are also discussed in the media, reflecting a similarly constructive perspective to key problems and concerns. Over the past 24 months these have included: social instability leading to crime and violence featuring young people; urban drift and youth unemployment; the retrenching of attitudes and gender inequality; sexual / reproductive health issues and relationships; sports and arts as one approach to social engagement of youth in addition to nurturing their engagement in politics.

The press, with its wide network of contacts, is quickly able to identify and report unusual activity or nascent concerns and so can play an important role in early warning. However, privately run special interest or community radio stations are recognised to be the most effective means of communication in a country where the majority of the population is illiterate and isolated. Islamic stations do contribute to promoting gender equality, for example using the Friday sermon by the imam to carry out advocacy for girls' education and the use of contraception or to preach against the practice of FGM. Other stations provide education on family health issues and women's rights or organise and broadcast debates between women or youth. Soaps operas can carry social messages, for example on cross-border trafficking, and drama sketches have been used to illustrate how to make decisions on which candidate to vote for. Some support for community radio development has been provided by international non-governmental organisations as well as USAID.¹¹² **Africare** in the north has provided training for women journalists and women as management committee members, so helping to promote positive attitudes for women's participation in local decision-making. The Africare project also shows how radio can contribute to conflict prevention, by facilitating contact with locally elected officials, strengthening inter-ethnic or inter-community relations, sharing cross-border events and information (on thefts, for example), giving early warning alerts and relieving emergencies (two-way radios can help to check if and when humanitarian aid arrives).

Recently there have been a few exceptions to the open relationship between government and the media. One was the indictment in March 2006 of Amy Sanago, editor of *L'Inter de Bamako* was convicted and fined for defamation. The case concerned an article published in February 2006, containing allegations that high-ranking politicians with the previous government were guilty of mismanagement and corruption at the National Bank for Housing.¹¹³

Another example concerns the government website set up in August 2006 to facilitate public dialogue - via an online discussion forum - about the government's handling of the uprising in Kidal. When newspapers began to complain that controversial contributions to the website were being censored, the discussion forum itself was closed down. It should be pointed out that journalists themselves can contribute to conflict: some reporting of the Kidal settlement sought to use the opportunity to undermine the president's position vis-à-vis the north - characterising it as favouritism of the Touraeg people and so fanning the flames of ethnic rivalry in other parts of the country.

¹¹² See P Daniel (2006) Africa: Tools of Liberation <http://www.opendemocracy.net/node/4124>

¹¹³ International Press Institute World Press Freedom Review, 2006
http://www.freemedia.at/cms/ipi/freedom_detail.html?country=/KW0001/KW0006/KW0165/

The latest case resulted in the arrest and sentencing of several reporters in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in July 2007. This concerned the alleged disrespect to the president in the essay assignment given out by a young Bamako teacher to one of his classes - which was reported by a number of newspapers. '*Discuss the case of a girl student and economic prostitute getting pregnant by a leading politician and arguing in public that he should marry her.*' Heavy-handed government reaction – including the use of tear gas by security guards to break up a peaceful protest of journalists on June 21st - was condemned by international press and human rights organisations. Interestingly this clampdown on freedom of speech was in relation to gender and morality rather than politics per se. Or as Seydina Oumar Diarra, who first published the story, explained: "*The link is clear between moral corruption at the grassroots and the role model at the very top which has created it. We allow young girls from our own families and villages to be pimped - in a society where money has become the only sign of success.*"¹¹⁴

4.7. An army for peace and stability: Gender and the security sector

Largely due to their role in peace-brokering in the north in the early 1990s, women's organisations like MNFPUN have developed and maintained good relationships with the military. The armed forces in Mali present an unusual example today, networking with civil society and organising joint training on gender and security.

The period of military rule was responsible for horrific crimes, creating an atmosphere of fear and mistrust not easy to dispel.¹¹⁵ Since 1991 the army has undertaken to transform itself, adopting policies more appropriate to Malian society than those inherited from and dictated by colonial powers from the 1960s: in particular the code of absolute obedience to orders, which served colonial interests.

'*A true republican army reflects on orders given: Does this conform to national and international law? Why am I being asked to kill my brother?*'¹¹⁶ Military training now aims to develop this reflection and, in addition, promote the concept of 'an army for peace and stability'. The Ministry of Defence pursues a policy of *rapprochement* between the military and civil society, especially through the establishment of its *Direction de l'Information et des Relations Publics de l'Armée*. This aims to reach out to the population, especially the most isolated, through national and local media, to spread the message that soldiers and citizens have the same objectives for peace and development. Army officers receive specialist training and are seconded to the media, as well as a range of other public offices (in the French model) to 'embed' the military in public life. Soldiers are also deployed in construction projects for development (the dam at Sausac, the road to Gao) working alongside members of the public.

The Peace School¹¹⁷ provides the opportunity for regional collaboration and Mali regularly contributes military observers to UN peace missions. The centre for peace-keeping operations (CDOMP)¹¹⁸ established in 2004 and existing on a shoe-string budget, provides email and internet communication for officers on UN missions as well as information for the public on a range of conflict resolution and peace issues. It has also organised joint training

¹¹⁴ *Info-Matin* June 1st 2007 http://www.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/Info-Matin_-_Article_SOD.pdf

¹¹⁵ Colonel Assimi S Dembélé (2003) *Transferts Définitifs*, Bamako: le Figuier

¹¹⁶ Colonel Abdoulaye Coulibaly, Direction de l'Information et des Relations Publiques des Armées, Ministère de la Défense et des Anciens Combattants, March 2006

¹¹⁷ L'Ecole de la Paix, previously at Koulikoro, now relocated to Bamako

¹¹⁸ Le Centre de Documentation pour les Opérations de Maintien de la Paix

and other events for military personnel and members of civil society, including religious groups, youth and women's organisations, including FEMNET.

