CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

THE SAHEL PEACE INITIATIVE

Steps Toward Peace

A CONFLICT ASSESSMENT OF THE LIPTAKO-GOURMA ZONE
BURKINA FASO, MALI AND NIGER

Acknowledgments

This report was written by Sheldon Gellar, with significant inputs from Robert Groelsema (CRS Senior Technical Advisor for Justice and Peacebuilding) and Patrick Williams (CRS Program Manager for the Sahel Peace Initiative). The team received additional support and guidance from Jennifer Overton (CRS Regional Director for West Africa), Abigail Johnson (CRS Regional Technical Advisor for Gender Equality), Caritas Burkina Faso (OCADES), Caritas Development Niger (CADEV), Caritas Mali and the CRS West Africa team. This assessment and report could not have been completed without innovative support and high-quality data collection by CRS' monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) teams in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

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Ouagadougou le 13 Novembre 2019

A:

Monsieur Seal L Callahan

Président de l'Agence Catholic Relief Services

Baltimore, USA

Estimé Monsieur le Président,

Nous venons d'achever un atelier qui a réuni des évêques délègues des conférences du Burkina-Niger et du Mali qui a connu la participation de deux délègues du Ghana et de Cote d'Ivoire.

Comme vous le savez, la réflexion a porté sur la situation d'insécurité au Sahel, les causes et les conséquences du phénomène qui dépassent le Sahel. Nous voudrions vous remercier d'avoir recueilli ce projet qui, grâce à l'engagement de tout CRS, est devenu une réalité.

Alors que les travaux qui sont bien déroulés s'achèvent, nous voudrions vous demander encore d'user de ce qui est en votre pouvoir pour accompagner le processus déclenché par cet important atelier afin que les actions retenues et planifiées puissent se concrétiser en vue de provoquer les changements souhaités en matière de cohésion social, de sécurité et de paix au sahel.

Veuillez féliciter votre équipe de CRS Afrique de l'Ouest pour la fructueuse collaboration que nous avons eue dans l'organisation et la tenue de cette rencontre inter-conférence sur la sécurité au Sahel.

Persuadés que la bonne collaboration nous réunira toujours autours des défis auxquels l'Eglise fait face en Afrique de l'Ouest en général et au Sahel en particulière, nous vous assurons de nos prières et de notre disponibilité.

Monseigneur Laurent B. DABIRE

Président de la Conférence Episcopale

Burkina-Niger

Monseigneur Jonas DEMBELE

Président de la Conférence Episcopale

du Mali

Foreword

Our sisters and brothers in the Sahel are living through an unprecedented period. Communities in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are under direct attack by violent factions who seek to aggravate and exploit community grievances and tensions for their own gain. The increasing number, severity and scale of these attacks against civilians, displaced persons and families is shocking. Millions of innocent people need immediate, lifesaving assistance and the region needs a solution for long-term, sustainable peace.

The Catholic Church stands united against this violence and has been working tirelessly to respond to the humanitarian and development needs of the region. Working across all three countries, among those displaced as well as the families hosting them, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has provided cash distributions, water, food and shelter over the past year. We are also continuing our work to provide healthcare, education and agricultural assistance, as well as carrying out peacebuilding activities. These efforts are led and championed by the Catholic Church in West Africa and grounded on an overriding priority for justice and peace in the region. CRS strongly supports this call as essential to its vision that all people fulfill their God-given human potential. We are proud to witness the superhuman efforts undertaken in response to this crisis, efforts that are to be celebrated.

But we are also alarmed by the growing demand for help that far exceeds available resources. While governments have recognized the critical importance of investing in the Sahel, we are calling on donors, policy makers, advocates and humanitarian responders to redouble their efforts to make peace a reality in the region.

In response, the Sahelian Catholic Church is leading a multi-country effort, The Sahel Peace Initiative, to raise awareness about this violent conflict and advocate for positive change. Toward this end, we present Steps Toward Peace, a multi-level conflict assessment of the ongoing crisis in the Sahel. Its ultimate message is clear: those who seek peace must focus on reinforcing social cohesion, vertical and horizontal, while engaging local leaders and civil society in all responses, activities and policies.

The findings and recommendations in this report are a reflection of the work conducted by Caritas Burkina Faso (known as OCADES), Caritas Niger (known as CADEV), Caritas Mali and CRS and shaped by extensive first-hand primary data collection, analysis and review. Our integrated team engaged with and listened to hundreds of individuals from the most vulnerable communities so that we could understand their challenges and reality, and better coordinate a unified response.

We invite you to consider how to actively support the application of these recommendations to ensure the integral human development of each and every person living in the Sahel. Similarly, we pledge to adopt these recommendations in the promotion of a new era of collaborative, integrated peacebuilding that seeks to unite communities across the region, and we invite you to join us. Although we are troubled by the gravity of the crisis, we are optimistic about a brighter, more just and secure future for the Sahel.

Thank you for your tireless efforts to build peace in the region.

Monseigneur Laurent B. Dabire	Monseigneur Jonas Dembele	Sean Callahan
Président de la Conférence	Président de la Conférence	Chief Executive Officer
Episcopale Burkina-Niger	Episcopale Du Mali	Catholic Relief Services

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Executive Summary

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report summarizes the findings, conclusions and recommendations of a conflict assessment commissioned by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Catholic Church in West Africa. The conflict assessment supports the Sahel Peace Initiative (SPI), launched in November 2019 by CRS in cooperation with local partners in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali and Niger.[1] The SPI seeks to assist the Church and other civil society actors to design and implement locally-led responses to the spiraling violence and growing humanitarian and development crisis in the tri-border area of Liptako–Gourma, the epicenter of the violence. Although this study acknowledges the role of hard power to protect and secure, it chooses rather to focus on the strengths of civil society and it emphasizes non-violent solutions to conflict. To this end, the authors call on governments, regional and international to balance military interventions with an equal commitment to humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding because—as the past decade shows—the root causes and drivers of the conflict cannot adequately be addressed through armed intervention alone.

Specifically, this assessment was commissioned to respond to the following objectives: (1) generate new knowledge and effective approaches to mitigate the Sahelian crisis; (2) identify opportunities to mainstream peacebuilding, social cohesion and governance into humanitarian and development aid programming; and (3) identify entry points and strategies for the Church and civil society to respond to the Sahelian crisis with special emphasis on advocacy-based and communication approaches that support and give voice to local community needs, priorities and initiatives.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The conflict assessment prioritized the following research questions:

- What are the underlying causes of violence, who are the perpetrators, and what are their motives, incentives, interests and grievances?
- Who are the main victims of the violence and what are their resiliencies?
- What have been the impacts on and consequences of the violence for local economies, government, services, political stability and social cohesion?
- What are possible ways forward?

METHODOLOGY

The assessment employed mixed qualitative and quantitative methods comprising key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), a literature review, direct observation, and a perceptions survey of social cohesion. KIIs and FGDs were conducted using semi-structured questionnaires, and the survey was based on an adapted version of CRS' Mini Social Cohesion Barometer (the Barometer), containing 18 indicators grouped into socio-cultural, economic and political spheres. The

1 The study was executed between April and June of 2020 and the report was drafted before the August 2020 coup in Mali.

assessment framework combined CRS' 4Ps (profile, problem, people and process)[2] and USAID's Conflict Assessment Framework (CAF) 2.0.[3] CRS' Peacebuilding, Governance, Gender, Protection and Youth Assessments: A Basic Guide for Busy Practitioners[4] provided additional guidance. CAF 2.0's focus on grievances and resiliencies and the 4Ps analytical structure were highly complementary for identifying factors that informed macro- and micro-recommendations.

Sampling was conducted within nine zones of the Liptako–Gourma tri-border area, which straddles Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. Six of the zones have experienced severe conflict. Focus groups and interviews were organized with individuals most affected by and/or involved in violence—women, youth, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, self-protection groups, marginalized ethnic groups, peacebuilders, administrative and security officials, and traditional chiefs and religious authorities. Across the study area, the assessment team held 45 FGDs and interviews. In addition, the team administered 90 surveys to government officials, traditional leaders and community members.

The assessment designers identified participants through purposive and snowball sampling.[5] Sampling relied on references from Caritas staff, mayors, religious leaders and others working in the target zones. The outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent restrictions on movement required the enumerators to conduct some activities in Mali and all activities in Niger by telephone.[6]

The team processed qualitative data manually through matrixed relational content analysis, which relies on the co-occurrence and identification of concepts captured in focus groups and informant interviews. This method permitted the assessment team to more fully explore conflict dynamics, key components of the main problems, the connections and relationships among conflict actors, and the context impacting and being impacted by the crisis. To bolster the relational content analysis, the team disaggregated and summarized quantitative Barometer data using descriptive statistics.

As mentioned, the assessment team encountered limitations such as COVID-19. In addition, snowball convenience sampling resulted in an oversampling of members of major ethnic groups—especially males. Findings of the Mini Social Cohesion Barometer were not representative as the study did not attain a sufficient sample size. For security reasons, active combatants and members of extremist groups were not interviewed. To mitigate these drawbacks, CRS and partners purposefully engaged women and minority ethnic groups where possible and hosted two virtual validation workshops during which partners and key respondents critiqued, corrected and confirmed the findings and recommendations.[7]

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS AND KEY FINDINGS

As noted above, the assessment methodology relied on USAID's Conflict Assessment Framework (CAF) 2.0 and CRS' signature 4Ps methodology (profile, problem, people and process), CAF 2.0 offered advantages at the macro level because of its

2 CRS. 2018. Peacebuilding Fundamentals: Participant's Manual. CRS.

3 USAID. 2012. Conflict Assessment Framework (CAF) Version 2.0. June 2012. Washington D.C.: USAID. USAID. 2012. Conflict Assessment Framework Application Guide. June 2012. Washington D.C.: USAID.

4 CRS. 2015. Peacebuilding, Governance, Gender, Protection and Youth Assessments: A Basic Guide for Busy Practitioners. CRS.

5 Snowball sampling is a nonrandom technique where known study participants recruit future participants from among their social network. Naderifar, Mahin & Goli, Hamideh & Ghaljaei, Fereshteh. (2017). Snowball Sampling: A Purposeful Method of Sampling in Qualitative Research. Strides in Development of Medical Education. In Press. 10.5812/sdme.67670.

6 A complete list of those engaged can be found in Appendix C.

7 Moving forward, CRS will continually engage communities in focus group discussions while regularly administering the Mini Social Cohesion Barometer to inform regular reporting and sharing of data.

focus on national and international actors, and its conceptualization of institutions, which were familiar constructs for recipients of Western-based education. The 4Ps complemented these strengths by emphasizing historical perspectives, micro level dynamics, and framing questions and concepts in language easily grasped by diverse cultures and people without formal schooling. The overlay of these frameworks encouraged a comprehensive contextual analysis and resulted in six key findings.

1. **Insufficient and inequitable access to wealth, livelihoods, and natural resources is the driving force behind the deterioration of the social fabric and uptick in violent conflict, especially for youth from traditional pastoralist backgrounds. Individuals emigrate, join violent groups, or perpetrate violence as an escape from poverty and injustice.**

Poor economic prospects are a major cause of the deterioration of the social fabric and rise in violent conflict. Virtually all focus groups identified youth unemployment and the lack of economic opportunities for youth as the main cause and consequence of violent conflicts. These findings were triangulated with CRS' Mini-Social Cohesion Barometer to provide a cross-sectional view of social cohesion in each assessment zone. Barometer findings clearly show that the economic and political contexts are closely interrelated as the most influential factors contributing to a lack of social cohesion. Results from this assessment align with previous research, which demonstrate that poverty alone does not drive or cause conflict. Mismanagement of and unequal and limited access to resources, largely agricultural in the Sahel, are also key drivers. The lack of employment opportunities as well as feelings of hopelessness, have motivated rural youth to abandon agriculture and seek their fortunes elsewhere by joining violent extremist movements or turning to crime and banditry to earn a living.

2. **The scale and scope of violence surpass the capacity of government and local leaders to coordinate a unified and effective response.**

Multiple, overlapping factors drive conflict. Among these are competition for the control of trans-Saharan trade routes, heavily securitized responses to conflict, conflicts over control and access to natural resources, failure to fully implement the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, and a dubious reliance on national-level leaders to resolve localized and regionalized conflict. The negative political and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising number of people in need of humanitarian aid also exacerbate conflict and increase pressure on limited state resources.

The scope of the drivers of conflict exceeds the capacity of any single country or actor to respond. The literature review and KIIs indicated that developmental and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs have largely been fragmented and ineffectual due to insufficient attention paid to local conditions and inadequate consultation with communities. While donors have dedicated significant resources to humanitarian aid, large swaths of the population remain unreached and in need.

3. **The conflict has impacted men and women differentially with women the least involved in conflict management at national and local levels.**

Within their households and communities, women play an important role in building social cohesion. They reinforce family values, participate in formal and informal women's associations, and advocate for social services. They are rarely the perpetrators of physical violence but may indirectly foster violent attitudes and behavior as they pass along implicit biases to children or actively act on prejudices. FGDs revealed that some women act as informants for violent groups.

Women are the indirect recipients of violence and manage the long-term impacts. When villages are attacked, men either flee or are killed. The consequence is that women must fend for themselves and their families in post-attack settings. They face multiple stressors—high market prices, searching for or buying firewood, tending fields, finding food for their families, caring for out-of-school children, and receiving fair treatment under the law.

While at national levels women's voice has gradually improved, authority structures at subnational levels typically remain the purview of older males, and do not favor women. This is especially true of chiefdoms and traditional community management systems. For example, traditional land tenure systems prohibit women from owning land. Norms are beginning to change. Imams and Quranic schoolteachers interviewed welcomed the participation and engagement of girls and women in their schools and mosques. Despite this openness, women consulted in the study felt marginalized and without influence beyond the household.

4. **Traditional chiefs and local religious leaders are committed to peace and social cohesion. They command respect from their communities for their objectivity and neutrality. Communities value traditional conflict management mechanisms and perceive them as essential resources.**

Traditional chiefs and local religious leaders are strong supporters of non-violent resolution of conflict, community cohesion and peacebuilding. They uniformly oppose violent extremism and denounce bad governance while actively promoting local conflict management mechanisms. Villagers, especially those above the age of 35, exhibit high trust in traditional authorities and religious leaders. All survey respondents indicated a strong belief in the importance of traditional conflict mediation and practices to prevent, mitigate and transform violence at the grassroots. They also valued a strong national response to the presence of violent extremists and external provocateurs. Three main obstacles have limited the effectiveness of traditional chiefs and religious leaders: 1) the lack of inclusivity of women and youth; 2) the disempowerment of local leaders by national governments; and 3) the targeted assassination of local leaders by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs).

5. **Self-defense groups are well-established throughout the Sahel, but they are less respected as peace actors in Mali. Self-defense groups do not necessarily make their communities more secure; indeed, they may perpetuate violence.**

The proliferation of extremist violence and widespread banditry has spawned a new kind of self-defense group that differs from historically small traditional village policing of petty thievery and livestock raiding. The new groups are heavily armed. They retaliate against alleged cooperation with extremists and expel competitors for control over land and resources. Owing to the anonymity of external actors and the unreliability of state protection, citizens increasingly depend on homegrown self-defense.

Self-defense groups are the perpetrators and victims of violence against civilians. To paraphrase one elder in Mali: "There are no winners in a conflict where each side wrongs the other." In Burkina Faso, communities demonstrated strong support for these groups, such as the Kogleweoogo. However, the Burkinabe also recognized that locally armed groups could be magnets for violence. Self-defense groups in Mali were widespread but were less viewed as guarantors of peace than as a necessary evil. In Niger, these groups were generally smaller and less well-armed in part because of community reliance on government forces for physical security and protection. As opposed to Burkina Faso and Mali, Niger's self-defense groups reflected geographic rather than ethnic allegiances.

6. **Unaccountable and unresponsive political leadership, especially at national levels, has eroded faith in democracy and civic engagement. In the tri-border area, governance failures exacerbate weak connections to modern economic and political systems.**

The study respondents were emphatic that citizens trust local more than national government. Top-down, poorly designed and executed decentralization policies have hindered development and shaken faith in local government. The disconnect between people and government is most apparent in rural, neglected, and impoverished areas.

Respondents widely expressed concern about security. For communities, peace was a moral state where people could feel protected, trust their neighbors, and work harmoniously to better their lives. From the KIIs and FGDs it was clear that to stoke grievances, extremist groups exploited political corruption, bad governance, economic deprivation, and social and ethnic division.

CONCLUSION

A mixture of incentives has driven external actors to war against Sahelian communities and their protectors. Some motivations appear to ride on greed and thirst for control over lucrative illicit trans-Saharan trade. Others have deep roots in religious ideology, grievances and propagandistic interpretations of global hegemony and marginalization. Various theories explain manipulative jihadist behavior. However, decades of misrule and neglect in the Sahel have advantaged these movements and increased their ideological appeal, especially to marginalized and unemployed youth with few prospects for a brighter future. On the bright side, few people in Liptako Gourma embrace jihadist goals and ideologies.

The results of this assessment show that Sahelians and their governments have been living on borrowed time, **Sahelians must rebuild a tattered social contract**, and with the help of their allies, restore order, reconcile conflicted groups, and strengthen social cohesion. Reforms must address chronic unemployment, inequitable access to land and unaccountable leadership. Peacebuilding needs to become the mandate and responsibility of ordinary people including traditional chiefs, religious leaders, women and youth. Actors for peace can make a difference. If they can value indigenous knowledge and implement locally generated solutions, they can reinforce vertical and horizontal social cohesion by engaging local leaders and civil society, thereby giving voice, opportunity and support to the people of the Sahel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report recommendations support local mechanisms and solutions to mitigate the violence and promote community resilience and social cohesion. The report recommendations are not one-size-fits-all as contexts, key persons and grievances differ by community, commune, region and country. Communities may be ill-equipped to confront violent actors, but they can present a unified front to those seeking to exploit divisions. Recommendations are designed to be actionable and are elaborated in the report's *Recommendations* section.

- **Reinforce peacebuilding task forces (in response to findings 4 and 6).**

Existing peacebuilding task forces (PBTFs) should bring together religious leaders at national levels to advocate for the adoption of realistic, just and humane policies

to overcome the suffering caused by the current crises and to reverse political and religious polarization, violent extremism and social unrest. National PBTFs in each country can reach out to grassroots members to promote interfaith collaboration in their local communities and ensure that local communities' voices are heard at the national levels.

- **Strengthen and diversify traditional conflict management and social cohesion mechanisms (in response to findings 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).**

Peace actors should seek to strengthen and diversify conflict management mechanisms while avoiding the creation of parallel platforms that create redundancies and confusion. Tapping into local knowledge about traditional conflict management mechanisms, supporting local leaders and encouraging the inclusion of women and youth in decision-making will empower chiefs, mayors and governors to lead while enhancing inclusive civic participation for democratic local governance and accountability.

- **Engage women as direct actors in the construction and management of peace (in response to findings 1, 3, 4 and 6).**

Women must be engaged and mobilized to take a more direct role in peace processes and social cohesion. Women's participation has improved at national levels, but more effort must be directed toward increasing their contributions in rural communities, towns and districts across the tri-border area. Protocols to include women in civic matters beyond the family are needed. Raising the status of women as peacebuilders must respect local cultural norms and practices, but advances in this traditionally male-dominated domain could significantly improve accountability and strengthen the social fabric in the long run.

- **Buttress humanitarian options for the poor (in response to findings 1, 2 and 3).**

The greatest untapped resources in the Sahel are its people, most of whom live below the poverty line, and many of whom lack formal education and skills that could enable them to ascend social and economic ladders. Stakeholders supporting peace efforts should redouble efforts to target populations most vulnerable to violence and its causes and ensure that development resources are directed toward their safety, their resilience and their right to be protected from exploitation and marginalization by predatory governments and extremists. High priority should be given to finding and applying local solutions that can revitalize rural economies, upgrade skills, and protect women and children.

- **Promote civil society solutions, especially regarding livelihoods (in response to findings 1, 4, 5 and 6).**

Peace actors should facilitate collaboration between and among learning networks linking external peace actors with Sahelian civil society. Peace actors should take advantage of critical indigenous expertise within paysan (smallholder farmer) universities[8] and apply it holistically to emergency and development assistance. Sahelian civil society has successfully responded to many of the root causes of indigenous conflicts; they now need political and financial resources to implement at scale.

8 Paysan universities are informal schools used to share learning on agricultural best practices.

Introduction

This conflict assessment was commissioned by Catholic Relief Services' West Africa Regional Office and conducted from February 10 to April 28, 2020, by an independent consultant. The assessment comes at a time when the Sahel region of West Africa is experiencing unprecedented levels of violence. In this regard, the regional Catholic Episcopal Conference stated:

> "We reaffirm our commitment to collaborate with all people, to put a stop to the killings and the displacement of the populations. The Church further reaffirms that the causes of the violence must be eradicated, ensuring that the victims are not abandoned on their own, but that their material, physical, psychosocial, and spiritual care is ensured, and that work is committed to effective conflict prevention, and lasting peace and sustainable living."[9]

This assessment acknowledges the importance of security to peace and development in the Sahel, but the findings argue for a more balanced and nuanced response to external and internal threats. The evidence suggests that the daily manifestations of violence linked to radicalism and extremism mask the root causes of conflict that run deep within Sahelian society. Decades of failed governance, for example, have eroded faith in government, and have undermined fruitful citizen-state relationships. A robust social contract remains beyond reach. But the findings also sound a hopeful note: if the root and proximate causes of violence embedded in Sahelian economic and political systems are clearly identified, better understood, and fully appreciated, the fissures dividing polities and peoples can be bridged through community re-visioning, restructuring and the transformation of social constructs.

The grounds for this assertion are found in this assessment's review of the vast and evolving literature on the Sahel, and in the myriad testimonies of hundreds of women, men and youth at the grassroots living at the epicenter of the violence. Frank and forthright reactions, ideas and insights offered in interviews, group discussions and surveys reveal a telling fact: Sahelian civil society, of which a plethora of vibrant community-based organizations forms the bedrock, has been greatly undervalued regionally and internationally. If Sahelian history, social institutions, faith traditions and belief systems receive the attention and respect they merit, they can be leveraged for peace and stability. Sahelians—in solidarity with the global human family—need to be able to reposition themselves to unleash their creativity and to realize their potential for transformative change.

SAHEL PEACE INITIATIVE

RATIONALE

For more than a decade, the Sahel has experienced unprecedented upheaval. Violent incidents occur daily displacing hundreds of thousands of families, destroying property and assets, forcing schools to close, and claiming the lives of civilians, military and peacekeepers alike. Peace-loving communities have encountered a five-fold increase in the number of violent attacks since 2016. Conflict plays out at multiple levels: extremist attacks, ethnic clashes, pastoralist/farmer disputes, religious

9 Unified Message of Bishops, Priests, and Secular Delegates of Episcopal Conferences Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Ivory Coast, and Ghana. Inter-Conference Workshop on Security in the Sahel. November 12-13, 2019.

disagreements, and a growing estrangement between civil society and state.[10] Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have been especially impacted, and as this analysis shows, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and other coastal states are vulnerable to similar threats.

The violence affects health and social welfare long-term. Farmers are unable to plant and harvest; a generation of children are going unschooled; and families are going to bed hungry when humanitarian agencies cannot reach them. Chronic poverty in the sub-region has been pervasive for years, but poor governance, food insecurity, youth unemployment, limited access to basic services, and recent extreme climate events have rendered the fragile soils and lands of the Sahel fertile ground for extremists. Uncontrolled migration, human trafficking, and illegal trade in small weapons, drugs and other illicit goods flourish along millennia-old trade routes. If the social and economic marginalization of the Sahel continues apace; if people can no longer trust each other; if governments and citizens do not strive for the common good, then hope for a brighter future could be abandoned and lost. Unity, prosperity, freedom and justice for millions could become a distant dream.

THE UNIFIED CHURCH'S RESPONSE

The Sahel Peace Initiative (SPI) represents the Catholic Church in West Africa's response to the crisis. In May 2019, at the third plenary assembly of the Regional Episcopal Conference of West Africa (RECOWA) in Ouagadougou, a small group of senior Church leaders led by the Archbishop of Ouagadougou, Cardinal Philippe Ouédraogo, began intense discussions around the devastating impact of the crisis on Sahelian life and its implications for the future of the sub-region. Subsequently, CRS West Africa Country Representatives held consultations with these leaders to better understand the Church's views on the crisis, and its role as a peace actor. Specifically, CRS discussed potential advocacy measures and possible interventions that could influence key stakeholders and lead to constructive responses. To gain additional perspectives, CRS met with donors and government officials in the sub-region.