However, it would be too optimistic to expect that the effects of Mali's history of violence and corruption can be eradicated in a decade or so, as one interlocutor pointed out: '*Those elements must still be there underneath, ready to emerge again.*' A number of those previously involved in military crimes are members of the current government, including the intelligence service. Because of poor pay and conditions, army officers are said to be regularly selling off arms ('*le matériel de la guerre*') to make a little extra money. As discussed in section 3, there has been a repositioning of actors in the North, involving military personnel and based on material interests, which again threatens the stability of the country.

The Malian army made a decision to recruit more women in 1995, at the time of a cross-border conflict with Burkina, when it was perceived that female office staff would be helpful. Women are now to be found at all levels of the armed forces, as combatants, pilots, doctors, truck drivers.¹¹⁹ However they still only count for less than 5% of military personnel and although female recruitment is still officially promoted, there is a lot of resistance among male colleagues ('there are already enough!') High-ranking female officers testify to the continuing difficulties of women in the military (and in society).

Lieutenant-Colonel Kani Coulibaly, recruited as a doctor, was given the portfolio for gender and peace, worked across ministries particularly in support of soldiers' wives and families, and also coordinated gender training at all levels for military personnel, as part of the pilot project between the Pearson Centre and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women. She has now had to go to South Africa because her husband has been posted there as Ambassador and her unique driving force has been lost. Commandante Nema Sagará, who did her senior officer training in the US and spent a year in Liberia on the UN peace mission, is involved in high-level policy-making. She highlights the effects of deep-seated cultural attitudes: '*Women are reluctant to join up, they lack confidence, hide their talents, we need to provide role models and encourage other women.*'

Gender training workshops¹²⁰ were run for officers by the Pearson Centre at the international Peace School in Koulikoro, with the intention that responsibility for these would be taken over by ECOWAS as a sub-regional initiative. However, in the end, the responsibility was delegated to CDOMP. The training package includes consideration of how women are used and abused during wartime; how they can contribute to peace; the behaviour of troops on UN missions or refugee camps; and specific needs of women as refugees and victims of conflict. Courses first met with resistance but have helped in sensitising male personnel to the problems and in changing attitudes. There has been little follow-up, though, and the topic has not been introduced into initial training for all military personnel.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Femmes dans l'Armée / Armée Malienne 40 ans, *Faro Revue de Muso Kunda* No 09 Spécial, 20 Janvier 2001

¹²⁰ See DFID / MAECI, 2002 La Problématique Homme-Femme et les opérations de Paix Module de Formation, (formation virtuelle) for online training materials [LINK](#)

¹²¹ Interview with Mme Mariam Kane, Conseillère en Genre et Développement et en Réforme de la Justice, Unité d'Appui au Programme Coopération Canado-Malienne

4.8. Talking the talk or walking the walk?

The Peace School, supported by a number of bilateral donors, is a regional centre for training African peace-keepers and UN mission observers, with input from both Canadian and French military trainers. This initiative falls under the so-called 3-D model (diplomacy, development and defence) of donor engagement with developing countries, which western commentators have characterised as primarily serving the economic interests of donors.¹²²

¹²³ Both military and civilian interlocutors in Mali, male and female, call into question the current system of donor assistance, which imposes a particular model of development on the country, contributing to an increase in poverty or vulnerability which in turns continues to undermine national stability. *“International relations are not democratic, they are characterised by economic or military strength. Even if we make our best efforts here amongst ourselves, Mali will never be mistress of her own destiny. Human security will always be precarious.”*¹²⁴

In this regard, despite the many confidence-building activities (and social capital) outlined in this section, it is reasonable to ask: for how much longer will Mali's relative stability be maintained through 'talking peace' without radical concrete changes on the ground?

¹²² The European Union's policy on Peacekeeping in Africa (2004) in fact makes the point quite clearly: 'EU interests are primarily economic. There are promising prospects of greater trade with Africa... rich in land resources and raw materials, whose commercial exploitation has been hit by the unstable environment.' http://assembly.weu.itnetwork.fr/en/documents/sessions_ordinaires/rpt/2004/1880.html

¹²³ Stephan Klingebiel (2005) *How much Weight for Military Capabilities? Africa's New Peace and Security Architecture and the Role of External Actors*, Bonn: German Institute for Development Policy [http://www.die-gdi.de/die_homepage.nsf/6f3fa777ba64bd9ec12569cb00547f1b/ec343b8b532dab1cc1256f81003064be/\\$FILE/Internet-DP2-05-Peace%20Security.pdf](http://www.die-gdi.de/die_homepage.nsf/6f3fa777ba64bd9ec12569cb00547f1b/ec343b8b532dab1cc1256f81003064be/$FILE/Internet-DP2-05-Peace%20Security.pdf)

¹²⁴ Quoted in Daniel, P. (2006) Mali: everyone's favourite destination <http://www.opendemocracy.net/node/3531>

5. National development and the role of the international community

The role of the international community needs to be taken into account in considering Mali's capacity for democratic progress, gender equality and conflict prevention. To what extent does international involvement help or hinder efforts on the ground?

5.1. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is the principal tool through which government and donors agree priorities and targets for national development in a rolling five-year programme.¹²⁵ Mali's first PRSP was reviewed in 2006 in consultation with a range of stakeholders, including civil society and representatives from women's organisations. The draft second-cycle strategy paper for the period 2007-2011 was published in December 2006.¹²⁶ The potential benefits of the PRSP model include the harmonisation of donor inputs and a more secure, longer-term approach to development planning. However, a number of problems with the model are becoming obvious since it was rolled out across Africa and these are exemplified in the case of Mali.

Firstly, the model does not increase national empowerment or autonomy in general because donor support is still conditional on economic reform. As regards empowerment and autonomy of women, research carried out by Gender Action on PRSPs in eleven countries identifies the following conditions as having the greatest impact on women's livelihoods: privatisation; cuts in government spending; trade and labour reforms; financial sector reforms. In summary:

*'Standard World Bank and IMF policy-based loans that require public health expenditure cutbacks increase women's home care for sick family members and reduce their time available for paid work; public sector and enterprise restructuring eliminates many jobs and benefits—women are often the first to lose jobs and last to be rehired because they are assumed to be secondary breadwinners; developing country tariff reductions threaten the livelihood of manufacturing and agricultural workers, the majority of whom are women in the poorest countries; financial sector reforms decrease women's access to financial services while increasing their risk of financial crisis.'*¹²⁷

The focus on poverty - defined in macro-economic terms as gross domestic product and income per capita, along a western model - ignores both the underlying problem of inequality and the erosion of social capital, which lead to increased vulnerability of families and communities and the consequent destabilisation of the state. Research elsewhere has highlighted the fact that, as in Mali, PRSPs are based on an insufficient understanding of poverty, suffering from a lack of gender-related information and analysis, reflecting the limited capacity of the different actors to apply a gender approach.¹²⁸ For integration of women in the fight against poverty, it is necessary to disaggregate their needs and interests as well as identifying the gender impact of each action and developing gender-related

¹²⁵ The PRSP model, largely influenced by World Bank economists, came out of the World Summit on Social Development at Copenhagen in 1995, see further discussion in Daniel, P. (2007) *Gender and the World Bank. Incompatible Objectives* <http://patriciadaniel.blogspot.com/2007/05/incompatible-objectives-gender-equality.html>

¹²⁶ CSLP 2ème Génération Adopté par le Conseil de Ministres 20/12/2006

¹²⁷ Susanna Dennis and Elaine Zuckermann (2006) *Gender Guide to World Bank and IMF Policy-Based Lending*, Washington: Gender Action
<http://www.genderaction.org/images/GA%20Gender%20Guide%20to%20World%20Bank%20and%20IMF%20FINAL.pdf>

¹²⁸ Emma Bell (2003) *Gender and PRSPs with experiences from Tanzania, Bolivia, Viet Nam and Mozambique*, Brighton: BRIDGE (IDS) prepared for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark

indicators of progress.¹²⁹ The direct impact of the current approach on women and children's lives is not overtly acknowledged in official circles although actors do recognise what has become known as the 'feminisation of poverty'. Critics, including those in Mali, claim the liberal economic model imposed by donors is not compatible with human rights.¹³⁰

Assessment of development success under the PRSP model is based on quantitative targets, including the millennium development goals (MDGs) rather than 'engagement with the concepts of society, culture and power that could help us interpret human action and support transformative processes for social justice'.¹³¹ As the Sahel Working Group point out, the use of simple quantified limits to define vulnerability is unhelpful where it disguises the importance of coping strategies. Vulnerability involves a constant shifting between states, and can move in both directions, but there is also a well-recognized "ratcheting" effect associated with loss of assets and increasing indebtedness that leads to ever increasing vulnerability.

In fact, the PRSP model is relentless and inflexible. The priorities and indicators set 5 years ago are rolled over to the next 5 years. While many actors are concerned that the current approach is not effective, there seems to be no mechanism for fundamentally changing the ground rules. The response to this problem in Mali has been to add an 'accelerated growth strategy' onto the end of the second-cycle PRSP, lumping together a number of important aspects which were left out of the original PRSP but have been the subject of civil society pressure. These include the cotton industry (Mali's main export earner now under threat),¹³² the development of tourism, attention to youth (especially unemployment) and, last but not least, gender.