SPI is a multi-country, multi-divisional effort whose purpose is to reduce violence and restore peace in the Sahel and neighboring countries. It prioritizes four areas: 1) communications, 2) influence, 3) fundraising, and 4) development and humanitarian programming. SPI places a priority on Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, which are at the epicenter of the violence, but also includes neighboring Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana. SPI's approach is holistic and comprehensive. It integrates justice and peacebuilding with and through Church networks and local partners. The initiative is designed to help West African communities, societies, and polities overcome destabilizing circumstances and build lasting peace.

In September 2019, CRS leaders met in Baltimore to develop a "whole of Agency" approach to addressing the crisis in the sub-region. This meeting served to align CRS' collective efforts for a multi-pronged response across departments to ensure collaboration and coordinated efforts.

Subsequently, in November 2019, the episcopal conferences in the target countries convened a three-day workshop to design a unified, strategic response to the crisis. Presided over and hosted by Cardinal Philippe Ouédraogo, the workshop attracted participation from the Mali and Burkina-Niger Episcopal Conference presidents, 11 bishops from Burkina Faso, representatives of the Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire Episcopal Conferences, a member of the USCCB and representatives of CRS headquarters

10 USAID. November 2014. Assessment of Risk of Violent Extremism in Niger (Washington, DC: The Mitchell Group). Augustin Loada and Peter Romaniuk. 2014. Prévention de l'extrémisme violent au Burkina Faso: vers une resilience nationale dans un contexte d'insécurité régionale. Global Center on Cooperative Security.

and field offices. The participants reaffirmed their commitment to ending the forced displacement of populations; to providing material, physical, psychosocial, and spiritual care to victims; and to working to prevent violent conflict and ensuring lasting peace through dialog, justice and reconciliation. Together, the bishops released a public statement; CRS issued a press release, and the USCCB published letters appealing for the U.S. Government to support an end to the violence in the region.

The Catholic Church in West Africa has a legacy of social justice and conflict resolution, but never have the national conferences collaboratively responded to a crisis or an issue of this magnitude. Although Catholics comprise a small percentage of the total population in the Sahel, the Catholic Church is a respected voice and is widely seen as a neutral, objective and non-political actor across the region. Further, the Church has been instrumental in convening interreligious and intergroup dialog across the Sahel. Given these attributes and its organizational capacity, the Sahelian Catholic Church is well-positioned to influence people of all walks of life from the grassroots to international circles.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The SPI was launched to promote peace, social cohesion and resiliency. The Church and CRS seek to work at the center of humanitarian, development and peace efforts, or "the triple nexus," by identifying and addressing the root causes of the ongoing conflict while responding to emergent humanitarian needs in the Sahel.

The goal of this conflict assessment is to provide an in-depth analysis of the conflict, and actionable recommendations that can inform gender-responsive justice and peacebuilding activities across the region, with an emphasis on social cohesion, governance and development. Specifically, this assessment was commissioned to respond to the following objectives: (1) generate new knowledge and more effective approaches to mitigate the Sahelian crisis; (2) identify opportunities to mainstream peacebuilding, social cohesion and governance into humanitarian and development aid programming; and (3) identify entry points and strategies for the Church and civil society to respond to the Sahelian crisis with special emphasis on advocacy-based and effective communication approaches that support and give voice to local community needs, priorities and initiatives.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS: TRI-BORDER AREA

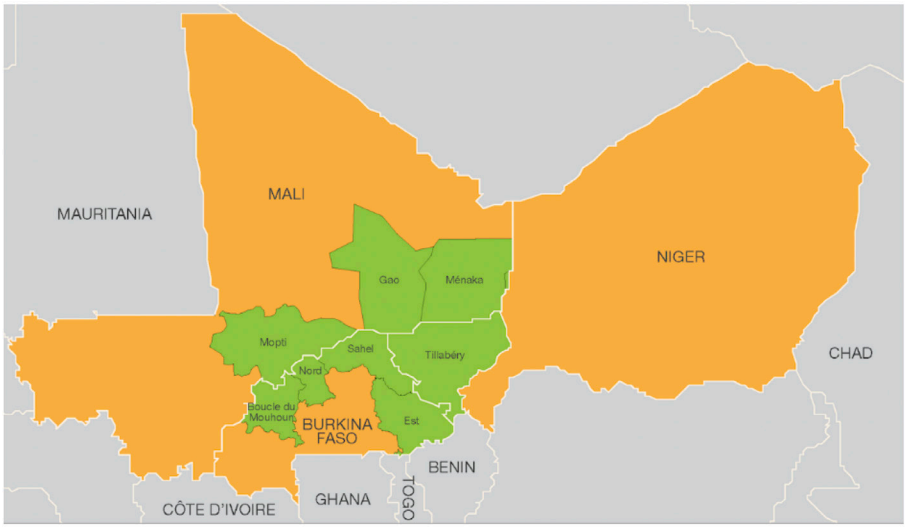
The SPI focuses on five states in the Sahel: Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali and Niger. Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana are categorized as ***prevention zones*** while the others form ***response zones***. The response zones have been further narrowed to the tri-border area of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, known as the Liptako–Gourma region.

This analysis focuses on Liptako-Gourma. The people in the tri-border area of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger share strong cultural ties and a common history of neglect and poverty under colonial and postcolonial rule. More recently, within the past five years, they have experienced a massive increase in violence that has forced millions of people to flee their villages, destroyed local economies, and increased the need for protection and humanitarian aid.

The assessment team, local Caritas and CRS staff further identified three sites in each country to participate in the conflict assessment. The team selected sites based on displaced persons, refugees, exposure to violent conflict, accessibility, and strategic

importance. These criteria identified the most vulnerable people, per CRS and Caritas field staff.

In Burkina Faso, the assessment team selected Kaya, Kongoussi and Ouahigouya; Ansongo, Koro and Tominian in Mali; and Ayorou, Ouallam and Torodi in Niger.



Source: The Defense Post

BURKINA FASO

Kaya is the capital of Sanmatenga Province in the Center-North region of Burkina Faso. Kaya sits 100 km north of the capital, Ouagadougou, and has an official population of 66,851, which is growing quickly as displaced people seek refuge from non-state armed groups (NSAGs). The town and surrounding area operate largely as agricultural centers of millet and cotton. The Center-North region has been severely affected by violent conflict with most displaced people seeking refuge in Kaya. This study engaged respondents at the city level and in the village of Barsalago.

Kongoussi is the capital of Bam Province in the Center-North region of Burkina Faso. Kongoussi is 110 km north of Ouagadougou and has been the epicenter of much of the violent conflict in the Center-North region. The town hosts a population of 18,400 people and supports smaller agricultural towns. The land is relatively fertile and has reliable access to water.

Ouahigouya is the capital of the Yatenga Province and the Northern region of Burkina Faso. Ouahigouya is 185 km north of Ouagadougou, has strong trade ties with Mali and is on the national route connecting the two countries. Ouahigouya relies heavily on irrigation channels that support year-round gardening of fruit and vegetables. The city has a population of 122,000 and has received large numbers of IDPs and refugees from the region. The Northern region has been dramatically affected by violent conflict. This study engaged respondents at the city level and in the village of Bogouya.

MALI

Ansongo is located in the Gao Region of eastern Mali. The commune has a population of 181,391 and is on the Niger river, 1,283 km from the capital city of Bamako. The local economy revolves around animal husbandry, agriculture, fishing and trade; all of which are connected to the town's location along the Niger river. Insecurity and violent conflict have negatively affected the commune since the start of the Malian conflict in 2012.

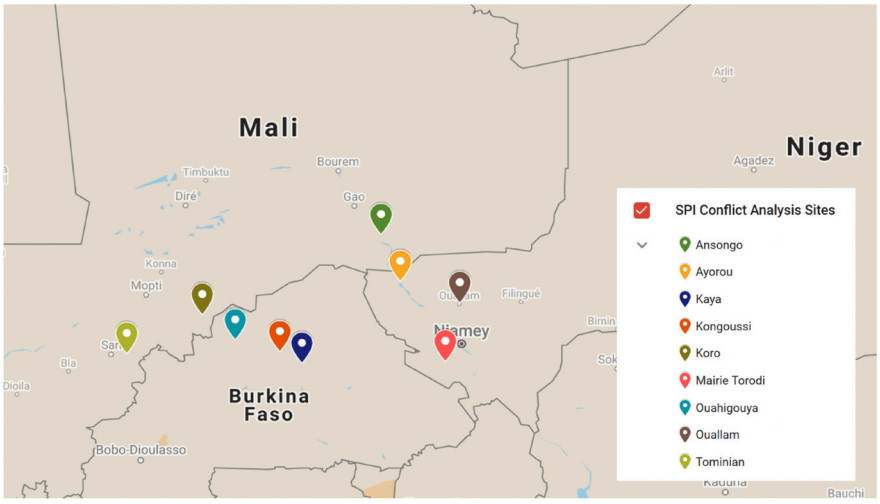
Koro is located in the Mopti Region of Mali. The commune has a population of 498,435 principally representing the Dogon and Peulh ethnicities. The city is on the national road connecting Mali and Burkina Faso and is 721 km from Bamako. The economy is based largely on agriculture and animal husbandry while trade is rather limited. The commune has become an extremely dangerous conflict zone, with NSAGs, bandits and self-defense groups operating in the region.

Tominian is the single predominantly Christian community studied. The commune is located on Mali's border with Burkina Faso and has a population of 303,978. The commune is 460 km from Bamako. The economy relies heavily on agricultural products and is home to an increasing number of IDPs fleeing violence. Despite the commune's relatively peaceful history, insecurity is increasingly becoming a concern as targeted assassinations and harassment from NSAGs begin to affect communities.

NIGER

Ayorou The department of Ayorou includes two communes with a total population of 80,000, representing Zarma, Tuareg, Peulh and Hausa ethnicities. The department is 200 km from the capital city of Niamey. The economy and community are agro-pastoral, and Ayorou hosts one of the largest cattle markets in West Africa, attracting traders from across the region. The department has experienced a marked increase in violence related to NSAGs, bandits and communal conflict.

Ouallam The department of Ouallam includes 400,000 inhabitants from the Zarma, Tuareg and Peulh ethnic groups. The department is 102 km north of Niamey and is a center for livestock and pastoralists. Ouallam hosts a Malian refugee camp in the village of Mangaize and has been the target of several attacks by NSAGs.



Torodi The capital of the Torodi department, Torodi is a natural resource rich area 65 km southwest of Niamey. Exact population numbers are unknown, but ethnic groups include Peulhs, Gourmantches, Djerma, Hausa and Tuareg. The inhabitants of this region rely on agro-pastoral lifestyles, although gold is also mined both formally and informally. Violent conflict in the region was previously intercommunal, exacerbated by increased activity of bandits and NSAGs.

PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

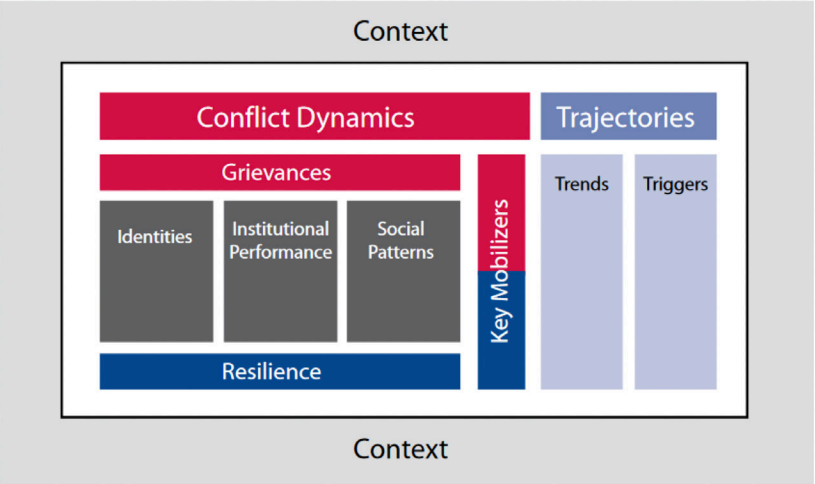
The conflict assessment sought to identify the main perpetrators and victims of the violence; the principal causes and consequences of violent conflict; the effectiveness of current policies to prevent, mitigate and resolve conflict; and the level of social cohesion and resilience of the victims. The data suggests actionable steps to transform the crisis. For example, to what extent does greed versus grievance explain the motivations of the perpetrators of violence, and what role do economic agendas play in causing and perpetuating the conflict in the tri-border area?

- Who perpetrates the violence and why (violent extremists, ethnic groups, self-defense organizations, military and security forces, bandits and crime networks)?
- Who is harmed by the violence (local communities, specific ethnic groups, military and security officials, government officials, religious and traditional chiefs)?
- What is the extent of the violence (grievances, incentives, interests, values)?
- How do perpetrators carry out violence (support from allies and sympathizers, source and nature of resources, strategies and tactics)?
- What are the consequences of the violence (destruction of local economies, reduced service delivery, political instability)?
- Who gains and who loses?
- What is the impact of the violence on the social cohesion and resilience of local communities?

Design and Methodology

ASSESSMENT DESIGN

The assessment methodology draws inspiration from USAID's Conflict Assessment Framework (CAF) 2.0,[11] *CRS' Peacebuilding, Governance, Gender, Protection and Youth Assessments: A Basic Guide for Busy Practitioners*,[12] and CRS' signature 4Ps methodology (profile, problem, people and process). CRS chose CAF2.0 because it provided a rigorous framework for balancing grievances with resiliencies, for discerning the trajectories of conflicts, and for projecting future scenarios.[13] Core elements of the CAF 2.0 framework include conflict dynamics, grievances, identities, institutional performance, social patterns, resilience, conflict triggers and key mobilizers. In the assessment team's opinion, CAF 2.0 offered advantages at the macro level because of its focus on national and international actors, concepts and language familiar to speakers of a European language, and shared understanding of Western institutions. The 4Ps complemented these strengths by emphasizing historical perspectives, micro level dynamics, and framing questions and concepts in language easily grasped by diverse cultures and people without formal schooling. The overlay of these frameworks encouraged a comprehensive contextual analysis.



USAID'S Conflict Diagnosis. USAID (2012) CAF 2.0. Page 15.

DESK STUDY/LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on conflict and violence in the Sahel is vast. The desk study, which culminated in a 25-page report, perused a range of topics including violent conflict, migration, refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs); agricultural and pastoral practices; issues around youth, gender and livelihoods; and history, ethnicity, religion, economics and politics. The review covered reports by the United Nations, U.S. Government agencies, regional African organizations, think tanks, academic researchers, and nongovernmental organizations. Documents reviewed dated from 1960 to the present, with most published between 2015 and 2020. To further narrow

11 USAID. 2012. Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF) Version 2.0. Washington D.C.: USAID. USAID. 2012. Conflict Assessment Framework Application Guide. Washington D.C.: USAID.

12 CRS. 2015. Peacebuilding, Governance, Gender, Protection and Youth Assessments: A Basic Guide for Busy Practitioners. CRS.

13 CRS. 2016. Social Cohesion Analysis: Cameroon. CRS.

the field, the study prioritized documents analyzing and assessing conflict in the tri-border area in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger within the last ten years.

The review identified a shift in donor orientation toward a more holistic approach to looking at interrelationships between different forms of aid, notably an emphasis on the intersection of peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian programming—the triple nexus. In addition, the study noted that donor agencies and NGOs emphasized consultations with local communities to learn more about their needs and priorities, and solutions to their problems. The review also detected a trend on the part of donors to "Africanize" conflict-assessment teams and to collaborate with Sahelian organizations and NGOs. These developments have produced highly useful micro-analyses that portray local realities more accurately and with greater nuance. Grassroots dynamics had previously been largely overlooked by broad-brush macro regional- and national-level analyses.[14]

The desk review identified four major gaps in the literature. These included the lack of in-depth analysis of the victims of violence and the activities and motives of key perpetrators; insufficient historical perspectives at both the macro- and micro-levels; inadequate disaggregation of data into constituent parts; and insufficient investigations of links between poverty and conflict. For example, the literature does not reach conclusions about who is doing the killing in the Sahel and who is protecting Sahelian civilians and communities from violence. The lack of actor specificity complicates military and social interventions. The primary data collected for this conflict assessment also found a high level of ambiguity among interviews regarding the identity of perpetrators of violence, and who was most victimized by the violence.

The desk review also observed that many analyses and conflict assessment frameworks underemphasized the weight of historical antecedents in determining present and future trends. The CAF 2.0, for example, focuses on trajectories that track events in the present into the future. Forecasting that overlooks the proportional impact of historical precedent would indeed miss critical precolonial and colonial political, economic, social and cultural antecedents that help us understand the roots of Sahelian conflict.

The review also found that studies and reports generally did not disaggregate categories like "rural populations," "village structures," "youth, women, and farmer groups," "students," and "military and security forces." With some exceptions,15 many studies relied more on national-level findings than local knowledge. Disproportionate weight given to actors at the national and regional levels distant from the conflict would presumably reflect their biases.

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14 For example, see Gellar, S. "Conseils ruraux et gestion décentralisée des ressources naturelles au Sénégal: le défi: Comment transformer ces concepts en réalité?, in Philippe Tersiguel and Charles Becker, eds. Développement durable au Sahel (Paris: Editions Karthala, 1997), 44-69, which looks at donor, government and rural population perspectives in a Sahelian country from independence in the1960s to the late 1990s. Donor models constantly shifted approaches and priorities, national Sahelian governments accepted donor models as a means of getting foreign aid, and rural populations were not involved in the design, implementation or monitoring and evaluation of donor and government programs. This pattern has persisted until the present. Emphasis on the "Triple Nexus" of integration of governance, development and conflict assessment is a relatively new development. It remains to be seen the extent to which this approach will be implemented. For a critique of the Triple Nexus in a Sahelian country based on donor failure to integrate local perspectives, see Emmanuel Tronc, Rob Grace, and Anaïde Nahkkian, Realities and Myths of the "Triple Nexus": Local Perspectives on Peacebuilding, Development, and Humanitarian Action in Mali. Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, June 2019.

15 Two noteworthy exceptions are USAID's Peace through Evaluation, Learning and Adapting (PELA) activity, and the International Crisis Group's work. Both are increasingly staffed by francophone academics with extensive field experience and personal contacts with government officials, media, NGOs and local communities. USAID. 2019. Peace Through Evaluation Learning and Adapting Activity (PELA). International Crisis Group. October 12, 2017. The Social Roots of Jihadist Violence in Burkina Faso's North. Africa Report No. 254.

Lastly, the desk study noted that the connection between the lack of livelihood opportunities and deteriorating economic conditions and the resulting impact on the spread and intensification of violent conflict, was understudied. The dearth of livelihoods is most pronounced in rural areas depleted of men and boys, who, in search of work, have migrated to urban and peri-urban centers. Unemployed and under-employed male youth with few skills are prime targets to mobilize for banditry, criminality and extremism.

SAMPLING

In response to the third gap identified in the literature review—inadequate disaggregation of data into constituent parts—the assessment team sampled a broad spectrum of community members via village-level focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs). The team designed a stratified sample of male and female youth, adult males and adult females. FGDs were divided by gender where appropriate. Female enumerators were not included in engagements with all male self-defense groups, and groups composed of women were required to have at least one female enumerator. A total of 326 (122 women) individuals participated in focus groups and interviews, and 90 persons responded to Social Cohesion Barometer surveys (see Appendix C for sampling criteria).

Groups sampled included the following:

- Elders above the age of 65;
- Self-defense groups;
- Internally displaced persons ;
- Host communities of displaced persons;
- Male and female youth aged 18 to 35;
- Poor and unemployed youth;
- Community religious leaders (Imam or Quranic teacher);
- Village chiefs;
- Commune prefects;
- Adults engaged in governance activities.

The local Caritas organization and CRS jointly elected assessment zones. Six of the nine sites were in high-conflict areas with need for humanitarian aid. For security reasons, areas controlled by non-state armed groups (NSAGs) or declared off-limits by government, were not selected. Communities with high numbers of IDPs and refugees were also given priority. To capture a diversity of experiences, the team chose Tominian in Mali where insecurity and violence are lower than elsewhere. Additionally, within each of the other assessment zones, one relatively secure village was selected. ***Chef lieux***, or administrative centers were selected as key respondent recruitment sites in all nine zones.

The team identified assessment participants through purposive sampling relying on references from Caritas staff. Mayors, religious leaders and participants from previous projects also proposed interviewees. The assessment team employed snowball

sampling method to reach isolated groups.16 At the local level, interviewees and survey respondents included government officials, traditional and religious leaders and community members. At the national level, individuals were either subject matter experts or had in-depth knowledge of national politics. These included researchers and NGO staff specializing in governance and conflict issues and possessing in-depth knowledge of perpetrators of the violence (Appendix C). In all, the team developed 19 protocols with 15 key questions framed for each group; conducted 45 FGDs and interviews, and 90 surveys. Owing to COVID-19, some interviews in Mali and all interviews in Niger were conducted by telephone.

TABLE 1 RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

COUNTRY	ZONE	MEN > 35 YEARS	MEN <35 YEARS	WOMEN >35 YEARS	WOMEN <35 YEARS
Burkina Faso	Kaya	18	1	16	11
	Kongoussi	33	12	2	0
	Ouahigouya	6	6	17	6
Mali	Ansongo	17	5	4	5
	Koro	25	7	17	14
	Tominian	19	11	14	2
Niger	Ouallam	8	3	0	6
	Ayorou	11	6	2	0
	Torodi	13	3	2	4

TABLE 2 RESPONDENT ETHNICITY

COUNTRY	ZONE	ETHNIC MINORITIES	ETHNIC MAJORITY
Burkina Faso	Kaya	2	44
	Kongoussi	3	44
	Ouahigouya	3	32
Mali	Ansongo	4	6
	Koro		1
	Tominian	6	1
Niger	Ouallam	3	14
	Ayorou	12	6
	Torodi	14	8

16 Snowball sampling is a nonrandom technique where known study participants recruit future participants from among their social network. Naderifar, Mahin & Goli, Hamideh & Ghaljaei, Fereshteh. (2017). Snowball Sampling: A Purposeful Method of Sampling in Qualitative Research. Strides in Development of Medical Education. In Press. 10.5812/sdme.67670.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (KIIS) AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)

Key informant interviews and FGDs utilized semi-structured questionnaires featuring the principal research questions. Focus groups comprised two to seven participants grouped by age, sex, profession and governance structures (Appendix C). FGD participants included refugees, IDPs, returnees, members of self-defense groups, local authorities and traditional leaders, and CBO members. Several FGDs centered on governance to generate information on institutional performance, land tenure, corruption, and protection.

MINI SOCIAL COHESION BAROMETER

CRS' Mini Social Cohesion Barometer (Barometer) is a survey that gauges perceptions of the level of social cohesion in a specific population or geography. It consists of 18 indicators grouped by socio-cultural, political, and economic categories of activity. When aggregated, the indicators offer a snapshot of a group's perception of the strengths and weaknesses in the social fabric of their community or society.[17]

For this conflict assessment, the Barometer captured a cross-section of perceptions regarding social cohesion in each study zone. The data was triangulated with results from the KIIs and FGDs to nuance the analysis, compare findings, and boost confidence in the conclusions. Community members—mayors, chiefs, farmers, merchants and pastoralists—were surveyed.

FIELDWORK LOGISTICS

Data collection protocols differed slightly depending on security and logistics. Master trainers[18] received training from the lead consultant and practiced the tools with CRS monitoring and evaluation staff. The master trainers delivered two-day trainings, including practice sessions to enumerators. Master trainers co-designed tools, refined questions, and developed protocols. Enumerators received materials on consent, body language and data management.

Each FGD had three enumerators and each KII had two enumerators. A moderator and two observers noted participant demographics, responses and body language, and developed concise summaries for each activity. Where possible, responses were attributed to specific persons. Activities were conducted in local languages The team recorded FGDs in Burkina Faso and Niger.

Owing to COVID-19 travel protocols, data collection teams in Niger and Mali had to amend collection procedures to account for physical distancing and restricted movement, and include hygiene sensitizations into their activities. Malian field staff were equipped with hygiene kits while, in Niger, the team switched to a telephone-based approach. After each FGD or interview, the teams held debriefs and summarized their notes in expanded field notes. Burkina Faso completed data collection prior to travel restrictions.

17 The development of the Barometer was informed by the South African Reconciliation Barometer (SARB) developed by the Institute of Justice and Reconciliation (IJR); research done by the Research Center for the Study and Observation of Living Conditions (CREDOC), and the Council of Europe's (CoE) methodological guide on the concerted development of social cohesion indicators. The CRS Barometer can be used in workshops within a pre- and post-test format and as a means for getting a cross-sectional view of the level of horizontal and vertical social cohesion. In the Central African Republic, CRS staff applied it to establish baseline and endline metrics to gauge changes in the perceptions of social cohesion in larger populations. In Bangladesh, the Barometer served as the basis for a pre-design assessment.