5.1.2. Gender in the PRSP

Mali's original PRSP includes the target 'increased participation of women' as the very last one in the document, along with three key actions:

- Encouraging women's participation in public administration
- Strengthening women's technical capacity
- Awareness raising in regard to socio-cultural practices which discriminate against women

As regards all the other priority actions for poverty reduction, of which there were around 150, women are mentioned specifically only four times: technical training for women in water and soil conservation; training centres for women (none were built); support for the national unit for girls' education (CNSF)¹³³ and lastly: '*redefine the roles and activities of the state with a view to ceding more responsibility to other development actors (decentralised authorities, civil society, **women** and the private sector).*'

The evidence presented in previous sections indicates that there is a long way to go before any of these targets are met, or in some cases even addressed. However, it is important to note that, through civil society consultation mechanisms, women have clearly been able to raise their voice in the PRSP I review process and influence the content of PRSP II. Six key areas for women have been identified in the 'accelerated growth strategy' and these broadly correspond to the areas of concern discussed in section 2. Additionally, roles and responsibilities of national government and donors are indicated along with a number of

¹²⁹ See Daniel, P. (2006) *Le genre comme indicateur de l'alerte précoce au Mali*, Rapport provisoire, Bamako: FLASH / CIDT

¹³⁰ The film '*Bamako*' (2006) directed by the Mauretian Abderrahmane Sissako and featuring a number of Malians as themselves, puts the World Bank and IMF on trial for crimes against humanity

¹³¹ Rosalyn Eyben (2006) *The Road not Taken: International Aid's Choice of Copenhagen over Beijing*, United Nations: Research Institute for Social Development

¹³² Depression of prices due to US subsidies to their own cotton farmers and cheap Chinese goods on the market

¹³³ La Cellule Nationale de la Scolarisation des Filles

priority actions (see Fig 6). These gains by the women's lobby may be largely symbolic since the additional commitments are phrased in very general terms. Furthermore, they reiterate undertakings which have already long since been promised (for example, the 1995 programme for the Ministry for Women and Children and the implementation of international conventions) but which have so far not been honoured - although the new PRSP goes so far as to acknowledge that 'equality before the law is established in the constitution'. The specific issue of political participation and the need for quotas or other strategies to support women's candidature in elections are not mentioned. Gender budgeting is highlighted for health and education but not for other sectors, which will inhibit any concrete action. Food security, a key issue for women, is not mentioned. And economic reforms will continue. Therefore, while there is a more general acknowledgment of women's needs, the format of the PRSP fails to really put women at the heart of development.

Fig 6. Gender in Mali's PRSP II ¹³⁴

- **Education:** gender planning and budgeting; increase numbers of girls in school; revise the curriculum to provide positive images of girls/women and also include messages about HIV/AIDS
- **Health:** gender planning and budgeting; information campaigns and awareness raising on family planning, FGM and spread of HIV/AIDS; increase numbers of women in health management
- **Economy:** improve women's economic visibility; revise programmes to better integrate specific needs of women; ensure equal access to resources and support women's entrepreneurship by prioritising loans for women
- **Law:** adoption and implementation of the family code; gender training for the judiciary; legal assistance for the most vulnerable women; awareness raising on women's rights
- **Governance, participation:** citizenship education for all; increased participation of women in local decision-making; strengthening women's organisations
- **Decentralisation:** increase in women in local planning and implementation; women's needs as regards credit integrated into budgeting; capacity building of elected officials and local government officers to ensure gender sensitive planning; use of gender indicators

Government: recognise and re-operationalize the gender units in each ministry; promote dialogue on gender among all social groups, especially with opinion leaders and decision-makers; collection and application of disaggregated statistics

Donors: re-establish the gender working group in order to harmonise interventions relating to gender

Priority actions

- (i) strengthen coordination with the MPFEF Ministry and involve civil society especially women's organizations in the process of identifying and monitoring poverty and gender issues
- (ii) strengthen capacity in gender for the members of the Poverty Monitoring Unit and assess the existing national expertise
- (iii) adopt a gender approach as a strategic element to be taken into account in each sector of development and at every level
- (iv) revise national and sectoral policies and programmes in order to include the different needs and potential of men and women and to strengthen the integration of gender in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of PRSP II
- (v) deepen gender analysis in the development of poverty profiles in order to have a better understanding of the real situation of women and vulnerable groups at local, regional and national level
- (vi) institutionalize a system of targeting the poorest through disaggregated data (men and women, girls and boys) and
- (vii) integrate relevant gender indicators into the system of poverty monitoring.

¹³⁴ From Section 9.4.1. of the PRSP

5.1.3. Peace and security in the PRSP

Some of the early warning signs relating to education, health and employment (identified in section 3 above) are to be found in the PRSP - but they are not discussed in terms of potential and actual conflict. As with the gender aspect, the problems facing youth (unemployment and social alienation) are not discussed as the effects of macro-economic policies. They are described as 'stand-alone' social problems:

“Mali, like the majority of African countries has a young population with challenges relating to (i) the creation of employment in order to integrate youth into socio-economic and professional life ii) an appropriate education and the development of civisme and (iii) the struggle against social plagues such as prostitution, paedophilia, banditry and especially the protection of youth against HIV/AIDS.”

Development indicators are included in the PRSP for youth employment and the participation of youth in sporting activities to enhance social cohesion. But there are no specific targets in relation to peace and human security. Priority actions (see Fig. 7) promote the integration of peace and security considerations into all development planning, along with the inclusion of gender in security strategies. But there are no gender indicators to support this and no mention of budgeting for these strategic areas. It seems reasonable to raise serious doubt about the implementation of these aspects for accelerated growth.

Fig. 7. Questions of Peace and Security in PRSP II ¹³⁵

Bearing in mind the relationship between peace-security and development, priority actions envisaged for PRSP II include: the consideration of the peace and security dimension in all development projects, programmes and sector policies; development of a security sector policy; integration of peace-security as a cross-cutting theme in the different interventions of civil society

Seven key priorities must underpin our security policy: (i) emphasis on prevention (ii) a local police force (iii) clarification and coordination of responsibilities (iv) a rational use of resources (v) strengthening access to outside (vi) an adequate communication strategy (vii) *inclusion of gender in all the strategies for development of security*

Key strategic areas are as follows:

- Capacity building for internal security and civil protection forces
- Development of a security coverage more appropriate to the geographical terrain
- Improvement of road and river security
- Strengthening of conflict prevention and management at community level
- Strengthening the management strategy for emergencies
- Establishing proper governance for internal security
- Strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation

¹³⁵ From Section 9.4.4. (paragraphs 298-300)

5.2. Alternativist solutions for national development in Mali

Civil society continues to propose a different approach to that embodied in the donor-driven PRS process, as several recent initiatives indicate. These are all closely linked to the strengthening of decentralised democracy, which is interesting because decentralisation has arguably been more actively promoted by donors than the present government.

5.2.1. Coalition for African Alternatives to Debt and Development ¹³⁶

Aminata Barry Traoré,¹³⁷ former Minister for Tourism and Culture, and ex-Resident Representative for the UN in Mali, leads the Coalition for African Alternatives to Debt and Development. Annually since 2002 she has organised a 'people's summit' to coincide with and as a counterpoint to the G8 summit of first world leaders. The main objective of this forum, which attracts participants from all over the world, is to enable associations of farmers, women, or young people to discuss trade justice, debt cancellation, emigration and genetically modified (GM) foods. CAD-Mali was also one of the organisers for the World Social Forum polycentric event in Bamako in 2006 and for the main event in Nairobi January 2007, which addressed similar issues and proposed similar solutions: greater autonomy for countries in the south and more accountability on the part of African governments for social justice and human rights. Both events included consideration of the impact on women of the current development model, especially the question of privatisation of basic services, as well as promoting women's contribution to alternative processes. ¹³⁸

5.2.2. The World Forum for Food Sovereignty¹³⁹ held an international conference in Mali in February 2007, which was called **Nyeléni** after the legendary Malian peasant woman who worked hard to feed her people and win recognition for her work. The concept of food sovereignty as a human right has been raised by civil society at successive FAO World Food Summits as an alternative to the neo-liberal agricultural policies of the World Trade Organisation. The focus is on localised sustainable food systems developed and owned by communities, drawing on traditional knowledge and skills. Women are seen as central to this process, not only as food producers, consumers and providers (through their primary responsibility for family welfare) but also as guardians of agricultural diversity. Their right to equal access to productive resources, in particular land ownership, is promoted by the movement.

One reason for holding the conference in Mali was that Alpha Oumar Konaré had promoted the concept of community supported agricultural systems and Mali adopted a new agricultural framework law in 2006 which declares food sovereignty a priority objective. The official line is that new developments will take into consideration the needs of small farmers and that, for example, the building of dams will only be carried out after public consultation. However, the introduction of GM crops, the plans for large-scale development of the Niger delta (as part of the Millennium Challenge¹⁴⁰) and hostility on the part of foreign companies to social movements in Mali all raise questions as to the real level of participatory decision-making. ¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ <http://www.cadmali.org/>

¹³⁷ A well-known critic of the impact of neo-colonialism. See Aminata Traoré (2005) *Lettre au Président des Français à propos de la Côte d'Ivoire et de l'Afrique en general*, Paris: Fayard

¹³⁸ <http://womenwsf.wordpress.com/2007/01/25/reflections/>

¹³⁹ A synthesis and evaluation of the forum as well as original documentation can be found at www.neleni2007.org

¹⁴⁰ The Millennium Challenge Corporation, a US-based fund, signed an agreement with Mali in late 2006 <http://www.mcc.gov/countries/mali/index.php>

¹⁴¹ High commodity prices for basic food from overseas again places West Africa in precarity this season (November 2007) <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=75216>

5.2.3. The Sahel Working Group

The need for a bottom-up approach to development is emphasised in a new research report¹⁴² on vulnerability in the Sahel (Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso). This reinforces concerns of a number of international non-governmental organisations about current approaches to food security, whereby the focus on providing humanitarian aid impedes longer-term sustainability. Additionally, the authors summarise:

“The imposition of external ideas about what constitutes good development and a focus on economic growth as a driver for national development are not addressing the needs and realities of the most vulnerable rural poor.... The few exciting positive developments in the region derive almost exclusively from long-term project work based on good learning from the communities concerned.”

The report calls on donors to revoke those international trade agreements which disadvantage the countries of the Sahel. It also calls on both donors and government to provide substantial long-term financial and moral support for **decentralisation as the key mechanism** for ensuring access to basic services, communication between civil society and elected officials and ‘*conflict prevention as it relates to natural resources and food sovereignty*’.¹⁴³

5.2.4. The consolidation of the decentralisation process

All evidence points to the fact that consolidation of the decentralisation process would offer new opportunities for women – but only if the key objectives relating to gender equality in the new PRSP are implemented systematically across the country. This requires practical concrete measures such as legislation, education and quotas for local elections. The gains – for women and the development process - would include:

- A better representation and understanding of the needs and interests of women in local planning
- A higher level of accountability for equality and inclusion in the implementation of plans and the evaluation of their impact
- A greater recognition of the actual and potential contribution of women as actors in rural or urban development
- Training for both women and men, support and monitoring of women in the process
- A higher level of involvement of women in the processes of confidence-building, early warning, conflict prevention and conflict resolution
- The development of youth employment opportunities in the countryside.