18 CRS trained two master trainers in Burkina Faso, three in Niger and five in Mali.

Répondant	Âge	Sexe	Emploi	Ethnique minoritaire / majoritaire	Autre[1]
1 (mossi)	*49*	*f*	*Agriculture et maréchaiculture*	*Majoritaire Mossi/ Minoritaire* Dogon	
2*(mossi)*	45	f	II	II	
3*(mossi)*	40	f	II	II	
4*(mossi)*	39	f	II	II	
5*(mossi)*	45	f	II	II	
6*(mossi)*	46	f	II	II	

Sample participant demographic capture form

Réponses	**Observations**
1. Qui sont les personnes séjournant dans les camps? D'où viennent-ils? Pourquoi sont-ils ici? N°1 : Il s'agit de déplacés internes qui ont fui des troubles dans leur localité. Ils sont venus jusqu'ici à cause des attaques qu'ils subissent ; N°2 : Ce sont des déplacés internes et composés en majorité de femmes, de vieilles personnes et d'enfants. Ils sont venus ici parce qu'ils sont à la recherche de la paix. N°5 : Ils sont venus de plusieurs localités telles que Barga, Rimassa et Tiou. ils sont venus à cause des conflits ; N°3 Certains d'entre eux sont venus également de Ingaré. D'autres ont simplement eu peur de ce qui se passe chez leurs voisins, raison pour laquelle ils ont fui leurs localités. N°6 : Yen a même dont nous ne savons d'où exactement ils viennent, nous savons seulement qu'ils ont fui des attaques. ils sont venus ici à cause de la crainte d'être attaqués N°4 : Certains sont venues des localités comme Mounoug-Boko.	D'une manière générale, les six(6) répondantes étaient inspirées quant aux réponses aux différentes questions posées. Il y avait de l'engouement et l'ambiance du groupe était au beau fixe. Une d'entre elles s'est illustrée par des paroles comiques qui ont contribué à détendre l'atmosphère. Cependant, au début du focus, elles voulaient toutes parler à la fois à chaque

All responses were attributed to individuals.

DATA ANALYSIS/LIMITATIONS

The team processed qualitative data through "matrixed relational content analysis," which identifies the co-occurrence of concepts captured in FGDs and interviews, and groups them into categories. This approach permitted a structured analysis of relationships between and among different types of conflict, governance issues, livelihoods and poverty, disaggregated by generation and gender.

Quantitative data collected by the Barometer was summarized and compiled to produce descriptive statistics. The team did not conduct inferential statistical analysis owing to the small sample. Because the study employed snowball convenience sampling, majority ethnic groups were oversampled with some minority ethnic groups not included at all. Further, conducting interviews and focus groups by telephone meant that direct observation of body language was impossible, and individuals without access to a telephone—e.g., marginalized women and youth—were under-sampled.

Finally, informed by experience from the Central African Republic, the team allows that Barometer respondents tend to overstate the strength of their community's social fabric. The team was also unable to conduct a random survey with the Barometer due to COVID-19 restrictions. To compensate for these limitations, the team invited key stakeholders to virtual validation workshops before finalizing the report.

Findings

Findings are grouped by Profile, Problem, People, and Process. Under Profile, the report considers political, external, socio-cultural, and economic contexts; gender; and an estimate of local levels of social cohesion. Under Problem, the report considers insecurity, economy, insufficient responses, and national government legitimacy. The section on People is organized by perpetrators of violence, governance mobilizers, and mobilizers for peace and social cohesion. Process discussion covers factors escalating and deescalating conflict. The findings section concludes with an analysis of potential trajectories as the conflict evolves.

PROFILE

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Pre-colonial legacies still impact the values and behavior of people living in Sahelian Africa. Of specific note is the model of governance found in the Mandé Charter elaborated by Soundiata Keita, the founder of the Mali Empire in the thirteenth century.[19] The Charter offered a federated model of governance granting a high degree of political autonomy and religious freedom to the diverse political entities within the Mali empire and rules for maintaining interethnic harmony.[20] Sahelian and other pre-industrial empires were ruled under patrimonial modes of governance.[21]

French colonial rule replaced the pre-colonial political order, especially the Muslim states resisting the French conquest, with centralized French administrative structures, while allowing small villages to retain their traditional authority structures, which remain strong in the present day tri-border area.[22] Fixed territorial borders separated ethnic groups previously living together and divided groups between different states while closed borders restricted the mobility of pastoralists and stimulated smuggling.

The French created a small African auxiliary elite based on French education that became an "inheritance elite"[23] which assumed power at independence and control over inherited French colonial institutions without the human, military and financial resources that enabled France to rule over millions of their colonial subjects. The French model of decentralization adopted by postcolonial francophone Sahelian states unilaterally set the size, boundaries and number of local government units on uniform criteria established by the central government without consulting local

19 For more details about the Mali Empire and its legacy, see: Nehemia Levtzion. 2000. Ancient Ghana and Mali (London: Methuen). Cheibane Coulibaly. 2016. Crise Politico-Institutionnel au Mali: Essai de philosophique Mandingue (Paris: Harmattan).

20 For example, see Ousmane Sy, Ambroise Dakouo, and Kadari Traoré. 2016. National Dialogue in Mali: Lessons from the 1991 National Conference for the Nascent Conference of National Understanding (Berghof Foundation) for references to the importance of Mandé traditions in opposition to the French concept of secular centralized state not respecting local autonomy and religious traditions.

21 Sahelian rulers in poor, still essentially pre-industrial states operate much like patrimonial rulers. See S.N. Eisenstadt. 1962. The Political Systems of Empires (New York: Free Press of Glencoe) and Sheldon Gellar "State-Building and Nation-Building in West Africa," in Building States and Nations, Vol. II Edited by S.N. Eisenstadt and Stein Rokkan (Beverly Hills, Sage Publications), 384-426 for extensive application of the concept of neo-patrimonialism to Sahelian and other West African states.

22 Robert Delavignette. 1950. Freedom and Authority in French West Africa (London: Oxford University Press). The author highlights and praises traditional village authorities, which remained unchanged under colonial rule. They survive today in the economically neglected tri-border regions where French colonial and postcolonial state structures were largely absent.

23 For more details on the concept of the inheritance elite, see J.P Nettl and Roland Robertson. 1968. International Systems and the Modernization of Societies: The Formation of National Goals and Attitudes (London: Faber and Faber).

communities. The model also imposed the same uniform rules for local government units without adjusting for differences in size, economic structure, capacity to deliver services, traditional ties with other communities, and local authority structures.[24] This practice continued after independence.

In general, postcolonial (1960–2020) politics have been marked by long periods of autocratic and military rule while open and free multi-party elections are a recent development. National politics have largely been based on clientelism and cronyism, and dominated by an aging political class that is losing legitimacy. State inability to provide adequate public services has increased distrust in national governments, political parties and national leaders. Additionally, the exclusion of youth, women and other marginalized groups have further disenfranchised the general population, which sees government as supporting the needs of a small minority.

> *"It's like the doctor visiting the patient after he's already dead."*
>
> **—PEULH MALE PASTORALIST REFERRING TO GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO INSECURITY IN THE REGION.**

Like the colonial state, the postcolonial states have largely concentrated financial and public services in the capital cities while neglecting the periphery. The states are failing to invest in infrastructure, agriculture, education and health facilities. The state's minimal presence at the periphery when combined with deteriorating environmental conditions, youth bulge and high youth unemployment set the stage for outbreaks of inter-ethnic and inter-community conflicts and banditry. In turn, the state's failure to enter the tri-border area and address these issues opens the door for violent extremists. Instead of fighting to protect populations against banditry, criminal networks and extremist attacks, the state has fled and allowed the tri-border area to become a chaotic, ungovernable, high-conflict zone and hotbed of anti-government activity.

One Peulh pastoralist in Mali said of the government's response to insecurity in the region: "It's like the doctor visiting the patient after he's already dead." This dim view of service delivery and center versus periphery is supported by Afrobarometer surveys. The 2019 Afrobarometer[25] showed a continued decline of popular support for democracy, with increased respect for local and religious leaders. According to Afrobarometer (2016, 2018), West Africans trusted their local leaders more than any other form of authority, with 72% of Burkinabe respondents indicating their trust in these institutions (68% in Niger and 63% in Mali).

EXTERNAL FORCES

Forces external to the Sahel continue to play a role in shaping the cultural, economic and political landscape of the tri-border region. First, there is a long tradition of religious influence on the sub-region from the Middle East via trans-Saharan trade routes connecting Mali and Niger to North Africa and the Muslim world.

Leadership of Sahelian-led extremist movements have links—both ideological and economic—with ISIS and Al Qaeda in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and other Arab Sunni Gulf states have promoted Wahhabi doctrines by financing the building of mosques, providing scholarships for study in Arab countries, and attacking Sufi and other tolerant forms of Islam in Sahelian Africa with some success. Violent extremist movements based on Salafist principles—like Al Qaeda and ISIS in the Middle East and AQIM in North Africa—seek to create a global Islamist state. These movements have

24 For an early critique of centralized state models, see The Failure of the Centralized State: Institutions and Self-Governance in Africa. 1995. Edited by James S. Wunsch and Dele Olowu (San Francisco: ICS Press).
For a critique of more current decentralization policies and weaknesses of centralized states in Africa, see Decentralization in Africa: The Paradox of State Strength. 2014. Edited by J. Tyler Dickovick and James S. Wunsch (Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner Publishers).

25 Afrobarometer is a non-partisan, pan-African research institution conducting public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, economy and society in more than 30 countries repeated on a regular cycle.

influenced the religious ideology, strategy and tactics of affiliated North African and Sahelian violent extremist movements operating in the tri-border area.

Second, France, as the former colonial power, has been working with G5 Sahel[26] forces to fight extremist organizations, but is criticized for not having done more to defeat them.[27] The United States and Germany are other external powers to have small contingents of special forces and bases in the Sahel. Powerful international donors continue to shape Sahelian economic and financial policies which do not always represent the most marginalized communities and individuals.

There is a long tradition of religious influence on the sub-region from the Middle East via trans-Saharan trade routes connecting Mali and Niger to North Africa and the Muslim world.

Third, Libya under Muammar Gaddafi, had ambitions to become leader of a pan-African union of states, and was a major influence in Sahelian Africa. Gaddafi had close ties with many Sahelian presidents. He championed Tuaregs in the 1980s and 1990s and brought in thousands of Tuaregs to Libya as workers and mercenary soldiers while oppressing the Toubou minority.[28] His fall and death in 2011 resulted in thousands of heavily armed Tuaregs returning to Mali, many of whom joined the Tuareg rebellion or violent extremist and self-defense groups led by Tuaregs.

Finally, Algeria is a significant player as a recipient of illicit goods from Mali in the Trans-Saharan trade route and a source of arms and consumer goods for Mali. Algeria's southern desert border also served as a sanctuary and launching pad for AQIM and other North African Jihadist groups. In June 2020, Abdelmalek Droukdel, AQIM's leader, was killed by French commandos only a few kilometers south of the Algerian border.

SOCIO-CULTURAL

Islam is the majority religion in Mali (90%), Niger (98%), and Burkina Faso (60%), but Burkina Faso is the most religiously pluralistic as it is also home to sizable communities of Catholics, Protestants, and adherents of traditional religions comprising 40% of the population. When originally converting to Islam, African rulers made no attempt to impose Islam on their subjects and continued to maintain traditional Africa religious rituals while hosting Muslim clerics in their courts.[29] For their part, Muslim clerics followed the Suwarian tradition, which believed in the separation of politics and religion, and rejected the use of force and proselytizing and regarded conversion to Islam as the result of their piety.[30] Focus group discussions indicated that most Muslims continue to practice respect for and coexistence with other religions. Muslim organizations affiliated with the Tijani brotherhood are the strongest Sufi organizations

26 G5 Sahel is an institutional framework for the coordination of regional cooperation in development policies and security. Its members are Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

27 In Mali, massive demonstrations led by Mahmoud Dicko in Bamako in June demanding the resignation of the president have also criticized the French and called for the withdrawal of French troops. For their part, violent extremists have demanded the departure of French and foreign troops as a pre-condition for negotiating with the government. Following three months of persistent protests, by midnight August 18, 2020, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, on state-run television, announced his resignation after a military coup.

28 The Toubou were a repressed pastoralist minority in southern Libya until the fall of Gaddafi. See Christophe Boisbouvier. 2012. "Libye: Quand les Toubous se réveillent" Jeune Afrique, May 12, 2012. Tuaregs and Toubous comprise 85% of the population in the Sahara Desert. They have been allies and enemies of the Tuaregs. The Toubou joined the Tuareg rebellion in the early 1990s. For Toubou presence in Niger, see Ressortissants Toubou, Note d'Information sur la Communauté Toubou-Teda du Niger. Niamey: May 2012.

29 See Lamin Sanneh. 1996. Piety and Power: Muslims and Christians in West Africa (New York: Orbis Books).

30 Salim Suwari was an influential Muslim Sahelian cleric in the 16th century who provided theological justification for Muslim acceptance of other religions and coexistence with non-Muslim rulers that took place after the demise of the Mali and Songhai Empires.

in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso.[31] Traditional African religious practices and Catholic Church influence are strongest in Burkina Faso.

Modern Wahhabist religious practices and doctrines gained momentum after independence and permitted Sahelian countries to renew and strengthen ties with Muslim states in North Africa and the Middle East . These relationships had been sharply curtailed and controlled by the French colonial administration. The strongest Wahhabi presence is in national capitals like Bamako and Niamey and large urban centers. Wahhabis have criticized Sufi and Suwarian religious practices, such as visiting the tombs of famous religious leaders, celebrating the birth of Mohammed as a religious holiday, and laxity in adhering to Sharia law.[32] Wahhabi leaders attracted young men through loans, arranging low cost marriages and establishing Muslim learning institutions.[33] They criticize the failings of westernized secular states and political leaders and offer Islam as the alternative and solution. Despite differences in doctrines, Wahhabi and Sufi religious leaders in Mali and Niger vigorously opposed Family Code legislation violating traditional Sharia regulations, including those that would advance women's rights.[34]

In the face of the rise of radical violent extremist movements, conflict between Wahhabi and Sufi leaders has somewhat declined. Both movements condemn religious violent extremism and reject Salafist doctrines articulated by the jihadists. Though religious conflicts are a reality, religion is not a major cause of violent conflict in Sahelian countries.

Tuaregs[35] and Peulhs[36] and have historically been more Islamized than the Bambara, Mossi,[37] and Dogon[38] ethnic groups. Conflicts between the more and less Islamized ethnic groups are based primarily on differences in occupational and political majority-minority statuses which exacerbate relationships between these groups. Peulhs and Tuaregs are primarily nomadic pastoralists while the Mossi, Djerma, and Bambara are agriculturalists. Many Peulhs and Tuaregs have adopted sedentary lifestyles while Bambara, Mossi, and Djerma have acquired livestock. The Peulhs and Tuaregs were dominant during pre-colonial times but the Mossi, Djerma, and Bambara have become dominant groups. The Dogon are hunters and a minority group that

31 Various branches of the Tijani brotherhood have emerged as the prominent Sufi brotherhoods in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Members of the Niassene Tijani branch originating in Senegal have millions of followers in Nigeria and Niger. Tijani religious leaders are also very influential in Mali. For the history of Tijani influences and late 18th century and early 19th century jihads launched primarily against lax Muslim states, see Jean-Louis Triaud and David Robinson (eds.). 2000. La Tijaniyya: Une Confrérie Musulmane a la conquête de l'Afrique (Paris: Karthala).

32 For analysis of conflicts between Wahhabis and Sufis, see David Westerlund and Eva Rosander (eds.). 1997. African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters Between Sufis and Islamists. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. The book was written before the rise of Sahelian jihadist movements.

33 For the origin and spread of Wahhabi doctrines in West Africa, see Lansiné Kaba. 1974. The Wahhabiyya:Islamic Reform and Politics in French West Africa. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

34 Pressure by Muslim leaders in Mali and Niger succeeded in getting their governments to cancel Family Code reforms that violated traditional norms.

35 Devon Douglas-Bowers. 2013. The Crisis in Mali: A historical perspective on the Tuareg People. Global Research. February 2013. Notes complexity of socio-economic and cultural patterns among Peulhs and political differences Tuareg communities.

36 Modibo Ghaly Cissé. April 22, 2020. Understanding Fulani Perspectives on the Sahel Crisis. Africa Center for Strategic Studies, April 22, 2020.
Boukary Sangare. 2019. Fulani People and Jihadism in Sahel and West African Countries. Observatoire du monde arabo-musulman et du Sahel. La Fondation pour la recherche stratégique.

37 Elliott Skinner. 1984. The Mossi of the Upper Volta: Political Development of the Sudanese People. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

38 For a history of relationships between Peulhs and Dogons, see Alpha Oumar Dougoukolo, Ba-Konare. 2019. Peuls et Dogons dans la tourmente au Mali:histoire d'une longue relation ambivalente. The Conversation, March 2019.

seeks to maintain power in their land. Traditionally, these groups have been governed by a caste system with traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.[39]

Ethnic groups are by no means biologically homogeneous. Intermarriage between different ethnic and religious groups is common and attendance at other religious groups' ceremonies is commonplace, especially in Burkina Faso.

The persistence of the traditional caste system based on a hierarchy consisting of nobles, hunters, artisans, musicians, and former slaves continues to determine individuals' social and economic status. Although steadily declining in urban areas, the social hierarchy based on inherited status continues to survive, especially in poor rural Sahelian areas in the tri-border region.

> *"We are in a region where rural youth feel hopeless."*
>
> **—NGO PRESIDENT, MALI**

Former slaves and dependents comprise the troops of Sahelian jihadist groups led by some Tuareg and Peulh leaders. The leaders offer material incentives as well as an appeal to the injustices and poor treatment imposed on them by the state, employers and society. The former slaves and dependents are also tempted to engage in banditry and work for criminal networks, and are often used by politicians to break up protests and rival political party rallies.

Members of the warrior and religious nobility have high social status in their ethnic and religious groups.[40] The hunter caste in particular plays a major role in many of the self-defense groups in Burkina Faso and Niger. The Dogon, for example, are known for their powerful self-defense group.

Rural and urban cultures are increasingly growing apart as educational and economic opportunities diverge in favor of towns and cities.[41] The resulting urban migration leads to increased competition for scarce employment opportunities and leaves many university graduates unemployed yet unwilling to return to rural communities where modern infrastructure and commodities are not available. University education provides few guarantees for employment and, despite their diplomas, most university graduates remain unemployed. Conversely, those remaining in rural environments have little formal education and are often unable to secure land for agriculture or animals for husbandry activities. The resulting unemployment for urban and rural youth has led to an increase in illicit drug use, crime and banditry.

In many FGDs, young people said that they were increasingly moving away from traditional systems such as caste which are perceived as lacking authority or power. They also held negative views of national government and state structures which hold legitimate power. In the words of the president of a transnational paysan NGO, "We are in a region where rural youth feel hopeless." The resulting lack of estimable government structure has created a power vacuum that external forces seek to fill. By comparison, FGDs made it evident that local traditional and religious leaders garner significantly more trust and confidence than national leaders. This point highlights the difference between the referent power of traditional leaders and the legitimate power of national leaders; and the resulting dissonance created in community members.

39 For details of precolonial caste systems, see Tal Tamari. 1997. Les Castes de l'Afrique Occidentale: Artisans et musiciens endogames. Nanterre: Société d'Institut d'ethnologie.

40 For a discussion of role differences between warriors and marabouts, and evolving practices among the Malinké, see Robert Launay. 1992. Beyond the Stream: Islam and Society in a West African Town. Berkeley: University of California Press.

41 This can be seen in differences between language and vocabulary used by rural youth in outlying areas and young people in the capital.

ECONOMIC

Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali rank near the bottom of human and economic development scales. Economic outputs in the Sahel continue to be connected largely to land ownership and subsistence agriculture, which generates little surplus. Outputs include cereals and grains, forestry products, and minerals such as gold. For pastoralists, animals are the main source of economic opportunity.[42] Legacy land tenure systems are based on the rights of the founder of the village and his descendants to allocate land to family members and newcomers.[43] Traditionally, land could not be sold, which accorded free access rights to the fisherman, hunters and pastoralists in need of livestock grazing land, water points and forests. In some rural areas, this legacy system prevails, but the push for land titles is restricting access to the commons. The result has been an increase in pastoralist-farmer conflicts over grazing lands, watering points and forests.

Additionally, government takeover of the commons for large-scale economic development projects, such as gold mining and irrigated agriculture, has restricted access to resources and land, depriving local communities of control over and use of natural resources. While generating revenues for the state, its office holders, concessionaires and investors, this wealth has contributed little to the well-being of the ordinary citizen. Indeed, mining for the masses has been reduced to artisanal forms that have led to pollution of water sources, degradation of grazing areas, and fighting among youth seeking to stake claims. Because much of the profit from artisanal ventures is siphoned by middlemen, extremist groups and crime networks have benefitted materially from mal governance of precious resources.[44] The Liptako Gourma triangle offers a prime example of the enabling links among extremism, crime and corrupt exploitation of precious minerals.[45]

Although less pronounced than in resource-cursed states like Nigeria, the Sahel's mismanagement of its natural wealth has made it vulnerable to extremist ideology. French control over uranium mining and Chinese control of oil production in Niger have denied residents access to large swaths of land while providing few employment benefits.[46] This situation provoked violent protests and anti-government sentiment.[47] Similarly, when world market prices for oil and uranium were high, rampant rent-seeking by Niger's politicians and their allies undid potential gains for development. The FGDs in this assessment reflected the views of the average citizen—and especially youth—that those in power merely exist to satisfy their greed while the majority stays mired in poverty.

Until recently, Sahelians' most reliable economic asset has been land. However, the shocks and stresses related to climate change and high annual population growth averaging 3% or more, have placed enormous pressure on marginal land. The

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42 For a detailed description of the pastoralist system, see United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel. August 2018. Launch of Study on Pastoralism and Security in West Africa and the Sahel. UNOWAS.

43 For a review of land tenure systems and policies, before the coming of the violent extremists, see Oliver Hughes. 2014. Literature Review of Land Tenure in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali: Context and opportunities. Baltimore: Catholic Relief Services.

44 See International Crisis Group. November 13, 2019. Getting a Grip on Central Sahel's Gold Rush. Africa Report No. 282. For a detailed analysis of the importance of gold-mining in generating incomes for poor Burkinabé in the Centre-Nord region, see Hermann M. Konkobo and Issaka Sawadogo. February 2020. GLOCON Country Report, No. 5, Berlin: GLOCON.

45 Assanvo, Williams. Dakono, Baba. (2019)Violent extremism, organised crime, and local conflicts in Liptako-Gourma. Institute For Security Studies.

46 World Nuclear Association. 2020. Uranium in Niger.

47 A controversial report completed by the Réseau des Organisations pour la Transparence et l'Analyse Budgétaire (ROTAB) analyzed extractive industries in Niger in 2014. The " Etude de référence sur les entreprises et les droits de l'homme: cas des industries extractives au Niger" identified a number of conflict points between local communities and extractive industries.

exhaustion of the soil, soil erosion, and frequent drought and flooding have made farming and livestock production more precarious and unpredictable. A decline in productivity, the exodus of young males, and the need for income have pushed male family heads to give women access to land. This trend is most salient in Burkina Faso and Mali but was also referenced in discussions with women in Niger.

A result of this trend in the tri-border region is increasing economic deprivation for poor male and female youth, who face dim prospects of owning land, livestock or social capital. Studies on this topic show marked increases of migration in the sub-region, with lower levels of migration by young women who are less free to pick up and leave as their male counterparts.[48] Migrants typically are low-caste dependents of wealthier farmers and pastoralists. They care for animals of farmers and merchants. Adult male family heads often sell land and livestock to meet basic needs, leaving no legacy for male children who then have insufficient means to marry. Female children have less chance of inheriting land and rely on marriage. Understandably, rural young men and women seek work in urban centers, mining areas, and in neighboring countries. Others join jihadi movements for pay.

GENDER

Gender inequality is a major contributing factor to conflict and fragility. Studies have shown that countries with higher levels of gender inequality are more likely to be involved in conflict, experience more intense violent conflict, and have more fragile post-conflict peace than countries where women have a higher status in society.[49] Further, gender inequality is more directly linked as a factor contributing to civil war than either democratic or economic development.[50] All three Sahelian countries have national quotas on the number of women who must be represented in the national assemblies, but lack significant implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Mali is the closest to meeting that quota and elected 41 women to its 147-seat assembly in 2020. Burkina's representation of women to men is 17:127 and Niger's 29:171. Despite this low representation at national and municipal levels, women are recognized by religious and traditional leaders as valuable and contributing members of Sahelian society and peace. One example of their influence is the 2014 march widely credited with the removal from office of President Blaise Compaoré.[51] Across the region, women play an important role in building social cohesion by reinforcing family values through formal and informal women's associations, sharing positive morals and values with children, and advocating for formal education and health centers.

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48 International Organization for Migration. 2019. Setting up a road map for mixed migration in West and North Africa.

49 Caprioli, M. 2005. Primed for violence: The role of gender inequality in predicting internal conflict. International Studies Quarterly, 49, 161–178.
Demeritt, J. H. R., Nichols, A. D., and Kelly, E. G. 2014. Female participation and civil war relapse. Civil Wars, 16, 346–368.
Gizelis, T.-I. 2009. Gender empowerment and United Nations peacebuilding. Journal of Peace Research, 46, 505–523.
Gizelis, T.-I. (2011). A country of their own: Women and peacebuilding. Conflict Management and Peace Science, 28, 522–542.
Melander, E. (2005a). Gender equality and intrastate armed conflict. International Studies Quarterly, 49, 695–714.

50 Bjarnegård, E., Melander, E., Bardall, G., Brounéus, K., Forsberg, E., Johansson, K., et al. 2015. Gender, peace and armed conflict. SIPRI Yearbook. Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

51 BBC. October 28, 2014. Huge Burkina Faso march against President Compaore. One author participated in the referenced march and witnessed the engagement and contributions of women. Women spoke on television and radio, and directly called for the removal of President Compaore.

Traditional land tenure laws in the Sahel prohibit the ownership of land by women, but these norms and official laws are beginning to change[52]. Further, Imams and Quranic schoolteachers interviewed openly welcomed the participation and engagement of girls and women in their schools and mosques. Despite this openness, women consulted in the study did not feel they held any significant power outside of the household. However, as men flee rural areas or join militias, women manage the fields, businesses, and income-generating activities for households. FGDs and interviews also demonstrated the generosity displayed by women in host communities toward IDPs and refugees. Further, women tended to define peace and normalcy as a return to markets and schools, while men focused on the removal of violent actors, local and external.

SOCIAL COHESION ESTIMATE

Data collected through the CRS Mini Social Cohesion Barometer was used to establish quantitative estimates of the level of social cohesion for each of the nine study zones. The social cohesion estimate (SCE) is used to gauge the level of social cohesion in the context of each zone. Three dimensions were identified for each zone (0-5, with 5 being the highest) based on the dimensions of social cohesion captured by the Barometer: socio-cultural, economic and political. A summative estimate was then calculated based on the means of the three distinct dimensions. A higher SCE implies a community may be better equipped to resolve conflict and resist divisive outside influences. Community leaders and traditional leaders usually reported higher levels of social cohesion than their less-well-off peers.

As these data were collected concurrently with lockdown protocols in relation to the COVD-19 pandemic, the sample size and representativeness of the data are severely limited. Only 90 individuals (24 women) were accessible by telephone, and data collectors were instructed to prioritize community leaders.[53] These data points are preliminary and will continue to be expanded over time, creating a series of chronological snapshots of community social cohesion.

TABLE 3 MINI SOCIAL COHESION BAROMETER FINDINGS BY ZONE (0–5, WITH 5 BEING THE HIGHEST)

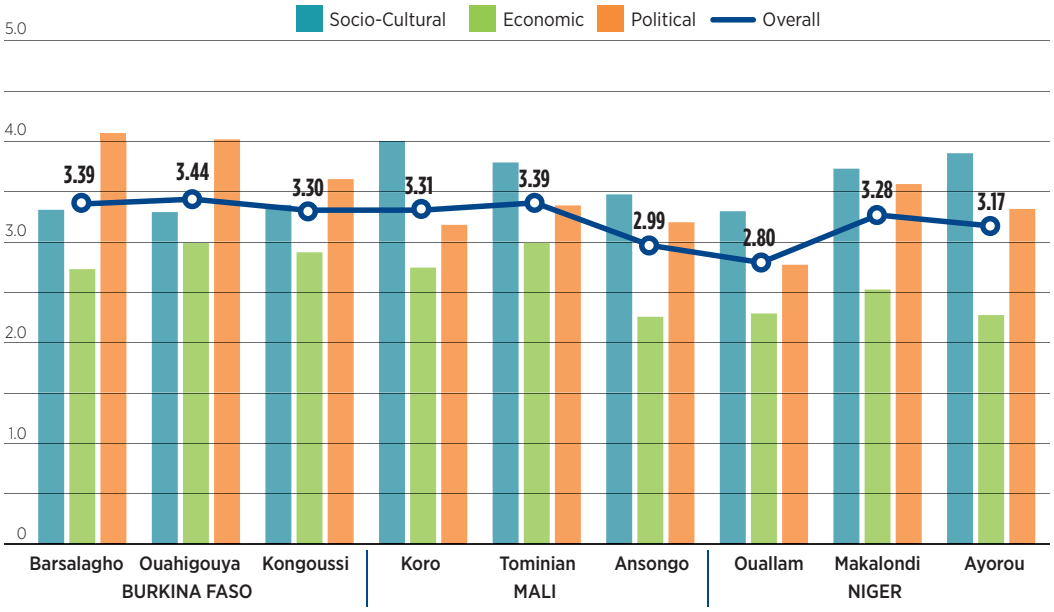
	BURKINA FASO			MALI			NIGER		
DIMENSION	KAYA	OUAHIGOUYA	KONGOUSSI	KORO	TOMINIAN	ANSONGO	OUALLAM	TORODI	AYOROU
Socio-cultural	3.33	3.30	3.38	4.00	3.80	3.48	3.31	3.73	3.88
Economic	**2.74**	**2.99**	**2.89**	**2.75**	3.00	**2.27**	**2.29**	**2.53**	**2.28**
Political	4.08	4.03	3.63	3.18	3.37	3.22	2.78	3.58	3.33
Overall	3.39	3.44	3.30	3.31	3.39	**2.99**	**2.80**	3.28	3.17

52 Artisanal mining is creating new property ownership opportunities for women in Burkina Faso and Mali while also reconfiguring land tenure rights. See: Brottem, L.V, Ba, L. 2019. Gendered livelihoods and land tenure: The case of artisanal gold miners in Mali, West Africa. Geoforumt, 105, 54-62.

53 The SPI project team is, however, implementing the Barometer on an ongoing basis to expand the database of responses. The data will be used to track social cohesion estimates across time and identify trends.

Social Cohesion in the Sahel

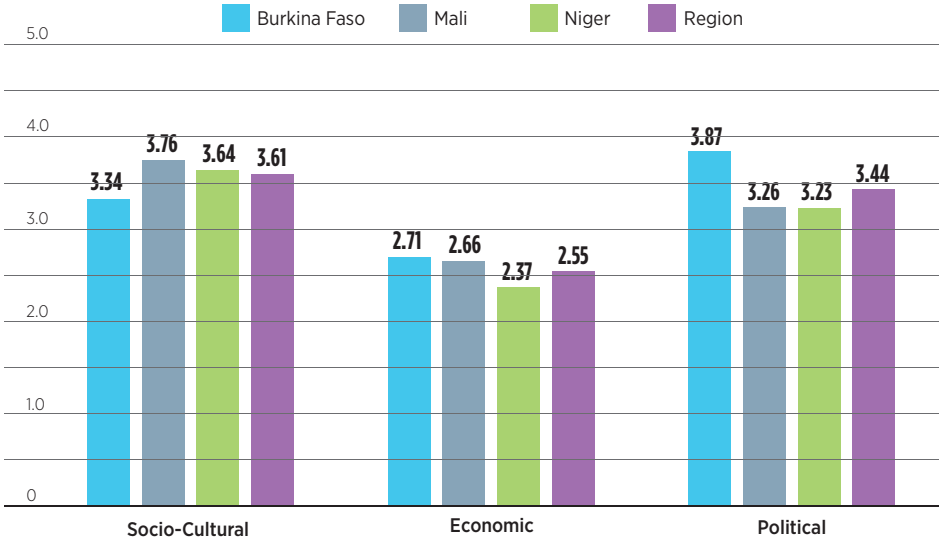
0–5, with 5 denoting highest level of cohesion



Data represent the responses of 90 community leaders across the 9 zones.

Social Cohesion in the Sahel

by dimension



Data represent the responses of 90 community leaders across the 9 zones.

Economic social cohesion scores were significantly lower than other scores across all zones, because most respondents answered, “not at all” or “slightly” to the following prompts.

- E3: Wealth is managed fairly.
- E4: Living conditions are decent for all.
- E6: Well-being is guaranteed to all.

Conversely, scores were high for prompts addressing national pride and integration into their communities. Across all zones and countries, respondents were proud to call themselves a national of their country. While proud, respondents did not always feel they were united or shared a common history or value system; this was particularly true of Mali.

Respondents across the region also identified weaknesses in political social cohesion as very few individuals agreed that "everyone has the opportunity to participate in the political process," that "legality is respected" or that community members "share the same values." The Burkinabe interviewed scored particularly high on political social cohesion. Triangulation of Barometer results with qualitative data indicates that the ouster of Blaise Compaoré continues to drive a narrative of empowerment for Burkinabe. Raw data and findings can be found on tables 1, 2, 3 with orange indicating critical weaknesses.

TABLE 4. SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSION RESPONSES BY ZONE

SOCIO-CULTURAL	KAYA, BF	OUAH, BF	KONGOU, BF	KORO, ML	TOMINIAN, ML	ANSONGO, ML	OUALLAM, NI	MAKALONDI, NI	AYOROU, NI
You feel integrated in your community	3.50	3.50	3.90	3.80	4.10	3.60	4.00	4.50	4.20
People are accepted as they are	3.50	3.70	3.80	3.80	3.30	3.50	3.40	3.30	4.10
Generations respect each other	3.60	3.90	3.40	4.20	4.00	3.50	**2.90**	3.50	3.40
Cultural diversity is put at the service of the nation	**2.80**	**2.40**	3.20	3.80	3.50	3.00	**2.80**	4.10	3.50
Neighbors have a friendly relationship	3.60	3.50	3.40	4.60	4.60	4.00	3.60	3.90	3.90
The dignity of every person is respected	3.00	**2.80**	2.60	3.80	3.30	3.30	3.20	3.10	4.20

TABLE 5. ECONOMIC DIMENSION RESPONSES BY ZONE

ECONOMIC	KAYA, BF	OUAH, BF	KONGOU, BF	KORO, ML	TOMINIAN, ML	ANSONGO, ML	OUALLAM, NI	MAKALONDI, NI	AYOROU, NI
People in my community help one another in times of need	4.22	4.20	3.60	4.20	3.80	3.90	**2.80**	3.80	3.60
People have equal access to livelihood and employment opportunities regardless of who they are	**2.80**	3.00	3.10	3.40	3.30	**2.70**	**2.20**	**2.50**	**2.20**
Wealth is managed fairly	**1.60**	**2.30**	**2.40**	**2.10**	**1.90**	**2.20**	**1.40**	**1.40**	**1.10**
Living conditions are decent for all	**1.60**	**2.30**	**2.50**	**1.40**	**2.30**	**1.00**	**2.30**	**2.30**	**2.00**
People in trouble are helped	3.40	3.00	**2.90**	3.10	3.80	**2.30**	**2.50**	3.10	3.20
Well-being is guaranteed to all	**2.83**	3.14	**2.88**	**2.30**	**2.89**	**1.50**	**2.55**	**2.11**	**1.60**

TABLE 6. POLITICAL DIMENSION RESPONSES BY ZONE

POLITICAL	KAYA, BF	OUAH, BF	KONGOU, BF	KORO, ML	TOMINIAN, ML	ANSONGO, ML	OUALLAM, NI	MAKALONDI, NI	AYOROU, NI
I am proud to be my nationality	5.00	5.00	3.89	4.90	4.60	4.40	4.00	5.00	4.70
The people of my nationality are united	3.00	3.30	3.20	3.20	**1.80**	3.20	3.30	4.20	4.10
Everyone has the opportunity to participate in the political process	3.90	4.10	4.00	**2.10**	**2.80**	3.50	**2.80**	**2.80**	**1.90**
Legality is respected	4.00	3.90	3.70	**2.70**	3.80	**2.70**	**2.30**	**2.20**	**1.70**
We share the same values	3.60	**2.90**	**2.90**	**2.80**	3.60	3.00	**2.40**	4.30	3.80
We share the same story	5.00	5.00	4.10	3.40	3.60	**2.50**	**1.90**	3.00	3.80

In the Sahel study, two additional questions were added to the Barometer; the first to gauge the number of people who had been recruited or knew someone recruited to a violent actor, and the second to evaluate respondent perceptions around the prudence of sending children to school. These questions were added to try to

understand how widespread recruitment was in specific communities and to gain a better understanding of access to schools.

In Mali, half of respondents (46%) knew someone or had themselves been recruited to a violent group. The majority of respondents (70%) also felt that it was not at all possible to send children to school.

In Burkina Faso, more than half of respondents mentioned that they or someone they knew had been recruited to a violent group (87%). Some 20% of respondents mentioned that it was not prudent to send children to school.

TABLE 7 COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF SECURITY

CONFLICT	KAYA, BF	OUAH, BF	KONGOU, BF	KORO, ML	TOMINIAN, ML	ANSONGO, ML	OUALLAM, NI	MAKALONDI, NI	AYOROU, NI
In the last 6 months, have you or someone you know, been invited to join an armed group? (includes self-defense group)	**3.60**	**3.10**	3.00	3.00	2.30	1.80	0.40	0.40	0.30
It is prudent and possible to send children to school today.	**2.50**	3.00	**2.90**	**1.40**	**1.40**	**2.20**	4.00	**2.40**	**2.60**

GENDER AND THE SOCIAL COHESION BAROMETER

The Social Cohesion Barometer was used to engage community members in each of the intervention zones, but oversampled men due to their predominance in communal and regional leadership. Limiting the depth of analysis, the Barometer focused on village chiefs, mayors, prefects and merchants while largely overlooking the participation of farmers or herders. As the analysis was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the sample size was further restricted to participants owning a mobile phone and a desire to engage in a phone survey. While the limited sample size restricts the representativeness of the data, significant trends concerning economic access and political representation are discernable. Further, the gender-aggregated results speak to the limited inclusion of women in local governance and positions of leadership. A comparison of results between men and women is restricted by the weak availability and engagement of women, especially in Burkina Faso.

TABLE 8. GENDER BREAKDOWN OF BAROMETER RESPONDENTS

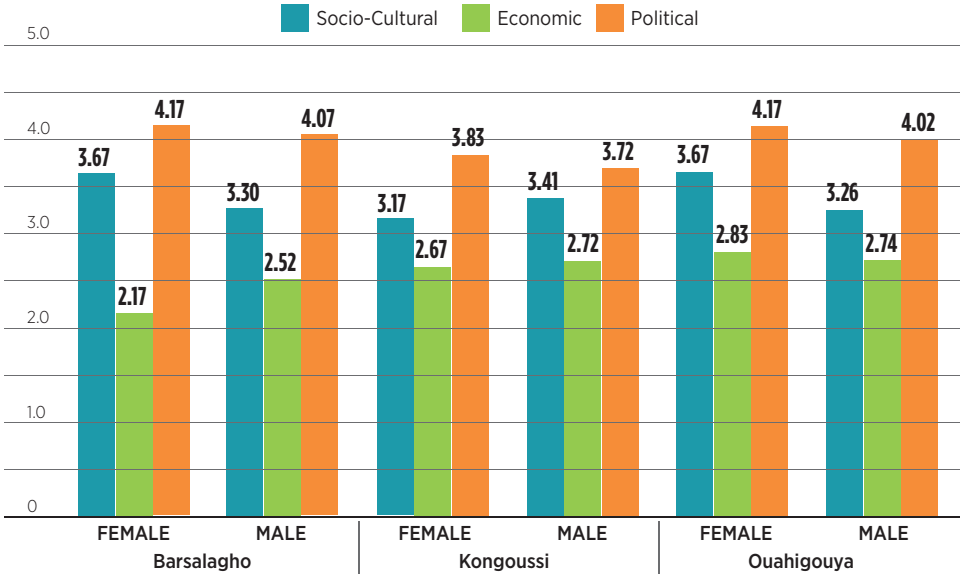
COUNTRY	ZONE	FEMALE	MALE
Burkina Faso	Kaya	1	9
	Kongoussi	1	9
	Ouahigouya	1	9

COUNTRY	ZONE	FEMALE	MALE
Mali	Ansongo	2	8
	Koro	6	4
	Tominian	1	9
Niger	Ayorou	5	5
	Ouallam	4	6
	Torodi	3	7
Total		**24**	**66**

In Burkina Faso, only one female respondent was engaged in each zone. Gender-disaggregated measures of social cohesion were difficult to compare in Burkina Faso due to the extremely limited number of women holding positions of power and leadership.[54] Because the Barometer was administered mostly to officials and traditional leaders, men were oversampled. The scores between men and women were roughly equivalent, with political social cohesion the strongest dimension and the economic dimension the lowest.

Gender Differences Across Dimensions of Social Cohesion in Burkina Faso

0–5, with 5 denoting highest level of cohesion

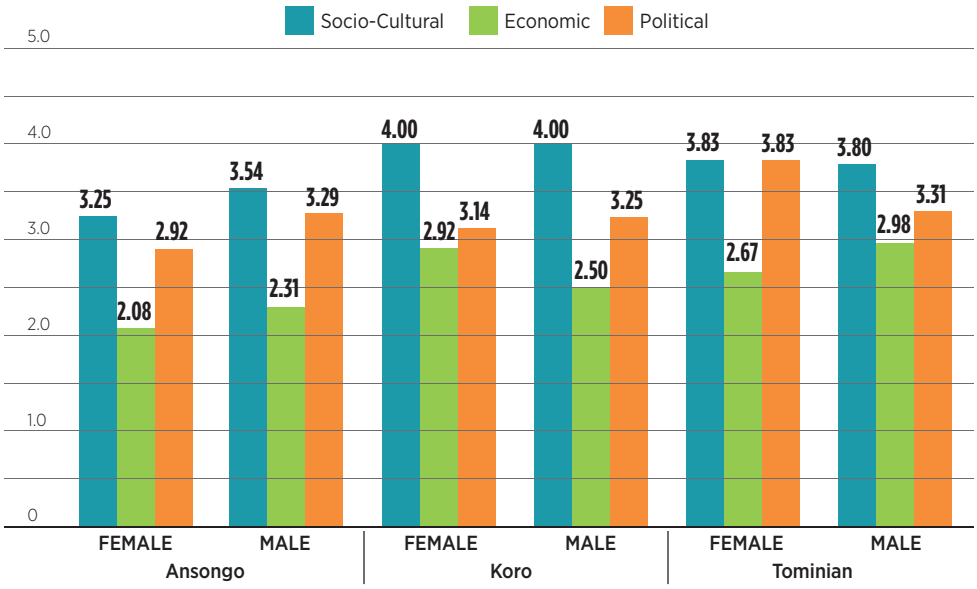


Gender-disaggregated measurements of social cohesion in Mali presented mixed results. Men and women scored comparably on cultural cohesion, but diverged around political and economic criteria. Men largely reported higher levels of political and economic cohesion, except in Koro, where women reported stronger levels of economic cohesion than their male counterparts. In Ansongo, women reported significantly lower scores than their male counterparts across all dimensions. In Tominian, only one woman was available for consultation.

54 For this study, the assessment team applied the Barometer to ordinary citizens, but oversampled leaders and office holders.

Gender Differences Across Dimensions of Social Cohesion in Mali

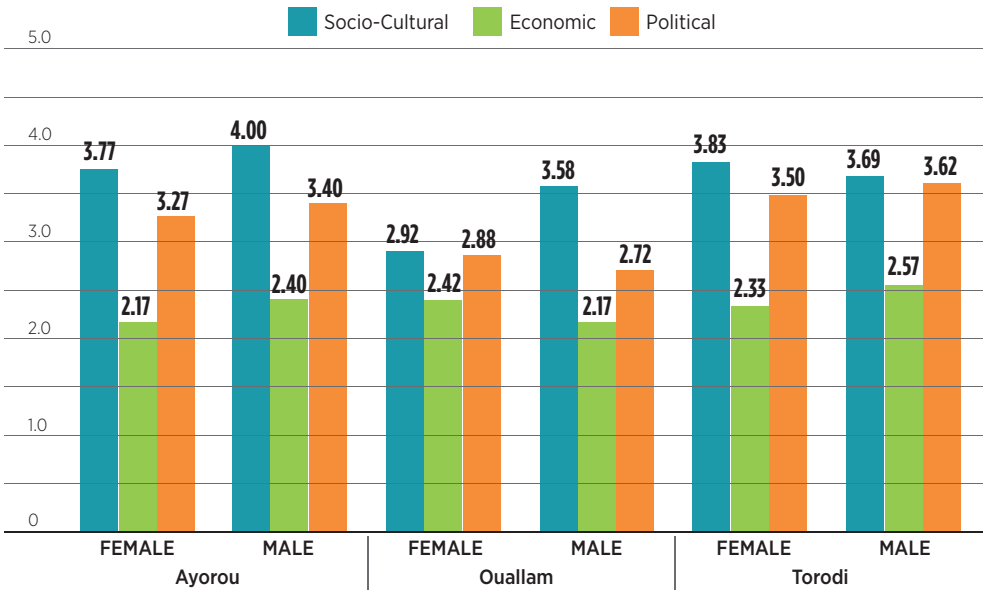
0–5, with 5 denoting highest level of cohesion



Results in Niger largely aligned with those in Mali. The cultural dimension of social cohesion ranked very high, while the economic dimension scored low. Scores between men and women were roughly equivalent with men perceiving stronger levels of social cohesion across the three dimensions.

Gender Differences Across Dimensions of Social Cohesion in Niger

0–5, with 5 denoting highest level of cohesion



The limited sample size restricted the representativeness of the data, but identifies trends that can be triangulated with data from FGDs and interviews. Notably, men and women viewed the economic dimension of their social cohesion as the weakest,

and women identified economic challenges and lack of access to markets as major barriers to peace in their communities.

TABLE 9: TRENDS IN SOCIAL COHESION DIMENSIONS ACROSS THE INTERVENTION ZONE

	STRONGEST DIMENSION	MEDIUM DIMENSION	WEAKEST DIMENSION
Burkina Faso	Political	Cultural	Economic
Mali	Cultural	Political	Economic
Niger	Cultural	Political	Economic

PROBLEM

INSECURITY

Security was identified as the overriding problem and priority for people in the tri-border area. Despite the efforts of governments to provide for the general well-being, safety and protection of citizens and people within their borders, physical insecurity has produced one million IDPs and thousands of refugees, destroyed local economies, and led to sharp increases in the need and demand for humanitarian aid. Focus group and interview participants shared confusion over who the perpetrators of the violence were. In Burkina Faso, a housewife said: "The problem is that we do not know the reason for this war. If someone declares war on you but you do not know the reason why, how can anyone resolve it?"

> *"The problem is that we do not know the reason for this war. If someone declares war on you but you do not know the reason why, how can anyone resolve it?"*
>
> **—HOUSEWIFE, BURKINA FASO**

The number of IDPs continues to grow, especially in rural areas where communities abandon their villages en masse and flee to neighboring communities, towns and cities. Humanitarian aid organizations lack the resources to meet the need and find it increasingly difficult to access displacement zones because of the violence and COVID-19.[55]

Security is more than freedom from physical harm. It includes food, health, and economic and environmental security.[56] Lacking security in these areas leads to lower standards of living, poorer health, fewer economic opportunities, greater stress and anxiety about the future, and higher mortality. In the high-conflict zones, local economies have been crippled by frequent attacks from violent extremists, bandits and self-defense organizations; severe restrictions on the mobility of residents; and state-enforced restrictions on markets. Violence is both a cause and effect of these other insecurities. As the president of a regional youth council in Niger said: "Peace is not only the end of a conflict, but it is also young people sheltered and employed."

Despite increased military spending, force of arms—as evidenced by the increase in violent attacks since 2018—has not improved security.[57] This dilemma is partially explained by the blurring of lines between the perpetrators and victims of violence. Ethnic minority groups, state defense forces, and self-defense groups are the perpetrators and victims of violence against civilians. To paraphrase a focus group participant, "there are no good or bad sides. The good side today becomes the bad side tomorrow."

55 Alexandra Lamarche. June11, 2020. Mounting Hunger in the Sahel: The Unintended Impact of COVID-19 Prevention. Issue Brief. Refugees International.