¹⁴² Sahel Working Group (2007) Beyond any drought. Root causes of chronic vulnerability in the Sahel, London: International Institute for Environment and Development
www.iied.org/mediaroom/docs/Beyond%20Any%20Drought.pdf

¹⁴³ The report emphasises that poverty and hunger not only lead to enforced economic migration but often also exploitation in agricultural and fishing industries.

Incompatible objectives?

However, there is a caveat, from Jo Beall's¹⁴⁴ observations of the fragile democracy in South Africa: 'the close association with neo-liberal politics negates the positive effects of decentralisation'. And as Benedicta Egbo¹⁴⁵ argues, the current lack of economic empowerment for so many women in the south is a direct result of previous World Bank driven programmes.

Closely related is the other main barrier to moving forward: the status of women within partner organisations, whether these are international donors or national NGOs. Often the internal situation reflects the limited participation and representation of women in decision-making and conflict management in wider society that a partner organisation, with good intentions, claims to be working to eradicate.¹⁴⁶

In other words, decentralisation has to become a process not only driven by civil society but by a social movement which itself exemplifies gender equality.

6. A future agenda

6.1. Obstacles to women's participation in democratic processes

Mali can be seen as a case study, which reflects a number of common problems facing women's emancipation across Africa today. As outlined in Section 2, these include the persistence of traditional attitudes and cultural practice, which discriminate against women, and the reluctance of men in power to recognise or implement international human rights legislation in order to redress inequality. Women's continuing socio-economic dependence on men restricts their movements and opportunities. At the same time, the current model of development works to further disadvantage women by making their family responsibilities more difficult to fulfil. Moreover, the lack of food sovereignty remains a serious defect of the international system, while women's contribution to the household economy remains largely ignored in local or national planning.

Changes in electoral systems to promote women's participation are not likely to make a radical difference without at the same time addressing the root causes of inequality which make this kind of positive action necessary. Similarly women's equal involvement in peace processes – their contribution to conflict prevention and the benefits they derive from a non-violent society – depends on addressing root causes of discrimination in addition to opening up formal opportunities for women in local and national government.

Women's participation in civil society organisations and social movements - whether as campaigners, journalists, academics / educationalists, para-statal watchdogs, members of grass-root associations or NGO managers – provides an alternative route to influencing and implementing change. However, the viability or effectiveness of this route depends on whether civil society has a sufficiently strong and autonomous voice, whether the movement is founded on coordination, cooperation and exchange – and has the capacity to represent

¹⁴⁴ Jo Beall (2005) *Fragile Democracy: State and Society in Democratic South Africa*, *Journal of Southern African Studies*

¹⁴⁵ <http://www.multilingual-matters.com/multi/display.asp?K=182471594069286&aub=Benedicta+Egbo&m=1&dc=1> not least the slashing of education budgets which impacted on succeeding generations of women, since girls' schooling always takes second place in times of hardship.

¹⁴⁶ Appendix A1. provides a useful checklist to consider when working with partners.

the interests of the most vulnerable. Measures supporting positive action for women's political participation, as well as - for example - a gender peace and security plan, unfortunately require money. Women in Mali, as everywhere else in Africa, still have to rely on the patronage their own husbands or of international donors. Those few exceptions draw on their own resources to get things done but this is neither equitable nor a long-term sustainable solution.

Within the current economic model, dependent on internationally imposed conditions, women's opportunity to contribute to and benefit from national development continues to be marginalized. Although Mali's PRSP II overtly recognises the need for a national effort to address the status of women, there are no really concrete plans to implement paper commitments – which are still subject to resistance under the 'culture' card. For these commitments to be realised, there is a need to set a definite budget in support of implementation and to identify clear indicators of progress.

The hypothesis behind the analysis of gender as an early warning indicator is that strengthening the status of women will bring gains in all areas of development, including security and stability. Conversely, if current trends and destabilising factors are ignored, especially as regards the susceptibility and vulnerability of Mali's young men and women, the implication is that conflict and violence will increase.

Abdoulaye Sall¹⁴⁷ argues that it is difficult to separate the definition of national priorities and choices from the 52% of the population who are women. *"If we admit that democratic societies are based on the principle of equality, the complete participation and representation of all the citizens, then the weak participation or non-representation of women in decisions relating to the life of the nation is a democratic deficit, a violation of democratic principles and human rights."*

The 10 July 2007 World Bank report identifies the six criteria used by the Millennium Challenge Corporation for allocation of funds to developing countries: voice and accountability; political stability and absence of violence; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption. Mali apparently passed the test in 2006, although evidence cited in this briefing, not only as regards gender equality, belies the state's success in such areas of governance.

Everything being relative, the question for Mali is: for how much longer will merely talking peace and democracy be enough to maintain stability?

¹⁴⁷ Président de Cri-2002. "Il est aujourd'hui très difficile de tenir à l'écart de la définition des priorités et des choix qui affectent la vie de toute la nation les 52 % de la population que sont les femmes. Si nous admettons que les sociétés démocratiques sont fondées sur le principe de l'égalité, de la participation et de la représentation à part entière de tous les citoyens dans la vie de la nation, la faible participation ou la non-représentation des femmes à la prise de décision concernant la vie de la nation est un déficit démocratique et une violation des principes démocratiques et des droits humains des femmes."

6.2. Positive gender indicators as a basis for future action

It may be that, within the current model of development, this democratic deficit will never be successfully addressed. However, taking the status quo as the starting point, there are four key strategies that could be highlighted as the way forward.

- A simple manifesto that can be understood and monitored by all: Fig. 8 below provides a list of *positive indicators for change* in women's status and participation
- Gender networking: systematic exchange of skills, human resources, materials, perhaps with the use of the internet (through Initiatives Mali Gateway)
- A national programme of gender training and awareness-raising for all sectors, at all levels
- Gender budgeting: a budget line in each government sector and each area of the PRSP to support specific action for women and gender equality. This requires more detailed analysis of implementation (see the worked example of political participation in Fig. 9).

As regards the role of different actors:

- o Money and accountability ensured/ guaranteed by donors
- o Commitment from central government
- o Coordination and harmony between the different women's organisations and with other relevant civil society groups
- o Support from the rest of civil society, for example the media, especially active buy-in of religious leaders and village chiefs

The municipal elections in 2009 provide the next milestone for gender and governance in Mali. It remains to be seen whether either the Malian woman or Mali herself is able to become mistress of her own destiny.

Fig.8. Positive gender indicators

Area	Key indicators
1. Legislation	Family Code is passed into law; Technical and financial support for implementation is provided
2. Political participation	50.50 quota at both national and local level government; civil service and para-statal bodies
3. Human rights	Ongoing awareness-raising against FGM carried out by government; NGO; religious leaders; Reduction in incidence of FGM
4. Land tenure	Legislation introduced to support women's right to own land; Legal advice provided through formal and informal organisations
5. Food sovereignty	Development of localised sustainable food systems (with full participation of women)
6. Literacy	Increased literacy rates for women of all ages (with a focus on non-formal education and citizenship)
7. Relationships between girls and boys	Equality, mutual respect, friendship, working together, similar aspirations (as observed at school); Change in roles and tasks given to young girls and boys at home
8. Employment	Youth training and apprenticeships for both young women and men; Uptake of employment (as opposed to prostitution, black market etc)
9. Conflict management at community level	50.50 quota for women in peace commissions; natural resource management committees; training and practice as paralegals; Scoping study on women paralegals (who, what, where) and women's peace group activities
10. Media	Positive images and role models; women as actors in politics, development, civil society, economics, conflict prevention Serious debates about women's rights; Increase of women in the media workforce, including local radio
11. Security sector	Higher percentage of women in the armed forces and police Especially in positions of influence; Ongoing awareness-raising for security sectors at all levels on gender equality and gender based violence
12. Peace-building policies, strategies and mechanisms	50.50 quota for female representation at all levels to support national and regional initiatives; Development of a national gender peace and security action plan (1325)

Fig.9. Recommendations for the promotion of political participation for women¹⁴⁸

Problem area	Action	Actors
All	Establish a single programme for the improvement of women's participation in the national and local elections (2007 and 2009)	Technical and financial partners (donors)
Socio-cultural	<p>Citizenship education for all</p> <p>Stronger advocacy for the 50.50 quota</p> <p>Ongoing awareness raising and information campaigns</p> <p>Specific activities with youth to develop their political and civic engagement</p> <p>Ongoing capacity building for women to encourage them into leadership positions</p> <p>Specific support and capacity building for both female candidates and female elected officials</p> <p>Development of strategic alliances</p> <p>Networking and the sharing of human and material resources (eg for training and campaigning)</p> <p>Exchange visits</p>	<p>The state</p> <p>Political parties</p> <p>Civil society organisations</p> <p>Communities</p> <p>Technical and financial partners (donors)</p>
Political and Institutional	<p>50.50 quota</p> <p>Improvement of the positioning of women in the electoral lists (either the first 3 places for women or alternating female-male candidates)</p> <p>Waiving of fees for the positioning of women on the lists</p> <p>Fines for political parties who present lists without women</p> <p>Set up a monitoring mechanism and capitalise on actions</p> <p>Access to land for women</p>	<p>The state</p> <p>Political parties</p> <p>Civil society organisations</p> <p>Technical and financial partners (donors)</p>
Geographic	Strengthen activities in the north and other disadvantaged areas	As above
Economic (Gender budget)	Creation of a special fund for women's political participation, to underpin all above actions, including financial support for female candidates, mobilisation expenses and other logistical costs	Political parties, Civil society organisations, Technical and financial partners (donors)

¹⁴⁸ Based on the synthesis from the workshop on the political participation of women in Mali, January 2007
http://initiatives.net.ml/article.php3?id_article=786

APPENDIX A1. Checklist for Gender and Education¹⁴⁹

A. WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

1. Does the school policy protect girls (and boys) from harassment, exploitation and abuse?
2. Are tasks shared equally between boys and girls?
3. Are the needs of girls taken into account during teaching and learning?
4. Are there separate toilets / latrines etc for boys and girls and for female and male teachers?
5. Does the curriculum promote gender equity and equality?
6. What is the ratio of female to male teachers?
7. What is the ratio of achievement between girls and boys in academic achievement?

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

1. Are there customs and traditional practices that hinder access and retention of boys and girls?
2. What is the proportion of women and men in leadership positions?
3. What is the extent of access and control of resources for women in comparison with men?
4. Are men and women given the opportunity to develop their skills, potential and literacy level?