56 For an exploration of the relative importance of different forms of insecurity as perceived by local communities in Niger, see CASPA. 2017. Etude sur la perception de l'insécurité par les populations du Niger. Niamey: CASPA. 86.8% of Tilabéri residents expressed food and economic insecurity as the most important form of insecurity.

57 Cooke, Jennifer G. November 15, 2017. Understanding the G5 Sahel Joint Force: Fighting Terror, Building Regional Security? Washington, D.C: Center for Strategic & International Studies.

Women and children are the most vulnerable to violent conflict in the Sahel. Households are attacked, and women raped, kidnapped, left alone to fend for the family without strong representation in government. For women, peace is a state in which they can feel secure enough to engage in market activities and send their children to school. In Burkina Faso, women demonstrated support of self-defense groups, such as the Kogleweoogo but also recognized that self-defense groups could be magnets for violent attacks. Nonetheless, because they could not rely on government, women supported these groups and their male family member participants. According to one Burkinabe woman, "we do not know who a terrorist or criminal is. Maybe they begin as criminals but become terrorists." In such ambiguous circumstances, self-defense groups are known to their communities and are flourishing.

> *Peace is not only the end of a conflict, but it is also young people sheltered and employed."*
>
> **—PRESIDENT OF REGIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL, NIGER**

In Mali, women said they relied on self-defense groups such as Dozos and the government for physical security. Even though women believed the government should be providing security, they expressed little faith in the government's defense forces. Because self-defense groups were generally smaller and less well-armed than in Burkina or Mali, women in Niger relied heavily on the government for physical security and had relatively positive views of government defense forces. FGD participants and interviewees uniformly agreed that the conflict had moved beyond the scope of local authorities and self-defense groups but had varying levels of faith in the ability of their governments to end the conflict.

When asked to identify the targets of violence, most Burkinabe women claimed to have no idea. They said that everyone was a target and at risk of being killed. One woman said: "I'm sure there are targets, but we do not know who they are, and this is why everyone flees. It is impossible to know if it's you or your neighbor." Women in Mali and Niger identified traditional chiefs, *griots*, mayors and religious leaders as the targets of violent attacks.

ECONOMY

The FGDs and the Barometer surveys indicated that insufficient and inequitable access to wealth, livelihoods and natural resources were destroying the social fabric and increasing violent conflict. Everyone, from small-scale farmers to government officials, was concerned about the lack of economic opportunity and the inequitable access to jobs and natural resources.

Most of the sub-region's wealth consists of subsistence farming and pastoralism. The declining availability of arable land and grazing areas, population pressure, and competition for control of and access to natural resources, have aroused latent animosities among pastoralists and agriculturalists. Scarcity affects host communities' ability to welcome displaced persons. One Burkinabe woman said: "We feel their [IDP's] pain and suffering, but we too lack everything."

Scarcity of arable land leaves many young men unemployed. Poor and unemployed rural pastoralist youth are the most prone to joining or collaborating with violent organizations, crime networks or bandit groups to earn money. Virtually all focus groups identified youth unemployment and lack of economic opportunities as the main cause and consequence of violent conflict. The lack of employment opportunities, government support and access to economic resources needed to survive and start a family, ethnic stigmatization, and feelings of hopelessness have pushed unemployed and underemployed rural youth to abandon agriculture and seek their fortunes elsewhere. Further, the political, economic and social marginalization of

these youth has increased anti-government sentiment and led many to join extremist movements or turn to crime and banditry to earn a living.

Women identified economic disparities as the root cause of conflict in Burkina Faso and Mali. Women felt that social unease derives from poor living conditions and the inequitable distribution of wealth. One Burkinabe woman said that if the country was wealthy, then authorities should ensure that the entire population benefits. "We see one or two people profiting from the wealth of our country," she said. Women across the tri-border area said their access to land was limited despite progressive land tenure laws at national levels. Women in local leadership positions said village women were not courageous enough to ask for land. This point is rendered moot however by the same women's admission that decision-makers would not seriously consider the request for land anyway.

> *"We feel their pain and suffering, but we too lack everything."*
>
> **—BURKINABE WOMAN**

Women also worried about being able to feed their families. They noted that insecurity had caused market prices to double. They could no longer safely collect firewood from forests and were forced to buy it from distributors in towns. When asked to identify the perpetrators of violence, women cited uneducated and unemployed youth. They pleaded for job training and placement, savings clubs, micro-loans, and continued monitoring and check-ins from the providers of said services.

INSUFFICIENT HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT RESPONSES

The enormity and urgency of the humanitarian crisis underscores the inadequacy of national and international responses. Communities have done their best to provide IDPs basic foodstuffs—corn, oil, rice and household supplies. However, they acknowledge that "donations are not enough, and we cannot give them everything."[58] Burkinabe women credited the national government for food assistance but lamented the lack of water and shelter. Women in Niger and Mali recognized local and international NGOs for their contributions, but noted the dearth of shelter and economic opportunities. Women uniformly identified endemic poverty as the main source of conflict. "For me, the source of the conflict is poverty. Most people live in poverty and misery. [It is] irrelevant if you are employed or unemployed, you still live in misery."[59]

DECLINING FAITH IN AND LEGITIMACY OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

According to Afrobarometer surveys, confidence in national governments is low. The surveys indicate that most citizens prefer democracy over non-democratic systems and they strongly support decentralization and local government institutions. Burkina Faso has seen an increase from 38% to 47% in perceived "supply of democracy," reflecting improvements since the ouster of President Blaise Compaoré.[60] But the perceived supply of democracy in Niger and Mali has dropped from 59% to 27% in Niger and from 44% to 28% in Mali. Perhaps more sobering is the decline in the demand for democracy, which has slipped from 40% to 23% in Burkina Faso, and from 53% to 34% in Niger.[61]

This result could signal widespread cynicism regarding national leadership, and indicate deep malaise surrounding vertical social cohesion. FGDs and interviews confirmed that citizens put more trust in local than national government.

58 Burkinabe housewife in Kaya describing host communities' inability to respond to all the needs of IDPs.

59 Young Burkinabe woman describing conflict in her community.

60 Afrobarometer. 2016/2018.

61 Robert Mattes. 2019. Democracy in Africa: Demand, supply, and the 'dissatisfied democrat'. Afrobarometer Policy Paper, No. 54, February 2019.

Decentralization acts and policies have been implemented unevenly and resistance at the top to devolving powers has stymied democratic local governance.[62]

Women across all three countries said only their national-level governments had the scope and resources to manage the macro-level conflict. However, none of the women interviewed thought it realistic to rely on national government. They instead turned to local and traditional leaders to provide mediation and relief. A Burkinabe woman said: "When there is conflict, the village chief, imam, and self-defense groups step forward to resolve or mediate. But for the case of terrorism, this issue is beyond their scope and therefore the government should step in." Reports from respondents suggested government intervention often arrived late, if at all, and did not stay in the community where there was need.

> *"For me, the source of the conflict is poverty. Most people live in poverty and misery. [It is] irrelevant if you are employed or unemployed, you still live in misery."*

In sum, focus group respondents felt that government and national leaders were out of touch with the people and cared little about their needs and concerns. Respondents felt that inequities in wealth and living conditions were generally recognized, but unaddressed by authorities. High levels of corruption, impunity, inequitable distribution of national income, and difficulty providing quality basic services and responding to youth unemployment have fueled grievances and strong anti-government sentiment. This sentiment manifests itself in the lack of trust and confidence in national structures, including the military.

PEOPLE

The literature review underscored the intersectionality of identity. Although ethnicity and affective identify traits are salient, people have multiple identities based on age, gender, family history, religious affiliation and class/socio-economic status. For example, not all Tuaregs are militants seeking to overthrow the government. The significance of each category as a central component of identity changes over time as do perceptions of these markers.

Gender emerged as a strong indicator regarding violence perpetration and victimization. Women are often the indirect targets of violent attacks and manage the long-term consequences. They are rarely the perpetrators of physical violence, but may indirectly perpetuate violence. As primary caregivers, they pass along implicit biases to children or actively act on prejudices by favoring their in-group in the competition for resources.[63]

Focus group discussions confirmed that women often must fend for themselves in post-attack settings. They struggle with rising market prices, buying firewood, tending fields, and caring for out-of-school children. Children of IDPs must adapt to new locations and schools. They may be forced to engage in dangerous or illicit economic activity, or work as virtual slave labor in gold mines. Women are subject to gender-based violence and may act as informants for violent groups.

This study found that the perpetrators of violence can also be the victims of violence, as all those consulted felt that they were victimized at some point. More than half of the Barometer respondents in Burkina Faso (60%) and Mali (70%) said they or someone they knew had been asked to join a violent group. Despite reporting that they felt a strong sense of pride in their national identity, respondents—except the

62 For more on decentralization policies and motivations please see Boone, Catherine. (2003). Decentralization As Political Strategy In West Africa. Comparative Political Studies—COMP POLIT STUD. 36. 355-380.

63 For an in-depth analysis of gender dynamics in the Malian conflict, see Lackenbaure H, Lindell M, and Ingerstad G. November 2015. "If our men won't fight, we will. A Gendered Analysis of the Armed Conflict in Northern Mali." FOI-R-4121-SE.

Burkinabe, felt their fellow compatriots did not share the same values or history. This finding illustrates the precarious state of horizontal social cohesion in Mali and Niger.

The assessment also found that national military and security forces may be perpetrators of violence in some settings and mobilizers for peace in others. The difficulty of identifying perpetrators was exemplified by a Burkinabe chief: "If they would fight face to face, we would be victorious. The Burkinabe is not a coward!" A female FGD participant insisted that the confusion surrounding the identity of attackers had caused people to lack confidence in their neighbors. "This is especially true when someone approaches you; you have no idea how to even behave with others."

> *"The Burkinabe is not a coward"*
>
> **—BURKINABE CHIEF EXPRESSING FRUSTRATION AT THE INABILITY TO IDENTIFY AN ENEMY**

Competing Identities: Classifications reflected here are generalizations. Classification may shift based on setting.

Competing identities. Classifications reflected here are generalizations; they may shift based on setting.

PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE

JIHADIST AND NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS[64]

In response to the absence of a state presence and authority in the tri-border area, non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and extremist groups have emerged as identifiable perpetrators of violence. NSAGs include ethnic militia, self-defense groups, criminal networks and well-financed bandits. What is confusing is that ethnic militia and self-defense groups claim to be protectors of their communities, and a bulwark against violent extremists, hostile ethnic groups and bandits. Sahelian-led extremist organizations such as Ansarul Islam, Ansar al Din, Katibat Macina, and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimeen (JNIM) have thrived by exploiting anti-government sentiments and inter-ethnic and intercommunity conflict. They have spread by offering protection to vulnerable communities while promoting their own agendas.

As extremist groups are expanding southward from the tri-border area, they seek to conquer territory by attacking local communities and state military forces, forcing local officials and teachers to flee. They also lure adherents by offering high salaries. This recruitment tactic has been especially directed at Peulhs and Tuaregs. Despite recent gains, extremists lack the popular support and numbers needed to control and occupy the Sahel. Converting locals to Salafist forms of Islam and calling for an Islamist caliphate with Sharia law are unpopular, and particularly resisted by local leaders. For this reason, extremist groups target community leaders, who are often imams and teachers, and if successful in forcing them to flee, coerce and manipulate community residents to adhere and commit acts of violence.

64 For descriptions of the major violent extremist, self-defense and Malian rebel groups, see Andrew Lebovich. May 19, 2019. Mapping Armed Groups in Mali and the Sahel. European Council on Foreign Relations.

The North African (AQIM) and Sahelian-led affiliates of the Islamic State (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda originating in the Middle East constitute the main extremist groups operating in the Sahel. The extremists embrace an exclusionist ideology affirming Islam's superiority over all other religions and their obligation to create Islamist caliphates through intimidation, conquest and forcible conversions if necessary to achieve an Islamic world order. A major development over the past five years has been the localization of jihadi leadership and movements, and the decline of influence of North African and Arab influences in on-the-ground decision-making.[65]

Sahelian extremist groups are led primarily by nobles, persons born of respected or wealthy families, or religious leaders educated in North African and Middle Eastern religious institutions. Since 2015, Sahelian groups (Ansarul Islam and Katibat Macina) led by ethnic Peulhs and Tuaregs (Ansar al Din) have stepped up their activities in the tri-border area of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Their success hinges on creating a no man's land that can serve as a base of operations and a staging area for southward expansion.[66] Importantly, an extremist leader's ethnicity does not imply that he represents the goals and interests of a specific ethnic group, nor does it mean that he enjoys widespread support from members of the group with which he identifies.

An extremist leader's ethnicity does not imply that he represents the goals and interests of a specific ethnic group, nor does it mean that he enjoys widespread support from members of the group with which he identifies.

Violent extremists have targeted civil servants, school teachers, military officials, Christian institutions, moderate Muslim leaders, and traditional chiefs, while indiscriminately killing men, women and children to demonstrate their power and the inability of the state to protect them. These activities have dramatically decreased the presence of the state and state services in the tri-border area and transformed hundreds of thousands of terrorized villagers fleeing the violence into IDPs and refugees, leaving increasingly larger swaths of land under the control of violent extremists.[67]

The main strengths of extremists are their military experience, weaponry and resources. Locally, they can self-finance by controlling gold mines, and trans-Saharan drug, arms, human trafficking and smuggling routes. Recruiting new fighters and allies depends on offering financial rewards and capitalizing on communal grievances and anti-government sentiment. They curry favor by offering protection to Peulhs, Tuaregs and other marginalized minorities threatened by bandits, self-defense groups and the state.[68]

However, extremist movements are not united and are fractured by frequent internal leadership battles. Their religious ideology and practices are repugnant to most Sahelian Muslims. Hence, for the lack of popular support, they resort to violence to divide and control.

CRIMINAL NETWORKS AND BANDITRY

Trans-Saharan trading routes harbor major criminal networks and many minor networks.[69] The members of the most well-known criminal networks come from nomadic Tuaregs, Toubou and Arabs in the Sahara, a vast, unpoliced and ungoverned

65 Abdel Droukdel, the Algerian leader of AQIM, a major non-Sahelian violent extremist, was killed during an assault by French commandos in June 2020.

66 International Crisis Group. December 20, 2019. The Risk of Jihadist Contagion in West Africa, Briefing No. 149, Africa. Also see Africa Center for Strategic Studies. January 18, 2020. Threat from African Militant Islamist Groups Expanding, Diversifying. Infographic.

67 Burkina Faso has suffered the most from villagers fleeing their homes. Alexandra LaMarche. February 11, 2020. Burkina Faso and the Sahel's New Frontline: Responding to the World's Fastest Growing Displacement Crisis. Field Report. Refugees International.

68 For violent extremist tactics in this area, see Ammour, Laurence-Aïda. February 26, 2020. How Violent Extremist Groups Exploit Intercommunal Conflicts in the Sahel. Spotlight. Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

69 USAID. November 2014. Niger: Conflict and Crime Assessment (Washington: USAID). International Alert, Sustainable Approaches to Organized Crime in Mali and the Sahel, November 14, 2014.

space. Violent extremists and rebel movements have also organized criminal networks in the Sahara and have used the desert as a sanctuary. Under Muammar Gaddafi, Libya served as the main destination for human trafficking, drugs and arms. North Africans and Arabs controlled much of the drug trade. After Gaddafi's fall, the Toubou seized large quantities of arms and became major arms traders. The Agadez region of Niger became a key launching pad for human trafficking and mass African migration to Europe through Libya.

Until recently, transporting migrants had provided employment for young Tuaregs, and other youth. Changes in regional migration policies have deprived these groups of sources of revenue and have pushed many towards banditry and selling drugs and arms. The increase in drug use in turn has fueled banditry, while cheap, accessible arms have enabled small-time operators to move between criminality and local defense by selling protection to communities. Competition for control over various strands of the lucrative Saharan trade has sparked violent conflicts among various groups including large self-defense organizations. Given several factors— the absence of police and state presence, the complicity of corrupt officials, and deteriorating economic conditions— the demand for illicit goods, including humans, will continue to strengthen.

> *"There are no winners in a conflict where each side wrongs the other."*
>
> **—ELDER, MALI**

SELF-DEFENSE GROUPS

The proliferation of extremist violence *and* widespread banditry has spawned a new kind of self-defense group that differs from small traditional village policing groups guarding against petty thieves and livestock theft. The latter's goal was to return what was stolen to the owners and to fine the thief to cover costs incurred in policing. But many of the newly established self-defense groups are heavily armed and ready to engage in reprisals against other villages and ethnic group to punish alleged support for extremists, to expel competitors for control over land and natural resources, and to settle old scores. Self-defense groups are steadily increasing as national governments such as Burkina Faso adopt policies that empower and train them.[70] Elsewhere, self-defense groups include Dogon hunters traditionally associated with policing the local environment; dominant groups (Mossi, Djerma, Bambara); minority groups (Peulhs, Tuaregs), agriculturalists, and pastoralists; and people from the same ethnic groups fighting each other.[71] Sometimes, the dominant groups attack Tuaregs and Peulhs, with the complicity of the state and the military.[72] Reflecting on the prominence of newly formed or reconfigured self-defense groups, one elder in Mali said: "There are no winners in a conflict where each side wrongs the other."

TUAREG-LED AUTONOMY MOVEMENTS IN MALI AND NIGER

The Tuareg rebellions have destabilized the Sahel for decades. Tuaregs became marginalized citizens of several nation states (Algeria, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso) in the early 1960s. Tuaregs historically practice a liberal non-Arabized form of Islam. They resisted French rule and after independence, fought for autonomy, and resisted efforts by the Modibo Keita regime to suppress slavery and reform their hierarchical political and social system led by nobles and based on caste. They first waged war against the Keita regime in Mali and later against national governments in Mali and Niger during the

70 The Burkina Faso parliament passed a new Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland law in January 2020 to repulse attacks on villages that were causing tens of thousands to flee. On the other hand, Mali has announced the dissolution of self-defense groups.

71 The most notable Dogon self-defense group is Dan Na Ambassagou, which operates in areas of Mopti, Mali, known as Dogon country. Malian officials believe that this highly militarized group is responsible for the massacres of Peulhs in Ogassadou that killed more than 100 people on March 23, 2019.

72 In January 2019, Peulh villages around Yirdou in the Centre-Nord were attacked by Koglweogo self-defense groups. For more details on the attack on Peulhs, by terrorists, Mossi self-defense groups and the military, see Sophia Douce. February 4, 2019. Au Burkina Faso, Les peuls sont victimes d'un délit de faciés. Le Monde.

1990s in the name of self-determination to gain more autonomy for Tuaregs and other nomadic groups. In 2012, Tuareg rebel groups associated with the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) joined forces with extremist movements from Algeria and controlled much of Northern Mali. The extremists betrayed the MNLA and created a short-lived Islamist state in their place. The MNLA then joined forces with the French to stop the extremists' advance and dismantle the Islamist state. Although the MNLA and Malian government signed a peace agreement in 2015, it has not been fully implemented or accepted by all parties within both groups.

While strong and resilient enough to hold onto territory in the North, Tuareg autonomy has been weakened by internal leadership divisions, differences in the movement's stance on autonomy and collaboration with Mali's national government, and the rise of parallel movements led by Tuaregs opposing the government and an autonomous secular Tuareg region.

NATIONAL MILITARY AND SECURITY FORCES

Military and security forces in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso are principal players in Sahelian violence. They have been defenders of national sovereignty, objects of attacks by extremist and rebel forces, and perpetrators of violence and extra-judicial executions against minority ethnic groups and communities. Such attacks have been in retaliation for alleged affiliation or collaborating with extremists and rebels.

In Burkina Faso, the dismantling of Compaoré's Presidential Security Force, the best-equipped and trained anti-terrorism unit in Burkina Faso, weakened the capacity of the military to fight extremists.[73] In Mali, the failure of President Amadou Toumani Touré to adequately support the military in fighting violent extremists and armed Tuareg separatist groups led to the coup that ousted him and the withdrawal of the military from the main battlefields. In Niger, the defense ministry diverted tens of millions of dollars from Niger's defense forces to politicians and businessmen affiliated with the ruling party. National political leaders suppress news reports of government atrocities to cover up their failure to properly equip the army.

Focus group respondents from majority ethnic groups in Mali were more supportive of the army than those from minority groups surveyed.[74] They were also more supportive of the government in their fight against extremists and armed groups, and honored their sacrifices. Regardless of ethnicity, adult males in FGDs stressed the need for more dialogue between local communities and security forces to reduce tensions with military and security forces.

Military reprisals against ethnic or community groups are motivated primarily by frustration, anger and desire to avenge losses. But these operations have had devastating impacts on local economies. For their alleged collaboration with extremists, Peulhs have been the main targets of military and security forces. Tuareg and Peulh communities are targeted primarily in Mali, but these groups constitute significant minorities in Burkina Faso and Niger. In the tri-border zones especially Burkina Faso and Niger, anti-military sentiment is growing. Army attacks on the Peulhs, massive displacement of populations in the name of fighting extremists, and curfews and other restrictions on mobility and cross-border trade have antagonized local populations against national armed forces.[75]

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73 Bettina Engels. Political Transition in Burkina Faso: The Fall of Blaise Compaore. Governance in Africa, (2) 1, (2015) 1-6.

74 For Peulh minority perspectives in Mali, see Mana Farooghi and Louisa Waugh. December 2016. 'They treat us all like Jihadis': Looking beyond violent extremism to building peace in Mali. International Alert.

75 International Crisis Group. June 12, 2018. The Niger-Mali Border: Subordinating Military Action to a Political Strategy. Report 281, Africa.

KEY GOVERNANCE MOBILIZERS

NATIONAL POLITICAL LEADERS

The former president of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, and the current president of Niger, Mahamad Issoufou, belong to the same political class that emerged in the mid-1990s during multiparty elections. Elected in 2015, Roch Christian Kaboré of Burkina Faso was a minister in the Compaoré regime before joining the opposition. All three ran and won as reform candidates,[76] but have become increasingly unpopular, especially in the impoverished tri-border area.

Their main strength comes from excessively powerful executive patronage systems with few checks and balances, which gives them the capacity to reward followers, punish dissidents, co-opt the opposition, and deploy military and security services. They control the levers of state aid, and public services, but rule with a mixture of corruption, cronyism, clientelism, and political repression.[77]

NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES

National political parties retain their importance as key mobilizers because they provide a structure for participation in national and local elections; give citizens the opportunity to choose candidates; and offer rewards to their elected officials and their supporters. They also comprise a political base for those aspiring to high political office. Their support base is made up of friends, family, ethnic groups and local communities. Their grievances reflect feelings that they, their political supporters, and constituents do not get their fair share of political spoils. They sometimes use violence against party rivals to break up campaign rallies and demonstrations and to prevent people from voting.

One of the major complaints of rural populations is that national-level parties are visible only during an election campaign, make empty promises, and do not return until the next election. The politicians act as neo-patrimonial rulers and patrons rather than representatives of their constituents. While local political officials such as mayors also belong to national political parties, they are often seen as neutral or unbiased once in power. Focus group participants unanimously stated that local officials were independent of political parties, despite their membership in a party.

MEDIA, HUMAN RIGHTS NGOS AND CITIZEN MOVEMENTS

The state-controlled media in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso serve the president and his agenda. The assessment detected censorship of news from the war fronts in the name of security, and the silencing of government critics who dared call out human rights violations by defense forces, and the failure to properly equip soldiers. State media describe attacks as perpetrated by “non-identified groups.” It is not clear whether this label indicates the state of play regarding intelligence failures or whether it represents a form of appeasement. Despite their limited resources, community radio stations have reported more accurately on the crisis.

National-level citizen movements represent platforms for change because they depend little on external funding and are receptive to greater participation of youth and women in decision-making. These movements offer alternatives to traditional Sahelian rural

76 For information about the evolution of Mali politics leading to the 2012 coup, see Gregoire Chauzal and Thibault van Damme. 2014. The Roots of Mali’s Conflict: Moving beyond the 2012 Crisis. The Hague: Clingeendael Institute.

77 Devermont, Judd. December 6, 2019. Politics at the Heart of the Crisis in the Sahel. Washington, D.C: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

societies with social hierarchies and set gender roles dominated by male elder decision-makers. Perhaps surprisingly, western-educated, urban-based reformers and traditional authorities show signs of dialoging and working together to curb violent extremism, and to build more socially just societies that harmonize old and new values.

MOBILIZERS FOR PEACEBUILDING AND SOCIAL COHESION

FGDs and interviews in the tri-border area indicated that religious leaders and traditional authorities were supportive of peacebuilding activities, as were women, traders, agriculturalists and pastoralists. Major agents of social cohesion and century-old traditions and practices calling for religious tolerance and respect for all religions still prevailed among Muslims and traditional religious authorities as well as Catholic and Protestant clergy.