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

1. Basic documents, statutes, rules, appointments: do they take into account access of women to posts of responsibility?
2. Does the partner have an active and effective internal gender policy?
3. What is the proportion of women to men in the organisation?
4. How many women hold posts of responsibility?
5. How many staff members have had training in a gender approach?
6. What is the division of labour (tasks) between women and men?
7. Is the work environment conducive to women's empowerment?
8. Is there a policy of equal pay?
9. Are there specific measures relating to status of women (maternity leave for example)?
10. What is the level of integration of gender considerations in the external activities and development interventions of the organisation?

Strategies to use with partners:

Training; Support and monitoring; Participatory action plan with women and men to address gender issues

¹⁴⁹ Outcomes from Oxfam West Africa education coordinators gender review workshop, Bamako, 23rd November 2006

APPENDIX A2. Key Strategies for gender and education

Bold designates new areas of activity

KEY HELPING FORCES	STRATEGIES
Government policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobbying; campaigning; engagement through the media; engagement with research results • Popular mobilisation • Networking with women's advocacy organisations (eg FAWE) • Coalition building • Policy analysis of inclusion of gender and effects of policy on gender
Curriculum and methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender training for teachers, school authorities, education officers, legislators • Gender analysis • Curriculum review
Religious and traditional leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitisation • Lobbying • Gender analysis at the grassroots with communities • Sharing research findings • Consultative meetings • Exchange visits (between villages) • Exchange meetings to share experiences
Livelihoods development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration between education and livelihoods programmes¹⁵⁰ • Strengthening women's groups • Adult literacy
Good role models, both male and female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender training, analysis, participation • Facilitation and animation • Sensitisation • Lobbying • Exchange visits between villages • Girls Clubs

KEY HINDERING FORCES	STRATEGIES
Cultural attitudes and perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitisation (with <i>animatrices</i>) • Promotion of women leaders (integration with governance programmes)
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of gender-sensitive curricula • Training for teachers • Monitoring of implementation of above
Sexual division of labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitisation work with families • Gender training for teachers
School environment/ infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction and furnishing of classrooms • Construction of separate latrines and water points for boys and girls
Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for community income generating activities • Support for school canteens in nomadic context • Support for textbooks and other school equipment • Integration of programmes in the zones of intervention • Literacy

¹⁵⁰ Also integration between education and other programmes, for example governance, health, WATSAN

APPENDIX B. Relevant websites

Cross border initiatives	www.afriquefrontieres.org
All Africa news	www.allafrica.com
Bilateral donors	www.bilaterals.org
CDOMP	www.cdomp-mali.org/
Canadian Embassy in Mali	www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/world/embassies/mali
ECOWAS	www.ecowas.int
European Union	http://www.europarl.eu.int/intcoop/acp/
Gender and Peacekeeping	www.genderandpeacekeeping.org
GFNSS	www.gfnessr.org
Initiatives Mali Gateway	http://initiatives.net.ml/
International Alert	www.international-alert.org
OECD	www.oecd.org
Pearson Centre	www.peaceoperations.org
PRODEJ	www.justicemali.org
Radical Party	www.radicalparty.org
Relief Web	http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/dbc.nsf/doc104?OpenForm&rc=1&cc=mli
UNDP Human Development Reports	http://hdr.undp.org/hd
UNDP Mali	www.ml.undp.org
Université de Bamako	www.ml.refer.org/univ-mali/
UNOWA	www.un.org/unowa
USAID Mali	www.usaidmali.org
USAID WARP	www.usaid.gov/missions/warp
Women in Law and Development for Africa	http://www.wildaf-ao.org/fr

APPENDIX C: Values and Principles of the Millennium Declaration

The 147 heads of State and government at the Millennium Summit (2000) agreed that certain fundamental values should underpin international relations in the 21st century, specifically:

Values and principles	Content
Freedom	Men and women have the right to live and bring up their children in dignity, free from hunger and fear of violence, oppression or injustice. It is democratic governance of public affairs, based on the will and the participation of the people, which best guarantees these rights.
Equality	No individual from any nation must be deprived of the benefits of development. Equal rights and opportunity for women and men must be ensured.
Solidarity	Global problems must be managed multilaterally and in such a way that the cost and the burden are fairly distributed, in conformity with the fundamental principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or are particularly disadvantaged deserve the help of those who are privileged.
Tolerance	There must be mutual respect between people in all the diversity of their beliefs, cultures and languages. The differences within and between societies should not be feared or repressed, but celebrated as the wealth of humanity . A culture of peace and dialogue needs to be promoted between all civilisations.
Respect for nature	We need to show wisdom in the management of all living species and all natural resources, in conformity with the precepts of sustainable development. Only on this condition will we be able to conserve and bequeath to our children the immeasurable wealth that nature offers. We must modify the current modes of production and consumption, which are not viable, in the interests of our future well-being and that of our children.
Sharing responsibilities	The responsibility of the management, at a global level, of economic and social development, as well as the threats to international peace and security, must be shared between all nations, and should be implemented in a multilateral framework. As the most universal and representative international organization in the world, the UN has a central role to play in this respect.

Government of Mali, Ministry of Education, Secondary School Modules for the Education of Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, 2005