> *"I am ready to join any group to bring peace because peace has no price."*
>
> **—QUR'ANIC SCHOOL TEACHER**

RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Most religious leaders interviewed in the rural conflict zones were imams and Quranic schoolteachers with varying degrees of formal education. Village chiefs often nominate imams or are imams themselves. Nearly all respondents identified as Muslim rather than as members of a Sufi brotherhood or a specific denomination. Their main objective was to improve the knowledge of Islamic moral values and practices in their community. They were financially supported by contributions from the parents of their students. The imams and Quranic schoolteachers did not oppose village children going to French schools. They welcomed Muslim girls in Quranic schools and often tutored young Muslim mothers. Some were open to allowing women to inherit or be given land, but less than that given to male children. They rarely expressed grievances and seemed satisfied with the level of respect shown by the government to the Islamic faith. The imams said that they regularly intervened to mediate marriage and inheritance disputes. Rural religious leaders did not describe violent extremists by their religious ideology and did not hold reverence or affection for extremist beliefs or organizations. Nearly all enthusiastically endorsed the idea of interfaith dialog and peacebuilding, but few had contacts with Christians or people of other faiths. While discussing interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding, one Quranic schoolteacher in Mali said: "I am ready to join any group to bring peace because peace has no price."

At the national level in Burkina Faso, most Muslim, Catholic and Protestant leaders, and leaders of traditional African religions, condemned extremist violence and supported the continuation of their country's long-standing traditions of respect for and acceptance of religious pluralism. The Episcopal Conference of Burkina Faso and Niger has been particularly active in promoting inter-community peace, good governance, and equitable development.

In Niamey, Niger, a younger generation of Muslim preachers has reached out to university students and unemployed urban youth to advocate a less rigid form of Islam. They are preachers who wear baseball caps, play sports, speak the language of urban youth, and accept women with western educations. Few have gone to North Africa or the Middle East for religious training. Many of their followers have graduated from Abdou Moumouni University.[78]

Cherif Ousmane Mamani Haidara, the current president of the Haut Conseil Islamique (HCI) in Mali, has emerged as an unorthodox spiritual guide who offers an alternative

78 Abdoulaye Sounay. Salifa Youth on Campus in Niamey, Niger: Moral Motives, Political Ends. In What Politics: Youth and Political Engagement in Africa. 2018. Edited by Elina Oinas, Henri Onodera, and Leena Suupaa. Brill, 209-229. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004356368_014.

to Wahhabi and Salafi forms of Islam.[79] His main rival is Mahmoud Dicko, his predecessor at the HCI and an advocate of a less rigid form of Wahhabi doctrine. Both men have called for national unity and peace while condemning inter-ethnic violence and the stigmatization and slaughter of Peulhs.

Muslim leaders like Haidara and Dicko have huge followings and are key players in Mali's national politics. Both men backed Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) for president in the 2018 national election, which helped him to win over 90% of the vote. Their influence reflects the rising tide of Islamization in Mali. Dicko led the movement of opposition politicians and civil society organizations to pressure IBK to resign.[80] Like Dicko, Haidara has attacked IBK for government corruption, nepotism and failure to end the violence in Central Mali, but has opposed pressure to force Keita's resignation as divisive and undermining of national institutions.

Traditional leaders exist at all levels of society from the village to the capital cities. They view their roles as keepers of peace and promoters of prosperity dating to pre-colonial modes of governance, divisions of labor, and conflict resolution mechanisms.

TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES

Sahelian national governments increasingly recognize traditional authorities as mediators of conflict and pillars of social cohesion. The table below highlights the presence of traditional leaders at all levels of society from the village to the capital cities. These roles hold historical significance and fill the authority gap in communities which are far removed from centralized state authorities. They view their roles as keepers of peace and promoters of prosperity dating to pre-colonial modes of governance, divisions of labor, and conflict resolution mechanisms.[81] These roles still exist but have been stripped of legitimate authority as their responsibilities have been transferred to centralized states. Despite this, rural communities continue to turn to these leaders for guidance and security. Noticeably, men occupy all positions. Women enjoy the benefits of these positions by association with men.

TABLE 10. THE DIVISION OF POWER IN TRADITIONAL SAHELIAN COMMUNITIES

ADMINISTRATIVE POWER	RESOURCE-BASED POWER	KNOWLEDGE-BASED POWER	RELIGION-BASED POWER	HISTORICAL POWER
Village chief along with the 5-15 village advisors from the general population	Land Chief *(Chef de terre)*	Traditional storyteller or communicator *(griot)*	Imams and preachers	Founding families
Faction chief (for nomadic peoples) along with faction advisors	Water Chief *(Chef des eaux)*	Traditional hunters and healers	Pastors	Noble tribes or branch families
Neighborhood chief (in urban settings) along with neighborhood advisors	Chief of Pastures *(Chef des pâturages)*	Trade unions (traditional brotherhoods including blacksmiths, weavers and shoemakers)	Priests	Nobles and influential persons
	Chief of forests *(Chef des forêts)*	Spiritual leaders		
		Religious judges		

79 See Gilles Holder. Chérif Ousmane Madani Haidara and the Islamic Movement Ansar Dine: A Popular Reformism in Search of Autonomy. Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, Vol. 206-207, No.2, 2012, 389-425. Haidara's Ansar Dine movement has followers in other countries.

80 Dicko organized and led massive demonstrations in Bamako in June and July 2020.

81 The table is based on Institute of Development Studies. Étude de Cas 4: autorités traditionnelles et religieuses dans la gouvernance locale au Mali (Berne/Bamako: IDS, October-December 2015), p. 14.

A growing generational divide has further weakened social cohesion, as traditional authorities complain that young people no longer understand traditional conflict resolution techniques used to prevent, mitigate and stop violence. Some of the factors undergirding the popularity and authority of traditional chiefs include the recognition of their legitimacy based on ancestral consent; high levels of trust in their integrity; the attempt of most to avoid partisan politics; their reputation for fairness in allocating land; demonstrated success in mediating conflicts; and their concern for the well-being of local communities. Weaknesses that hinder their influence as peacebuilders and pillars of social cohesion include violent competition for succession; generational gaps and sharp cultural differences between urban youth and chiefs concerning lifestyles, values, and modes of communication; participation in partisan politics; their inability to protect their villages against attacks by non-state armed groups; and the erosion of their authority to allocate land. Traditional authorities are weakest in Central Mali because of the presence of powerful extremists and self-defense groups, and decentralization laws that have stripped much of their power to control the allocation of land in their domain.

PROCESS

FACTORS ESCALATING CONFLICT

COMPETITION BY VIOLENT EXTREMISTS AND CRIME NETWORKS FOR CONTROL OF TRANS-SAHARAN TRADE ROUTES, AND THE "JIHADIZATION OF BANDITRY"

Traditional authorities are weakest in Central Mali because of the presence of powerful extremists and self-defense groups, and decentralization laws that have stripped much of their power to control the allocation of land in their domain.

The literature on banditry and criminality in the sub-region reveals that competition for control over lucrative trans-Saharan trade routes has created opportunistic and uneasy collaboration among violent extremists, criminal networks and bandits. The rise of heavily armed ethnic militias and self-defense organizations has also exacerbated the spread of violence. However, occasional military successes by national governments and their allies have set back the extremists. Such gains are temporary, and have lulled some into believing that because radicals seemingly lack the numbers, resources and popular support to overthrow established order, they will one day be vanquished or vanish from their present strongholds. This view is not shared by the communities assessed in this analysis, and lacks credibility. As noted elsewhere in this report, competition for control over lucrative, illicit Trans-Saharan trade routes has fueled incentives to join and grow criminal networks, justify self-defense groups and ethnic militias, and perpetuate grand and petty corruption.

The "jihadization of banditry"[82] based on collaboration and alliances of convenience among jihadist movements, criminal networks and local bandits has also spread violence. Symbiotically, violent extremists have provided heavy weapons and hard currency to criminal networks and local bandits. In exchange, criminals and bandits have provided intelligence, logistics and manpower to extremists. Despite suffering heavy losses at times, violent extremists have been resilient. They have leveraged relationships with allies of convenience to regroup and stage new attacks.

SECURITIZED RESPONSES

The priority given to military solutions to counterterrorism has not worked and has intensified grievances and conflict. The military and security forces have not been able to defeat rebel movements fighting for autonomy in Mali nor violent extremists

82 Heni Nsaibia. January 17, 2019. Insecurity in Southwestern Burkina Faso in the Context of an Expanding Insurgency. ACLED.

in the tri-border area. The resulting failures have left national military forces with these grievances:

- The militaries feel that the national governments have not provided them with sufficient training, weapons, protective clothing and equipment needed to confront and defeat the enemy. These grievances in Mali precipitated the 2012 military coup and withdrawal of troops from Northern and Central Mali.
- Defense forces feel that large amounts of funds intended to support their efforts have been diverted into the hands of corrupt officials and businessmen. An example of this is the recent scandal resulting from an audit of the Niger Defense Ministry which revealed financial discrepancies.[83]
- Defense forces feel harassed by watchdogs such as human rights groups who allege defense forces are murdering innocent people.
- Defense forces have suffered significant casualties following attacks by non-state armed groups. They seek revenge by attacking Peulh or Tuareg villages and groups alleged to be collaborating with non-state armed groups.

These grievances are often shared by citizens who deplore the lack of support the army gets from their government and resent the charges by external human rights groups that the military is violating human rights when doing their duty of fighting the "enemy."

Actions by the defense forces have also aroused widespread grievances, anger and anti-government feeling, especially from populations in high-conflict zones:

Triangulation between primary and secondary data sources clearly indicated that pastoralists have been the biggest losers in this conflict because of their minority status and government policies favoring agriculturalists.

- Communities feel the military has fled rather than stayed to fight the enemy.
- Communities feel the security forces arrive too late. As one respondent said: "The doctor is visiting the patient after he is dead!"
- Communities feel that the restrictions on mobility, the government displacement of populations without providing lodging and food, and border closures, are destroying livelihoods and local economies while pushing youth to join the violent extremists or to become bandits.
- Innocent Peulhs and Tuaregs experience bitterness when they are called jihadis and beaten and arrested. They have seen their villages destroyed and their people killed by military and security forces in the name of fighting violent extremists.

CONFLICTS OVER CONTROL OF AND ACCESS TO LAND AND OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES

Interviews confirmed that the struggle for control over land and grazing areas is the major cause of conflict between agriculturalists and pastoralists and has intensified bloody ethnic conflict between the two groups. Both sides present grievances when asked, but triangulation between primary and secondary data sources clearly indicated that pastoralists have been the biggest losers in this conflict because of their minority status and government policies favoring agriculturalists. Unemployed rural youth resentful of the lack of economic opportunities and political, social and economic exclusion are the most prone to joining violent extremists, criminal networks and militant ethnic militias.

Control over land and access to wealth continue to be major challenges for women in the Sahel. Although national laws permit the ownership of land by women, some local

83 New Africa Daily. 2020. In Niger, a Defense Audit Could Weaken the President. March 26, 2020.

authorities continue to balk at the idea of granting land to women. Yet some men are willing to share their land with women because they recognize that they do not have enough male labor to farm family land. This has resulted in an increase in women working in the fields but not necessarily owning land. This is further complicated as men are killed, kidnapped or forced to flee their communities. When the land belongs to the men, how can their wives legally access the land in the future? One female advisor said: "We must do everything possible to ensure that a woman who requests access to land actually gains it." Access to wealth allows women to manage their families while contributing to the health and vitality of local communities.

Land tenure systems continue to spark conflict in the region as there is sporadic application of national policies that conflict with traditional or local methods of resource management.

Land tenure systems continue to spark conflict in the region as there is sporadic application of national policies that conflict with traditional or local methods of resource management.[84] One Burkinabe chief said that because land was so scarce "every human being must not forget to be grateful for the little bits that we have." This sentiment challenges the progress of women as landowners, as decision-makers can further limit access based on scarcity, irrelevant of their true sentiments on whether or not women should be granted access.

The tri-border area has been the major arena of violent conflict related to resource scarcity. Nigeriens claim cattle rustlers are coming from Mali and Burkina Faso, while Burkinabe claim that they are coming from Mali and Niger. Both are true as cattle rustlers are generally nomadic. In Niger, Djerma and Songhai farmers battle with Peulh and Tuareg pastoralists as Peulh pastoralists are also competing with Tuaregs. Pastoralists' grievances are mounting as farmers enter their traditional grazing grounds. Farmer grievances mount when pastoralists cause damage to their food crops and fodder. These grievances have sparked the creation of village self-defense organizations whose main goal is to protect their control over and access to land, grazing areas and water points that they believe are theirs to manage or own.

Another major source of grievance that stirs anti-government sentiment in Niger is the state's granting of land and control over oil, and uranium- and gold-mining resources to external investors. Oil and uranium mining generate little employment for the residents of these areas, while often polluting local water sources. Grievances have erupted into violent anti-government demonstrations. Gold mining is particularly harmful to many thousands of poor landless people who seek to derive a modest income from artisanal gold mining.[85] In the gold-mining areas, violent conflicts arise over competition to access and mine specific sites.

Gold mining also provides armed groups with an additional source of funding.[86] Violent extremists offer to protect formal and informal mining enterprises while many youth struggle to subsist in an artisanal gold mining economy dominated by middle men and foreign buyers.

84 The French Development Agency (Agence Francaise de Développement-AFD) through the Land and Development Technical Committee has done many studies on land tenure issues and supported land tenure reform in Sahelian Africa. For examples, see AFD, Different Strategies and procedures to formalize rural land rights, March 2018; Opportunités et défis d'une approache par les commons de la terre et des ressources qu'elles porten, September 2017; and Investissement dans l'agriculture familialed'Afrique subsahararienne, sécurité fonciere et formalization des droits, February 2018. For relationships between land tenure issues and politics, see Catherine Boone. 2014. Property and Political Order in Africa: Land Rights and the Structure of Politics. (New York: Cambridge University Press). Also see Elinor Ostrom. 1990. Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action (New York: Cambridge University Press).

85 Hermann Konkobo and Issaka Sawadogo. 2020. Exploitation minière artisanale et semi-mécanisée de l'or au Burkina Faso. Glocon Country Report Series, No.5, February 2020. The study identifies 39 different positions involved in gold-mining operations in Burkina Faso, which provide thousands of jobs for men and women in the Centre-Nord region.

86 International Crisis Group. November 13, 2019. Getting a Grip on Central Sahel's Gold Rush. Africa Report No. 282.

FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT 2015 AGREEMENT FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IN MALI[87]

The collapse of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali resulted from divisions within the Tuareg group and from resistance within the Malian government and among and Malian citizens, who believed that too much autonomy had been granted to the Tuareg-held north. Divisions within and between Tuareg and Arab rebel signatories, led to the withdrawal of the Arab-led *Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad* (CMA) and fueled fighting in Mali's Northern Region. Despite their demand for a greater role in peace negotiations and implementation, Malian women's associations were excluded.[88] Clashes between pro-government Tuaregs and the MNLA have continued to the present. One of the main coalition groups negotiating with the government is Gatia, a Tuareg self-defense organization led by El Haj Gamou. Gatia joined French forces, but has been accused of banditry, intimidation and the murder of civilians.[89]

Grievances have sparked the creation of village self-defense organizations whose main goal is to protect their control over and access to land, grazing areas and water points that they believe are theirs to manage or own.

In Niger, Tuareg rebels under the leadership of Mohamed Anacko made peace with the government, which in turn named a Tuareg prime minister and instituted reforms ceding control of local government in the north to Tuaregs.[90] The Issoufou regime also appointed Anacko as High Commissioner for the Consolidation of Peace. In contrast to Mali, Tuaregs in Niger, who are found throughout the country, have not demanded autonomy.

Malian women continue to support village governance systems through their associations and husbands' connections. Women use these channels to gain influence and exercise voice in civic affairs. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is seeking to create an independent women's observatory to monitor implementation of the 2015 peace accords.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO PEACE AND SOCIAL COHESION

RELIGIOUS PEACEBUILDING NETWORKS AND INTERFAITH COLLABORATION

The assessment found that traditional chiefs and religious leaders were champions for community cohesion and peacebuilding, opposed violent extremism, and denounced bad governance. In FGDs, community members expressed their trust in traditional authorities and religious leaders, and their confidence in traditional conflict mediation and practices. Religious leaders in the tri-border area affirmed their commitment to peace and acknowledged the role that interfaith collaboration could play to strengthen unity, and reinforce social cohesion in the sub-region.

At the national level, Muslim, Catholic and Protestant leaders, and leaders of traditional African religions have consistently condemned extremist violence and supported long-standing traditions of religious tolerance and pluralism. In Burkina Faso, the Moro Naba, the traditional chief of the country's largest ethnic group, joined national-level faith leaders in signing an appeal for peace and an end to violence. The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) enlists several Catholic and Protestant faith-based civil society organizations working for peace, justice and human rights in Burkina Faso. These religious and faith leaders are all working towards peace but may not necessarily be coordinating their efforts.

87 International Crisis Group. March 1, 2017. The Sahel: Mali's Crumbling Peace Process and the Spreading Jihadist Threat.

88 Jenny Lorentzen. February 2, 2017. Women and the Peace Process in Mali. GPS Policy Brief, 2. Oslo: PRIO.

89 Andrew Lebovich. May 2019. Mapping Armed Groups in Mali and the Sahel. This report has a detailed description of the major organizations involved in fighting and peace.

90 For details on Tuareg rebellions in Niger under different political regimes, see International Crisis Group. September 19, 2013. Niger: un autre maillon faible dans le Sahel? Africa Report No. 208. Also see USAID. November 14, 2014. Assessment of the Risk of Violent Extremism in Niger. Washington, DC: USAID.

The High Muslim Council in Mali has vigorously condemned terrorism, intercommunal violence and ethnic discrimination. Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara, the most popular and outspoken proponent of interfaith collaboration in Mali, was recently honored by the Burkinabe government for working for peace and stability in the Sahel. Unlike Mahmoud Dicko, his Wahhabi religious rival, he has worked closely with faith leaders for peace, interfaith harmony and political reform in Mali.[91] In Niger, thanks to the efforts of Mama Kiota,[92] the Tijani spiritual center in Kiota has become a model of interfaith collaboration. Kiota has attracted diverse Muslim traditions, Nigerien Catholics, Protestants and adherents of traditional African religions as well as members of different Sahelian ethnic communities who live and work together in harmony in Kiota.

RESILIENCE OF TRADITIONAL CONFLICT MEDIATION AND SOCIAL COHESION MECHANISMS

As noted elsewhere in this report, Sahelian traditional institutions are under threat, but exhibit an abiding resiliency. Chiefs are called upon to hear grievances and resolve conflicts, and in some instances have websites and advocacy groups to bolster their chiefly authority, and to promote good governance, social cohesion and peace.

Village women's associations are active in making peace within families, educating children, and mediating domestic and communal conflict. At national levels, women's peace associations—especially in Mali and Niger—have advocated for gender equality legislation. In 1991, urban women helped ouster Moussa Traoré in Mali, and depose Blaise Compaoré in Burkina Faso in 2014. Traditional conflict management mechanisms include:

- **Joking relationships.** These consist of exchanges of insults between members of different ethnic groups and social categories, and are widely used to defuse tension. Mutual insults are accompanied by the obligation to not harm the other person or group. In Mali, some peacebuilders are suggesting that the Dogon revive their old joking relationship traditions with the Peulh.[93] Traditional chiefs encountered in the assessment indicated their desire to revitalize joking relationships among rural and urban youth, who are no longer aware of the tradition.
- **Traditional mediation.** Members of different ethnic groups or within the same ethnic group are designated as peacemakers to mediate conflicts. For example, the Rugga were Peulh peacemakers who resolved conflicts within the Peulh pastoralist communities. Blacksmiths intervene in marriage disputes.
- **Management of the commons.** Heads of different social-economic categories—agriculturalists, fishermen, hunters, pastoralists—mediate disputes taking place in their domain, water, forests and grazing areas. They also hold consultations to determine access to and management of the commons.
- **Traditions of reconciliation.** Making peace by engaging with, apologizing to, and asking for forgiveness from the other party in the conflict was evoked by many participants in FGDs and interviews in high-conflict zones. The tradition has been a major feature of resolving disputes between farmers and pastoralists. It has been

91 Somaila T Diarra. February 10, 2020. Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara: 'Il n'y a pas de contraint dans la réligion. Le Républicain. Cherif Haidara has close ties with religious leaders in Burkina Faso whose government honored him for his work for peace in the region.

92 Mama Kiota is the leader of a Sufi Muslim women's movement in Niger, and received a Global Humanitarian Citizen award from Tufts University in 2018 for her work with women and as a model for building tolerance, peace and social cohesion in the Muslim world. For more information on peacemaking in Niger, see Aminatou Daouda Hainikoye. 2016. Courants Islamiques et Consolidation de la Paix au Niger. Niamey: USAID.

93 Sy, Ousmane, Ambroise Dakouo, and Kadar Traoré. 2016. National Dialogue in Mali: Lessons from the 1991 National Conference of National Understanding, Berghof Foundation.

used in South Africa to promote reconciliation between races, and in Rwanda between Tutsi and Hutu.

- ***Griots.*** *Griots* are the singers, musicians, historians and praise singers in traditional Sahelian societies. Today many descendants of *griots* using traditional and modern styles of singing (reggae and hip hop) are conveying tolerance, peace, democracy, good governance and respect for traditional values. Sams'K Le Jah and Smockey founded Balai Citoyen (Citizen Broom) mobilized youth and women to oust Blaise Compaoré. They belong to a steadily growing network of influential singers and musicians promoting peace and democracy throughout Africa.

REDUCING THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL GENERATION GAP

Traditional chiefs have become more open to change, to listening to the voice of youth, and to supporting youth and women in decision- making. Despite this, young people and especially women comprise a small percentage of all local councils. At the national level, urban youth have become hostile to the aging, corrupt political class governing their countries. In Niamey, a younger generation of Muslim preachers is reaching out to engage angry university students and poor, unemployed youth. They dress like and speak the language of the young. They call for political and economic reform, non-violence, and greater understanding of peaceful Islamic values.

TRIGGERS

The fragility of Sahelian states leaves little room for error regarding human protection, basic needs, restoration of degraded lands, and secure livelihoods. Events and incidents that could trigger fresh violence could also escalate armed responses and spread insecurity and chaos to neighboring coastal states. The assessment calls attention to:

- The potential spread of COVID-19 and government responses;
- The Malian junta, which could prolong military rule;
- Potentially flawed elections that could spark mass protests;
- Climate-induced shocks;
- State collapse that could require large-scale international interventions.

TRENDS

The assessment observes that armed responses have not reduced violence overall in the Sahel. The G5 and allies have won limited victories against armed groups and bandits. The trend is toward increasing military support and intervention from foreign powers—France, the United States and Germany, They have managed to protect large urban areas and some rural cities and towns. If this trend holds, organized violent groups may retreat, but state fragility could further erode service delivery and rejuvenate violent groups. Communities and governments will need to identify ways to reliably manage conflict.

Respondents continue to feel that their voices are unheeded, and their interests ignored. Respondents shared a lack of faith in political systems. The dominant pattern of flawed elections could tip the scales toward increased terror and violence as Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger and Ghana host presidential elections in 2020. Budget cuts to development and humanitarian programs will place additional stress on national governments and civil societies in the three countries. A demonstrated lack of capacity to respond to development and humanitarian issues risks continuing the southern spread of violent conflict, which exposes coastal states. The flow of

arms into the sub-region has been a trend for decades and has raised the stakes as disputes and clashes become increasingly bloody and violent.[94]

TRAJECTORIES

Based on current trends, the assessment team has projected three scenarios: worst case, status quo, and best case. All scenarios are affected by recent events in Mali. Notably, the best-case scenario is dependent on the increased transfer of power and resources to rural areas as well as the full engagement of women and youth in issues of governance and resource management.

DETERIORATION OF STATUS QUO

1. The Malian government collapses under a coup d'etat, and the military clings to power;[95]
2. Mali fails to implement its 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, allowing violent groups to remain active;
3. National protests in one or more countries spiral out of control, and evidence of government-sponsored extra-judicial killings pushes more civilians to join NSAGs;
4. Violent groups use Mali as a staging area to infiltrate neighboring countries;
5. Al Qaeda, Islamic State and organized crime continue to extend their grip on land and resources;
6. Militarized responses to extremism escalate violence and conflict;
7. Inter-ethnic and interreligious dialog are undermined by extremist organizations and the radicalization of conservative Muslim clergy.

MODERATE PROGRESS

1. Mali continues to struggle to implement the peace and reconciliation agreement;
2. Military campaigns curb extremist attacks, and security improves;
3. Displaced persons return to their homes, but women and youth remain excluded in civic affairs;
4. Civil society becomes more robust, but governments in Mali and Niger clamp down on basic freedoms and civil rights;
5. Clashes between pastoralists and farmers become less intractable because traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are being invoked;
6. Dialog between national governments and NSAGs bear fruit; national armed forces become more professional and inclusive, but attacks continue;
7. Interreligious leadership and collaboration improve government accountability.

BEST CASE

1. Mali implements the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, and installs a government that strengthens the social contract with all ethnic groups;
2. Violent extremists no longer pose a major threat; and equitable governance of the commons prevails, e.g., grazing lands, water points, forest resources. New technologies are adopted to reclaim pastureland, marginal farmland and forest resources;

94 Access to weaponry is financed by violent groups' involvement in illicit activities and markets. Assanvo, Williams and Dakono, Baba (2019) "Violent Extremism, organized crime, and local conflicts in Liptako-Gourma." Institute For Security Studies.

95 This scenario was in play as this report went to press in September 2020.

3. Pressure from civil society and interreligious peacebuilders leads to major reforms and accountable political leadership. Elections are free and fair. Revenue from extractive industries funds basic public services;
4. Governments transfer more human and financial resources to local communities while engaging youth and women;
5. Cross-border ties between neighboring countries flourish based on mutual interests and pooled economic and security resources.

Talata Dicko, 15, fled from her home near Bankass, Mali in November 2019 after armed men attacked her village and burned it to the ground. She's been living at a camp for displaced people in Mopti, Mali ever since. CRS provided her family with cash upon their arrival, which allowed them to purchase food and clothing. Some 3.5 million people throughout Africa's Sahel region have been displaced due to violent attacks perpetrated by armed militias and terrorist groups. Photo by Annika Hammerschlag for CRS

Country-Level Nuances

MALI

The collapse of the Gaddafi regime in 2011 triggered the current Sahel crisis when thousands of heavily armed Tuareg mercenaries returned to Mali to support the MNLA-led Tuareg rebellion in 2012 to create the independent state of Azawad in Northern Mali. The 2012 Tuareg rebellion was strengthened by an initial alliance between jihadist organizations and the MNLA. The rebels gained control over most of northern Mali, but Arab and Algerian-based jihadist groups and a new Tuareg-led jihadist group headed by Iyad Ag Ghaly, pushed the MNLA aside and established an Islamist state. The defeat of Malian security forces caused a coup d'état and deterioration of state presence in north and central Mali.[96]

The 2012 French military intervention and MNLA forces defeated the jihadists, dismantled the Islamist state, drove the jihadists back toward the Algerian border, and permitted Tuareg rebels to control Kidal. Despite the signing of the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, the infighting among different Tuareg pro-independence, pro-government, and Tuareg-led jihadist groups coupled with strong, anti-Tuareg sentiment in government circles delayed a settlement concerning the degree of autonomy to be granted. Although violent conflicts have declined considerably in Kidal, as reflected in the small number of IDPs in that region, the major locus of conflict has shifted to central Mali, particularly in the tri-border area. The Islamic State and organized networks have exploited historic grievances and authority vacuums, and have profited from ambiguity and equivocation. Their actions have spurred a proliferation of self-defense and more criminality.

As described elsewhere, Mali's August 2020 coup ousted President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. Mahmoud Dicko, an influential, moderate imam, led the anti-IBK protests. Security forces attempted to repress dissension with brute force. The size and fervor of the protests, however, unveiled the severity of underlying stressors—unemployment, corruption, and natural shocks such as droughts. Violent conflicts on the Mali side of the tri-border differ from conflict dynamics on the Niger and Burkina sides in important ways:

- Self-defense organizations, ethnic militias and criminal networks are more heavily armed;
- Ethnic self-defense groups and militias—Songhai, Bambara and Dogon—are prominent;
- Ethnic cleansing of Peulhs is more intense, especially in Dogon areas, and anti-Peulh sentiment is more prevalent among dominant agriculturalist groups. Anti-Tuareg sentiment remains strong among the Songhai and Bambara;
- Peulhs are organizing more aggressive self-defense groups and joining jihadist groups in greater numbers because they identify with the pre-colonial Peulh Macina Islamist state;

96 For more details on the dangers of a stalled peace process, see International Crisis Group: Mali : Réformer ou rechuter, Africa Report No. 210, January 10, 2014; Mali: Derniere chance a Alger. Briefing No. 104, November 18, 2014; and Mali : la paix a marche forcé. Africa Report No. 226, May 22, 2015. Also see International Crisis Group. 2008. The Niger/Mali Border: Subordinating Military Action to a Political Strategy.

- Agriculturalist–pastoralists conflicts drive ethnic competition because ethnic identity correlates with occupation. Further, such conflicts have deep roots in historical grievances, class differences and stigmatization;
- Alliances and conflicts between and among jihadists, criminal networks, self-defense groups, and politicians over trans-Saharan trade routes with outlets in Algeria assume greater importance owing to geography, and historical and present value;
- Peulh and Tuareg-led jihadist groups are more active than in Niger or Burkina Faso, for example, Katibat Macina, Ansurul Din and JNIM;
- Residents in high-conflict zones have lower expectations of or trust in army or security forces;
- Male migration to urban areas, other regions, and other countries is higher than in Niger and Burkina Faso;
- Mali has no major refugee camps in high-combat zones. Malian refugees can be found in Burkina Faso and Niger camps close to the border.

Mali has a powerful Islamic civic society—93% of Malians identify as Muslim, and Islamization has intensified since independence. Hence, Islamic civil society and political influence is stronger in Mali than in Niger or Burkina Faso. Muslim leaders like Mahmoud Dicko, Cherif Ousmane and the High Islamic Council of Mali are highly influential and have called for the formation of a new Malian government. They hold conservative views on gender equality but support political reforms and preach the need for reconciliation, dialog and non-violent protests. To date, few Muslim or other religious leaders have supported the August 2020 coup.

Like Niger and Burkina Faso, Mali ranks near the bottom of the 2018 Human Development Index. It is a major exporter of gold and cotton and has not fully exploited the Senegal River and Niger River basins. The south, which has more rainfall and arable land, and fewer pastoralists, also has fewer conflicts and threats from jihadists. Central Mali is tiring of the vicious cycle of killing, reprisals and lose–lose situations, and Sahelian-led jihadists in Mali may be more amenable to negotiating a ceasefire, or peace, with a new government, if the government has the confidence of popular Islamic leaders.

NIGER

Niger is bordered by Algeria and Libya in the North, with Burkina Faso and Mali to the West and South. Most of the population is concentrated in the southern half of the country, which shares borders with Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad. According to the IMF's World Economic Outlook Database, Niger ranks 187/191 in terms of GDP per capita ($1,280). Some 99% of the population is Muslim. There are six main ethnic groups in the country with the Tuareg and Peulh comprising 11% and 6.5% of the population respectively. The Nigerien government withstood the exodus of mercenaries from Libya because it already had relatively positive governance arrangements with northern regions of the country, thus no independence movements or militia for mercenaries to join. Like Mali, Niger hosted Tuareg rebellions in the early 1990s and again in 2008. Nigerien Tuaregs did not join the rebellions in Mali because the Niger government introduced reforms to end Tuareg marginalization. These included decentralization measures that enabled Tuareg

leaders to head regional and municipal governments in areas with majority Tuareg populations, and culminated in the naming of a Tuareg as prime minister. Unlike in Mali, where Tuaregs were concentrated primarily in the north, in Niger Tuaregs are distributed throughout the country.[97]

Niger's situation and violent extremism differ from Mali and Burkina Faso in several ways:

- Unlike Mali, Niger has no indigenous jihadist organizations;
- Boko Haram, the major jihadist group threatening Niger, originated in Northern Nigeria along Niger's southeastern border and is now operating primarily in the Lake Chad Basin and carrying out periodic attacks in Niger's Diffa region. Before 2015, Boko Haram regarded the Diffa region as a sanctuary rather than a major attack target where it could blend in with family members from the same ethnic groups;
- Before 2015, attacks by external jihadist organizations in Niger were sporadic. Most of the violence then involved conflicts between and among agriculturalists and pastoralists, bandits, and criminal networks in the tri-border area, with the causes described as high youth unemployment, feelings of hopelessness, drugtaking, and competition for and access to land, water and grazing grounds. Peulh pastoralists were the biggest losers in this struggle;
- Peulh-led jihadist groups like Ansourul Islam and Katibat Macina based in Mali stepped up attacks on government and military targets, and exploited the situation to recruit new members from the Peulh community and transform the tri-border zone into a no man's land where they could operate more freely;
- Efforts to fight the jihadists by displacing populations, setting curfews, and forbidding cross-border trade wrecked local rural economies in Diffa and Tillaberi, and did little to stop the jihadists, making the situation worse;
- Self-defense groups have proliferated and are increasingly based on geography rather than ethnicity. Their main goal is to prevent attacks and retaliate against other groups felt to be intruding on their territory. The result of the proliferation is the multiplication of small-scale and increasingly deadly conflicts pitting agriculturalists, pastoralists and ethnic groups against each other
- The US has a military base in Niger and sent small numbers of Special Forces troops to train Niger's defense force; U.S. forces have suffered casualties in Niger.

Some 98% of Niger's population is Muslim. The Tijaniyya brotherhood has replaced the Qadiriyya as the largest Sufi group in the country. Since the 1980s, Hausa traders from Nigeria have been promoting orthodox Wahhabi doctrines, criticizing Sufi practices and gaining ground in the capital and large cities. Religious leaders in rural areas, as well as Sufi and Izala religious leaders, oppose reforms to family codes promoting gender equality. Islamic civil society is weaker in Niger and less influential in national politics than in Mali. Muslims in Niger reject jihadist doctrines and violence.

Despite having vast uranium resources, oil and gold, Niger in 2018 was the last of the 188 countries on the Human Development Index. Unlike Mali and Burkina Faso, Niger has no major agricultural exports. Little has been done to improve rural economies, especially in the periphery. Niger is heavily dependent on American and European military, development and humanitarian aid which has done little to improve living

97 USAID. November 2014. Assessment of the Risk of Violent Extremism in Niger. Washington, DC, Mitchell Group. International Crisis Group. September 19, 2013. Niger : un autre maillon faible dans le Sahel? Africa Report No 208.

conditions or physical security. The Nigerien government and military have received significant support from western powers in the wake of the 2015 migration crisis. Although the support did not necessarily respond to the root causes of irregular migration, it did reinforce the national borders and strengthen coordination between peace actors in Niger. Before 2015, many of the violent groups operating in Niger were from outside of the country, including Boko Haram from Nigeria operating in the Diffa region. Later, jihadists and bandits entered the Tillaberi region and began attempts to destabilize the region. Their destabilization efforts were further supported by the Nigerien government's unintended damage to rural economies by restrictions on movement and trade, specifically affecting Peulhs.[98]

Like Mali and Burkina Faso, Niger has an aging political class perceived to be corrupt, out of touch with the people, and unwilling to transfer power to younger leaders. Compared to Mali and Burkina Faso, Niger has a relatively weak secular civil society and conservative social structures resistant to change. Traditional chiefly society is stronger in Niger than in Mali, but weaker than in Burkina Faso. The Islamization of politics and politicization of Islam have resulted in resistance to western models of political and economic reform such as gender equality and neo-liberal models of development, but to date have not generated a strong demand for the overthrow of an unpopular regime.

Of the three countries engaged in the tri-border conflict, Niger's problems seem to be the most challenging. Its political class and government lack sufficient will or capacity to address the country's growing problems.[99] The steep decline in world market prices of uranium and oil[100], the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the economy, and likely cuts in foreign development and humanitarian aid will exacerbate the current crisis.[101] The disclosure of millions of dollars diverted from the defense budget to the pockets of overcharging contractors and politicians from the ruling party is likely to further aggravate grievances and underscore the need for change.

BURKINA FASO

Unlike Mali and Niger, Burkina Faso does not share borders with any North African states and did not receive mercenaries after the collapse of the Gaddafi regime. Tuaregs make up a relatively small percentage (2%) of the population and Burkina Faso hosts over 40 ethnic groups that practice Islamic, Christian and traditional religions. Nomadic Peulhs are a minority group nationally but make up a sizable majority in northern regions. The violent conflict under consideration in this report has largely been limited to the northern tri-border region, but has crept southward where Burkina Faso borders Benin, Togo, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. Violent non-state actors view Burkina Faso as the gateway to coastal expansion, but religious extremism finds little tolerance in Burkina Faso.

Until 2016, Burkina Faso was considered the most unlikely Sahelian country in danger of attack by jihadist groups for the following reasons:

- While 60% of the country identify as Muslim, it is the least Islamized of the three Sahelian countries, with the highest percentage of citizens adhering to traditional African religions (18%) and Christianity (22%);

98 Mahanty, Daniel. July 24, 2019. Niger: A Bulwark against Further Instability in West Africa. Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

99 Devermont, Judd. December 6, 2019. Politics at the Heart of the Crisis in the Sahel. Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

100 Business Insider has captured the sharp decline in Uranium prices since 2012.

101 Devermont, Judd. January 10, 2020. What to Watch in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2020. Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

- Muslim leaders follow the Suwarian tradition of respecting different religions and non-Muslim rulers provided that Muslims can practice their own religion freely;
- Most of the territory in what is now Burkina Faso was never conquered by Muslims. In 1900, adherents of traditional African religions comprised 85% of the population, while Muslims comprised a small but respected minority. Muslims became a majority after independence;
- After independence, traditional authority structures remained highly respected for their non-partisan approach to politics and concern for the welfare of their communities;
- While Muslims had grievances concerning their underrepresentation in political institutions and lack of significant recognition of Muslim holidays, they remained on good terms with non- Muslim government and religious authorities.

Economic conditions in the neglected tri-border region have much in common with those in Niger: marginalization of poor pastoralists; growing competition between agriculturalists and pastoralists for access to land, water, and grazing areas; poor infrastructure; inadequate schools and medical services; and little hope for the future for poor, low-status farmers and herders. The major differences affecting conflict dynamics in Burkina Faso are:

- The Peulhs are the outlier ethnic group with low economic status, desperate for dignity and respect;
- The founder of Ansarul Islam was Ibrahim Dicko, a Salafist Peulh preacher from Burkina Faso with ties to Ansar Dine and Katibat Macina, led by Peulh preacher Amadou Kouffa in Mali. Ansarul Islam is now composed largely of Peulh fighters recruited in the tri-border area of Burkina Faso and aligned with JNIM in attacking targets in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso;
- The main thrust of the jihadist strategy is to advance southward through Burkina Faso, which has become the jihadist gateway to coastal West African countries;[102]
- As a group, the Peulhs have become the main target for ethnic stigmatization because of their alleged support of and affiliation with the Peulh-led jihadist groups. The security forces and ethnic majority self-defense forces (Kogleweoogo) target Peulh communities for revenge and reprisal attacks.

Burkina Faso has an engaged civil society that forced Blaise Compaoré to flee the country to the Ivory Coast following demonstrations in Ouagadougou under the banner of *Balai Citoyen* and other civil society actors. With the support of anti-Compaoré military units, the movement also succeeded in reversing a military coup in 2015 engineered by one of Compaoré's trusted generals and head of an elite military unit trained by the West to gather intelligence and fight jihadist terrorists. The dismantling of this group divided and weakened Burkina's defense forces and made it easier for jihadists to operate in the country. Public support for defense forces and self-defense organizations is stronger in Burkina Faso than in Niger and Mali. At the same time, religious leaders, traditional authorities and rural communities condemn the stigmatization of and vicious attacks on innocent Peulh communities.

Although more popular with the general public than in Mali or Niger, the political class in power and in the opposition is largely composed of former members of Blaise Compaoré's party and has not lived up to public expectations for ending corruption.

102 International Crisis Group. October 12, 2017. The Social Roots of Jihadist Violence in Burkina Faso's North. Report No. 254 Africa.

Of the three countries, Burkina Faso may have the best chance of addressing the Sahelian crisis:

- Jihadist operations and extremist violence are largely limited to the north;
- Burkina Faso has the smallest pastoralist population;
- The Moro Naba, Catholic, Protestant and Muslim religious leaders have joined together to denounce jihadist violence;
- There is greater support for traditional mechanisms of mediation and reconciliation such as joking relationships, asking forgiveness, and public messaging through musicians and singers;
- Burkina Faso has a vigilant press, vibrant community radio stations, and a robust and resilient civil society;
- There is slightly less gender inequality.

Recommendations

The acceleration of violence in the tri-border area of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger continues to bring misery and suffering to the inhabitants, and has swelled the numbers of refugees and internally displaced people to over 1.5million. Since the commissioning of this report, the COVID-19 pandemic has further challenged the sub-region.

The following recommendations call for five distinct categories of intervention: interfaith advocacy, conflict management at local levels, dynamic engagement of youth and women in peacebuilding, humanitarian action, and learning. The recommendations are not a one-size-fits-all approach as contexts, key persons, and grievances and resiliencies differ by community, commune, region and country. The intent is to support local mechanisms to respond to conflict and promote social cohesion. A village chief in Burkina Faso provided a powerful example of how communities can unite against violent actors. The chief of Bogouya empathized with two young landless men who had left the village to join an extremist group. He wrote to them and offered to give them land to start a farm to induce them to return. The two men returned to Bogouya to farm and rejoin their community. Communities like Bogouya may be unable to confront violent actors directly, but they can present a unified front to opportunists seeking to create and exploit divisions.

Communities may be unable to confront violent actors directly, but they can present a unified front to opportunists seeking to create and exploit divisions.

REINFORCE INTERFAITH PEACEBUILDING TASK FORCES (PBTFS)

Responding to Pope Francis' call for solidarity and an end to indifference, the Catholic Church and CRS should initiate Peacebuilding Task Forces (PBTFs) composed of national religious and customary leaders, to act as a catalyst for creating new and mobilizing existing networks from the local to the national level. The PBTFs should capitalize on high levels of trust and respect for religious leaders, and should include male and female representatives from Christian, Muslim and minority faith communities. Members of the overseas African diaspora may also be solicited to partner with the PBTFs to promote fundraising and awareness-raising abroad. Significant Muslim engagement is critical as they constitute the majority in Sahelian Africa, and Muslims have been the main victims of jihadi violence in countries that for centuries have been models of religious tolerance. While miniscule in adherents, the Catholic church is viewed as a respected yet neutral actor for peace and provider of social services.

The PBTFs should advocate for good governance and humanitarian relief, denounce violent extremism and other forms of repression and injustice such as inequitable economic opportunity, corruption and poor service delivery. They should convene civil society and government to consult and identify innovative solutions to radicalism and extremism. They should lead local efforts to support the neediest and marginalized while strengthening social cohesion. In addition, they should promote inter-ethnic collaboration locally and advocate for strong national leadership concerning tolerance, respect and solidarity.

STRENGTHEN AND DIVERSIFY TRADITIONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL COHESION MECHANISMS

Peace actors should seek to strengthen and diversify traditional conflict management mechanisms that have proven effective over time. In recognition of the

contribution of women to society and local economies, and to temper the severity of intergenerational conflict, local and traditional leaders must adapt to present realities. Change involves the meaningful participation of women and youth in the affairs of their communities and having a voice in the decisions that impact them. Younger generations and women need to become more familiar with traditional conflict management mechanisms. High-level delegations from the international community should empower local chiefs, mayors and community groups. Actions could include:

- Diversify local governance structures demographically, and engage consistently with chiefs, mayors and governors instead of ministerial- and presidential-level politicians. Support leaders, who include youth and women into their councils and governance structures;
- Allow musicians, artists and *griots* to transmit peace messages and to transform gender norms;
- Strengthen local associations, such as savings and loans, youth and women's groups. These groups bring people together and reinforce positive social norms of collaboration and tolerance while building social capital;
- Use high frequency radios to connect villages across the tri-border zone, and to serve as an early warning system. Make better use of community radio to disseminate peace and reconciliation messages;
- Reinforce the power and authority of traditional power structures, including traditional chiefs, religious leaders and locally-elected representatives;
- Reduce generational, ethnic, gender and cultural gaps by reinforcing social cohesion;
- Involve local civil society in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of development programming;
- Connect local communities to government economic operations (e.g., gold mining), which have had adverse impacts on communities without providing economic benefits. Employ young people in these operations.

ENGAGE WOMEN AS DIRECT ACTORS IN BUILDING AND MANAGING PEACE

This assessment has shown that women must be engaged and mobilized to play a more direct role in the quest for peace and social cohesion. In Mali, MINUSMA's mandate actively seeks to "promote the full participation and representation of women at all levels in the stabilization process." Similar initiatives by government and civil society to honor women as architects of peacebuilding, governance and social cohesion are vital. Actors for peace can do the following:

- Support Recommendation #2 by incentivizing local governance structures to actively include women, beyond simple attendance counts;
- Build women-only local platforms that go beyond the usual focus on family life, education and food, and enable women to organize and ensure their voices contribute to debates on vital public concerns;
- Commission studies to identify strategies to ensure the voices of women are considered without doing harm, e.g., the village level may expose women to

stigmatization.[103] Similarly, studies should identify best practices and CBOs in the forefront of women's empowerment;

- Train women (and men) at the local level in peacebuilding, mediation, and social cohesion;
- Provide high frequency radios to connect women and men across villages and communities in the sub-region. This strategy has worked in the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where early warning, clear communications, and social cohesion protect vulnerable villages against deadly attacks.

BUTTRESS HUMANITARIAN OPTIONS FOR THE POOR IN TRI-BORDER REGION

Peace actors must redouble and sustain their humanitarian and development programs with an emphasis on refugees and IDPs. Migrants, homeless and dispossessed peoples are among the most vulnerable groups. The massive increase in IDPs in the tri-border area, especially in Burkina Faso, has placed a heavy burden on receiving communities. Host communities are generous, but are overwhelmed and desperately need humanitarian aid.

Possible actions include:

- Integrate social cohesion, peacebuilding and livelihoods into development and relief initiatives to assist vulnerable youth; develop labor-intensive projects such as road construction;
- Link humanitarian aid with development projects;
- Train displaced persons to upgrade skills and prevent radicalization;
- Expand and protect the natural resource base by reclaiming land, forests and grazing areas;
- Introduce technological innovations to increase food production and agricultural productivity, and conservation measures;
- Improve relationships between displaced persons and host communities by facilitating social cohesion activities;
- Improve sanitation and access to water in host communities and camp settings;
- Provide schooling, psychological care for children, and trauma healing services;
- Organize functional literacy courses for women in camps.

LINK FOREIGN PEACE ACTORS WITH NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY FOR INDIGENOUS INNOVATION

This recommendation calls for greater incorporation of local knowledge, Sahelian expertise, innovative and holistic thinking as essential to elaborating the high-value policies, programs and projects needed to alleviate the Sahel crisis. To achieve this goal, learning networks and joint partnerships should be created and strengthened between international actors and Sahelians to share and learn from their respective experiences and expertise.

103 Women who engage directly in politics or government are often seen as overstepping their natural position in life. See: Lackenbaure, Helene, Magdalena Lindell and Gabriella Ingerstad. November 2015. If our men won't fight, we will. A Gendered Analysis of the Armed Conflict in Northern Mali. FOI-R-4121-SE.

The literature review and CRS' experiences underscore the insufficient use of local knowledge[104] and Sahelian expertise in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating aid programs as major causes contributing to the failure of many projects, the wasting of resources, and violations of the principles of Do No Harm. Since the 1980s, Sahelian expertise has been steadily increasing as local NGOs work with local communities to solve problems using local knowledge, values, and resources.

The literature review noted a recent shift in the thinking of international, US and European development agencies away from rigid, top-down and technical sector-oriented development policies, programs and projects toward consultation with local communities and community-driven development.[105] But application of this shift in approach is incipient. While the Africanization of development aid field staff has increased considerably, policies and programs still adhere to old accountability models. Decision-making remains largely in the hands of non-African officials and institutions.

This recommendation depends on building relationships, which fell out of favor after the Cold War. The proposed linkages would connect foreign and Sahelian knowledge, funding, and respective expertise in political, economic, religious, cultural, technological and environmental areas which contribute to:

- Holistic thinking, Triple Nexis approaches, and morality and spirituality;
- Identifying best practices and novel mechanisms through which women and youth can be more readily engaged in peacebuilding and governance;
- Elaboration of policies that reflect local realities, needs, aspirations, values and priorities;
- Consultation and collaboration with local leaders to understand and tap traditional ways of resolving crises;
- Use of technological innovations to improve quality of life and increase economic and agricultural productivity;
- Sharing of bibliographies on African perspectives, methodology, local knowledge, innovations, and initiatives, strategies and case studies;
- Dissemination of and conferencing on lessons learned.

Papa Sene's projects[106] are a prime example of how local expertise and holistic thinking can be used to successfully improve the lives of Sahelians. His project in Burkina Faso and Niger (2015–2018)[107] activated a Peulh tradition in which wealthy Peulh women gave goats to poor Peulh women in the village. The sharing of four to five goats was enough to pull pastoralist women out of poverty when combined with training on the vaccination and care of milk-producing animals. The multi-dimensional project also provided employment for traditional artisans, raised agricultural

104 Bernard Le Compte. Participation Paysanne à l'aménagement et techniques des projets. Revue Tiers-Monde,Vol.19, No. 73 (Janvier-mars 1978), 93-108. Le Compte quotes village chiefs who complained that outsiders never asked for their advice or ideas about projects. He also notes that the management techniques formulated by outside technicians are usually based on external models that don't work in an African village context.

105 See USAID Rise II (Resilience In Sahel Enhanced). 2019. Technical Approach Working Paper.

106 Papa Séne has worked in Sahelian Africa for over 40 years in many fields. He is best known for his innovative participatory development strategies that have inspired, trained and empowered thousands. In recognition of his outstanding work, he was inducted into the United States Cooperative Hall of Fame in 2014. His participatory methods of international cooperative development have been applied to programs promoting food security, natural resource development, community-based health, good governance, and the empowerment of women and young people. Papa Séne now works in his home village in Senegal to produce drought-resistant and more nutritious varieties of seeds.

107 REGIS builds on local knowledge and a Sahelian staff. USAID REGIS-ER (Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel -Enhanced Resilience) project reports (2015-2018(.

production and nutritional levels, revitalized local markets, reclaimed marginal land, and fostered village integration into local government institutions by working closely with traditional chiefs.

The following list provides examples of African organizations generating and using local knowledge and Sahelian expertise to define problems, identify causes, discover opportunities, and elaborate realistic policies and projects that reflect their values, priorities, and knowledge of their physical environment.

- *Paysan* universities and *Paysan* organizational networks
  - The *Réseau des Organisations Paysans et Producteurs Agricoles* (ROPPA) is the most prominent paysan network and confederation of farming organizations operating in 13 West African states including Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. It is a strong advocate for small family farms and the integration of traditional and innovative modern techniques to raise agricultural production and productivity. ROPPA seeks to bring together farmers and pastoralists to promote family farms, improve production and productivity, and provide livelihoods for unemployed rural youth. Its climate change programs focus on finding organic alternatives to chemical inputs. Roppa has been instrumental in creating schools where farmers undergo training programs and share information about improvements in productivity based on their knowledge of the local physical environment, and success and failure stories. Ibrahima Coulibaly, the Malian president of ROPPA,[108] attributes the failure of African national leaders and governments to support family farmers to their uncritical acceptance of western models and multinational agricultural businesses. These models often are inapplicable to African conditions, unsustainable, and defended by external experts, who have never lived in an African village.
- Sahelian NGOs and think tanks
  - ENDA (*Environnement et Développement du Tier-Monde*). ENDA's action research division does research with local communities rather than about local communities. For over three decades, it has been working closely with rural communities that use their knowledge of local environmental conditions to define, analyze and find solutions to their problems. ENDA stresses the importance of relationships. It produced a series of books, starting in the mid-1980s, highlighting the expertise of rural communities and paysan organizations in defining their own problems and seeking solutions based on their deep knowledge of local environmental conditions.[109] ENDA also produces accounts of citizen initiatives to improve informal educational and training institutions to enable them to find work and livelihoods in the modern economy, and was an early proponent of paysans universities staffed by agriculturalists and other rural producers. Other divisions of ENDA have specializations in environmental issues, urbanization and homeless youth.[110]
  - Alternative Report for Africa (*Rapport Alternatif Sur L'Afrique*). RASA is a network of Sahel-based researchers and development practitioners elaborating African-based development paradigms.[111]

108 Agnes Faivre. May 29, 2020. Ibrahima Coulibaly: L'agriculture a petite échelle peut nourrir nos pays. Le point.

109 These are collective works produced by ENDA and paysan committees:
ENDA. 1985. Initiatives paysannes au Sahel.
Pierre Jacolin et al. 1991. Diobass: Les Paysans et leurs Terroirs: Guide Pédagogique. Dakar. Imprimerie NIS.ENDA-Graf. 1992. Avenir des terroirs: la Ressource Humaine. Dakar: Enda-Editions.
For more information about ENDA Graf and Emmanuel Ndione, see endagrafsahel.org [French].

110 For other ENDA programs, see endatiersmonde.org [French].

111 For more information about RASA, see https://www.rasa-africa.org/ [French].

- *Balai Citoyen*. BC is a grassroots citizen organization in Burkina Faso that mobilized hundreds of thousands of youth and women through music to oust a long-time president who sought to amend the constitution to extend his position after 27 years of power. *Balai Citoyen* recently held concerts to fight against stigmatization of the Peulh community.[112]
- WATHI. WATHI is a broad-based Sahelian network that provides a forum for discussion of a wide range of issues such as climate change, violent extremism, COVID-19 and gender, from an African perspective.[113]
- CASPA (*Cabinet d'analyses et d'Actions pour la Securite et la Paix*). CASPA is a Nigerien think tank founded by Mohammed Anacko, a former leader of Tuareg rebellion groups in Niger during the 1990s and now an advocate for peace.[114]

112 See https://www.facebook.com/CitoyenBalayeur.

113 For more information, see https://www.wathi.org/ [French].

114 For CASPA, see www.caspa.asn.au.

Conclusions

A mixture of incentives has driven external actors to war against Sahelian communities and their protectors. Some motivations appear to ride on greed and thirst for control over lucrative illicit trans-Saharan trade. Others have deep roots in religious ideology, grievances and propagandistic interpretations of global hegemony and marginalization. Various theories explain manipulative jihadist behavior. However, decades of misrule and neglect in the Sahel have advantaged these movements and increased their ideological appeal, especially to marginalized and unemployed youth with few prospects for a brighter future.

Internally, centuries-old inter-communal, inter-ethnic and farmer-herder conflicts have intensified. The rise of such conflicts owes their existence to growing scarcity of arable land and viable pasturage, and to the neglect of traditional conflict management mechanisms. Climate stressors and shocks can trigger violence on massive scales owing to modern communications and the free-flow of automatic and semi-automatic weapons into the sub-region. It is logical that unemployed young men and women with no hope for a livelihood would make easy recruitment targets for organized crime, bandits and jihadist groups. On the bright side, few people in Liptako Gourma embrace jihadist goals and ideologies. The staying power of radical and criminal organizations is questionable, particularly if viable alternatives exist. Yet, armed force alone will not end the violence, or resolve the crisis.

The question arises: Given the scope and scale of the violence, and the multiple, complex causes, what can be done to coordinate a unified, effective response? And while citizen protests can topple autocrats, how long will it take them to change systems of rule that have existed since colonial days?

The results of this assessment show that Sahelians and their governments have been living on borrowed time. **Sahelians must rebuild a tattered social contract**, and with the help of their allies, restore order, reconcile conflicted groups, and strengthen social cohesion. Reforms must address chronic unemployment, inequitable access to land and unaccountable leadership. Peacebuilding needs to become the mandate and responsibility of ordinary people including traditional chiefs, religious leaders, women and youth.

Like the residents of Bogouya village demonstrated, when empathy, solidarity, trust and respect abound, opportunities for livelihoods will appear. Actors for peace can make a difference. If they can value indigenous knowledge and implement locally generated solutions, they can reinforce vertical and horizontal social cohesion by engaging local leaders and civil society, thereby giving voice, opportunity and support to the people of the Sahel.

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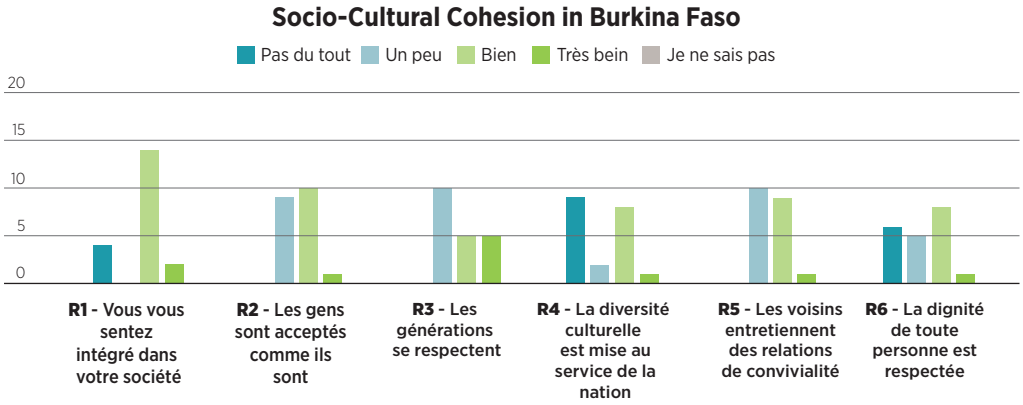
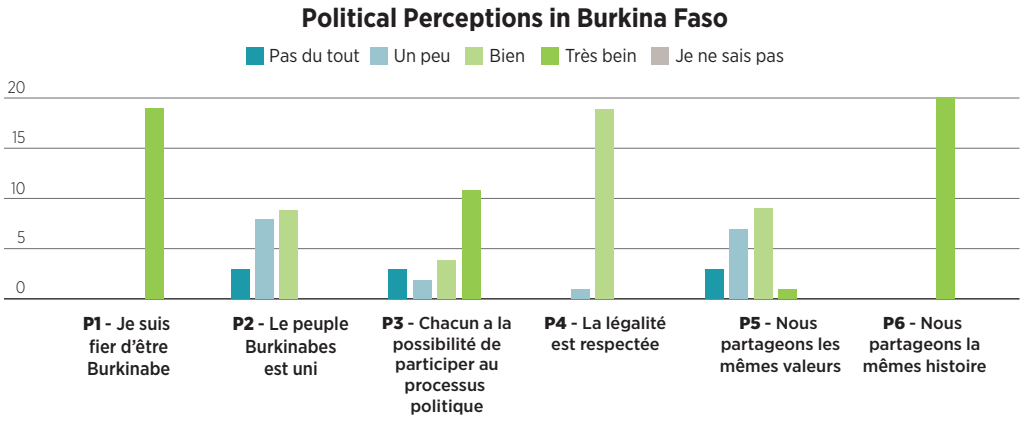
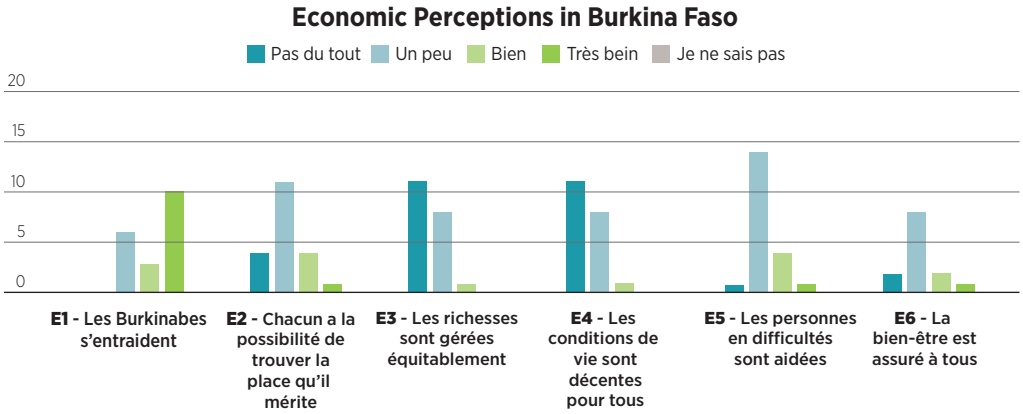
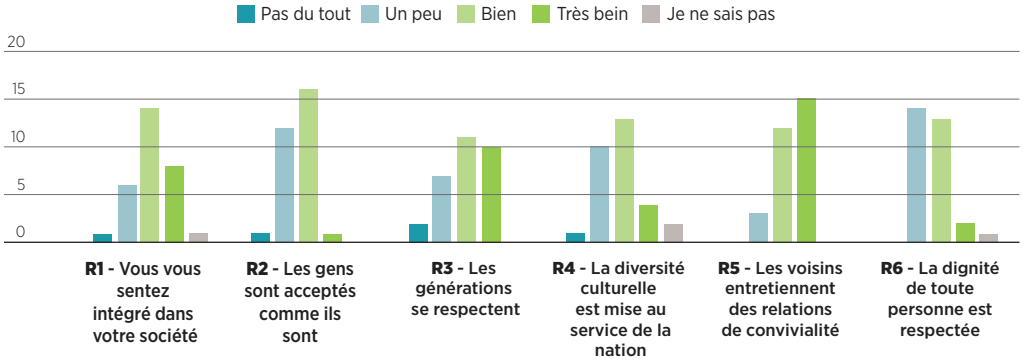
Annex B: The Mini Social Cohesion Barometer



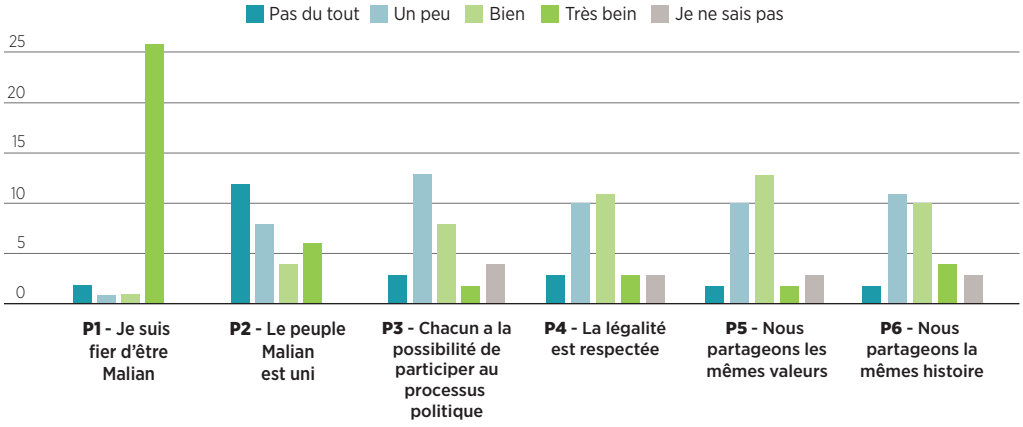




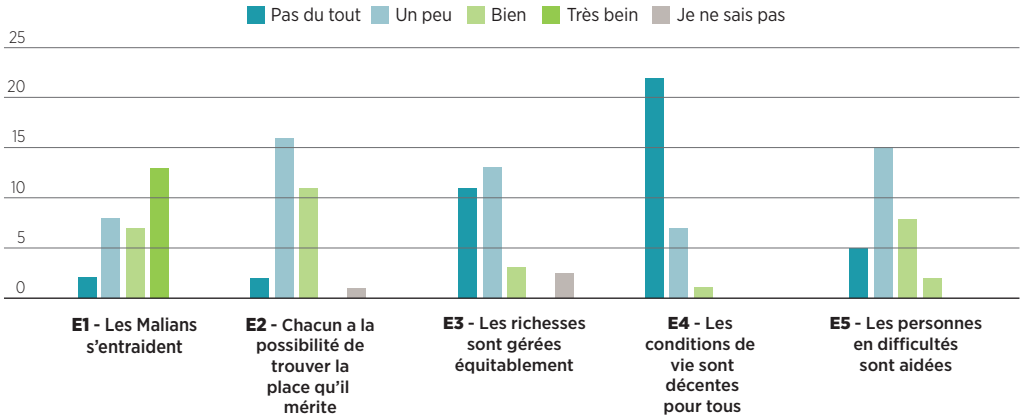
Socio-Cultural Cohesion in Mali

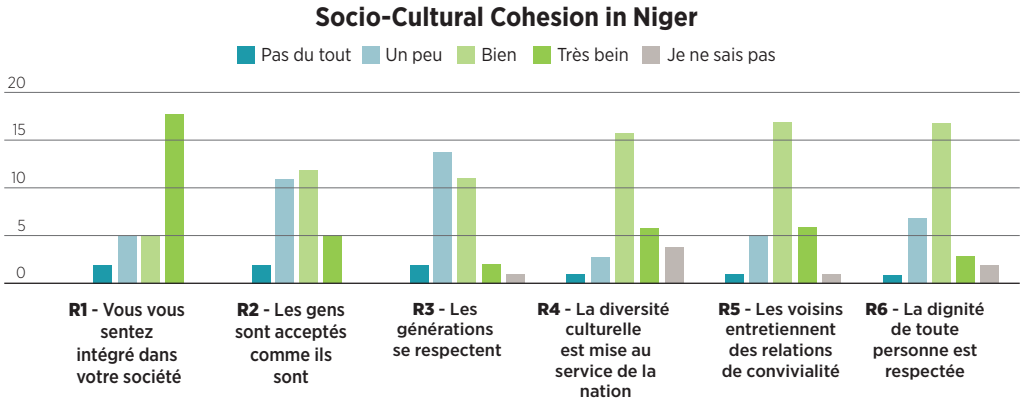


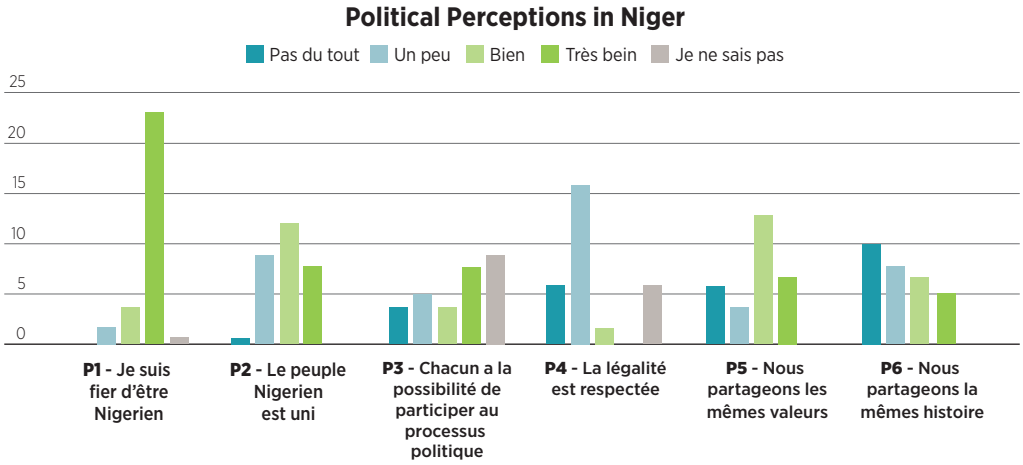
Political Perceptions in Mali

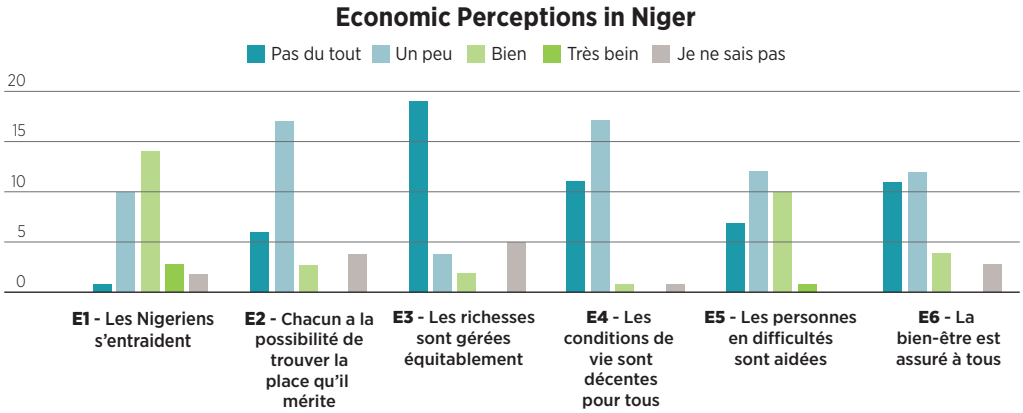


Economic Perceptions in Mali




Socio-Cultural Cohesion in Niger
Pas du tout
Un peu
Bien
Très bein
Je ne sais pas
20
15
10
5
0
R1 - Vous vous sentez intégré dans votre société
R2 - Les gens sont acceptés comme ils sont
R3 - Les générations se respectent
R4 - La diversité culturelle est mise au service de la nation
R5 - Les voisins entretiennent des relations de convivialité
R6 - La dignité de toute personne est respectée


Political Perceptions in Niger
Pas du tout
Un peu
Bien
Très bein
Je ne sais pas
25
20
15
10
5
0
P1 - Je suis fier d'être Nigerien
P2 - Le peuple Nigerien est uni
P3 - Chacun a la possibilité de participer au processus politique
P4 - La légalité est respectée
P5 - Nous partageons les mêmes valeurs
P6 - Nous partageons la mêmes histoire


Economic Perceptions in Niger
Pas du tout
Un peu
Bien
Très bein
Je ne sais pas
20
15
10
5
0
E1 - Les Nigeriens s'entraident
E2 - Chacun a la possibilité de trouver la place qu'il mérite
E3 - Les richesses sont gérées équitablement
E4 - Les conditions de vie sont décentes pour tous
E5 - Les personnes en difficultés sont aidées
E6 - La bien-être est assuré à tous

Annex C Sampling Matrix

SPI CONFLICT ANALYSIS SAMPLING MATRIX

		COUNTRY									
		BURKINA			MALI			NIGER			
ID	TOOL	KAYA	KONGOUSSI	OUAHIGOUYA	ANSONGO	KORO	TOMINIAN	OUALLAM	AYOROU	TORODI	TOTAL
1-INTEL	Elders: Interviews: Age 65-85+	1	1			2	1		1	1	**7**
2-FGY	Youth Focus Group- Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso	1		1	1	1		1	1		**6**
3-FGPY	Focus Group: Poor and Unemployed Youth:		1				1			1	**3**
4-FGDH	Focus Group: Adult males:	1		1	2	1	1	1	1	2	**10**
5- FGDF	Adult Women's Focus Group :	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	**8**
6-INTRM	Interviews with Returnees: Male Tuaregs to Mali					1	1				**2**
7-FGMR	Malian Refugees Focus Groups								2		**2**
8-FGIDP	IDP Focus Group	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	3	1	**14**
9- FGCH	IDP Host Communities FGD		1	1					2		**4**
10-FGSD	Village-Based Self-Defense Organization		1	1				2			**4**
11-INTPB	Interview Interfaith Peace Building Groups (1male 1 female)	1	1			2			2		**6**
12-INTCV	Interview: Chefs de Village:	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	**9**
13-INTGOV	Interviews with young men and women, adult males and females on governance issues:	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	**18**
14-INTH	Interviews: Adult Males, farmer and herder, same village	1	1	1	1			1			**5**
15-INTF	Interviews: 2 young woman: and 1 from farm family; 1 from pastoralist family	1		1		2			2		**6**
16-INTM	Qur'anic School Teachers or Imam: Village	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	**9**
17-FGCL	Focus Group (or Interview): Chef lieu of Rural Commune	1	1	1			1			1	**5**

ID	TOOL	COUNTRY									TOTAL
		BURKINA			MALI			NIGER			
		KAYA	KONGOUSSI	OUAHIGOUYA	ANSONGO	KORO	TOMINIAN	OUALLAM	AYOROU	TORODI	
18-FGOCL	Interviews: Villages Outside the Chef Lieu		1			1			1		**3**
19-INTP	Interview with Prefect at Department/Cercle Level	1	1		1		1	1		1	**6**
	National Level Interviews		3			3			3		**9**
Total		**14**	**14**	**13**	**12**	**17**	**12**	**13**	**20**	**12**	**45**

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

COUNTRY	ZONE	MEN > 35	MEN <35	WOMEN >35	WOMEN <35	ETHNIC MINORITIES	ETHNIC MAJORITY	IDP- MALE	IDP-FEMALE	FEMALE OFFICIAL	MALE OFFICIAL	TRADITIONAL LEADER	RELIGIOUS LEADER	ELEVEUR	AGRICULTURALIST	SELF-DEFENSE	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	HOUSEWIFE
Burkina Faso	Kaya	18	1	16	11	2	44		6	2	3	1	2	2	17	3	11		1
	Kongoussi	33	12	2		3	44	8		2	6	2	3		28	8		8	
	Ouahigouya	6	6	17	6	3	32		6	4	1	1	1		16		2		
Mali	Ansongo	17	5	4	5	4	6	5	6			1	1	9	1		13		5
	Koro	25	7	17	14		1	8	8	2	3		1		20		15		21
	Tominian	19	11	14	2	6	1	6			6	1	1	8	11		4	7	8
Niger	Ouallam	8	3		6	3	14				1			2	4		5		3
	Ayorou	11	6	2		12	6					1		3	2		12		1
	Torodi	13	3	2	4	14	8				4			2	3	4	5	4	

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