STUDY ON SPARSELY POPULATED AREAS

Case study: Mali

REPORT 17 APRIL 2014

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Niger river valley, Timbuktu region (Mali). © Ferdaous Bouhlel
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Within the framework of this study on sparsely populated areas in northern Mali, which was conducted by Groupe URD for the World Bank between October 2013 and February 2014, interviews were carried out with more than 520 people who are representative of the socio-economic, cultural, and political diversity in this complex area. Northern Mali is still trying to move beyond a series of conflicts that have caused widespread suffering, internal and external displacements of people, and reminded us how fragile yet necessary the social contract is there between the State and these sparsely populated areas, which are often marginalised. “Sparsely populated” implies difficulties in terms of both interactions and additional costs linked to long distances and frequent major logistics problems. This notion is also synonymous with economic and even political marginalisation, because all too often when the “value for money” concept is applied to these areas, it translates into “doing anything.”

Several major points emerged from the analysis of these interviews.

First, there is a need for the structural elements of the State and State services to adapt to the numerous challenges facing them in sparsely populated areas. This issue concerns long-term economic and social development strategies, aiming to:

- take account of the human, natural, socio-economic, and logistic specificities of sparsely populated areas, and particularly the constraints linked to high transaction costs resulting from their remoteness and the poor road conditions;

- identify specific modes of action for supporting the principal sectors of economic activity in these areas, such as nomadic herding, and recessional and irrigation-based agriculture;

- adapt basic services to nomadic pastoral systems in which people are mobile, with appropriate school and healthcare systems, and local security;

- identify the innovations permitted by Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and the methodological advances made by development aid stakeholders in terms of implementing economic and financial support adapted to these situations, in which high transaction costs and risks affect the resource transfer systems normally used;

- strengthen the role played by local political stakeholders (local governments, traditional chiefs, and civil society) and the dialogue with local communities in this process. The long distances and sparse population, as well as the seasonal movements of the communities, have led to certain kinds of “social contracts” between communities, and also between these communities and the different forms of governance that we must understand and optimise.

The surveys conducted throughout this study show that the current war is not really proof of the failure of the State. Rather, this war expresses the exacerbation of that failure, which is the result of a long-term process of degradation and/or non-consolidation of the State.

The second point is extremely political: it will not be sufficient to provide solutions that make basic services such as healthcare and water viable, if we cannot ensure security, justice, and the protection of people. To assess these services, and how viable they are, we must consider what representation the people concerned have of the State. If there is no confidence or hope for reconstruction, no service can be viable and sustainable. According to a recurrent narrative, resolving the political conflict, combating impunity, and restoring law and order are the indispensable conditions for the return of refugees, even if they are today in an extremely fragile situation. Therefore, to resolve the crisis and reinstate the legitimacy of the State in these areas would require a concomitant and far-reaching resolution of the political conflict.

Third, once the crisis has been resolved, it will be urgent to restore basic services, which includes helping refugees who go home, rebuilding basic infrastructure and restoring State services, and distributing food. These important tasks will require an accurate assessment of the needs, good coordination of the stakeholders, and especially, the capacity to respond to various urgent short- and long-term needs. The fact that State instances, including local authorities, have had problems re-establishing themselves in emergency contexts and the fact that their programmes have fallen behind schedule, has done considerable damage to their reputation, and this in a situation where
they had already lost a great deal of. How this process unfolds will depend as much on the priorities set by the government as on the support it receives, and the capacities of all stakeholders involved to coordinate their actions.

**Fourth, an overall strategy must be implemented so that technical and social services can work together more smoothly, and to make economic and environmental services more effective.** In sparsely populated areas in northern Mali, perceptions of the State’s technical services are quite similar, whether we ask sedentary people in the river valley or livestock herders in non-flooded areas. Differences were, however, observed in terms of proximity, and aid for economic activities and infrastructure development. On the one hand, all the sedentary residents and farmers in the valley have benefited from the priority plan for development actions (since the 1970s with the creation of an office in Niger and the development of Village Irrigation Projects (VIPs)); on the other hand, the State considers that it is difficult to manage the vast pastoral and agro-pastoral world. Yet, the livestock-herding sector represents one of the only ways to produce value in these arid zones, and is a key opportunity for generating GDP.

**Conclusion:** Working on sparsely populated areas, first requires us to find solutions adapted to these particular areas. In other words, we must start by redefining development strategies in a way that can permit us to provide certain services in areas that are difficult to access and to offset the costs with specifically earmarked funds such as development aid, and support for the private sector. We must then make up for the disparities between these areas and more heavily populated ones that are often more productive. Third, we must think in terms of an integrated strategy, not one that divides activities and social services by sector. Finally, in these contexts of crisis resolution, in addition to taking account of long-term development issues, a second temporal element comes into play: the need to manage the open wounds of the recent conflict.

Promoting crisis resolution in northern Mali that will not engender another crisis requires a very subtle approach, because northern Mali is a very complex sparsely populated area, which is environmentally fragile, politically sensitive, and has deep socio-cultural wounds. Given the partially undermined State, lack of legitimacy of State services, which must be rebuilt, or even built from scratch in many places, and the societal wounds that have not yet healed, the challenges are enormous. In this context, listening to and understanding others – including those from the South – and the will to make changes, are the key actions needed to contribute to resolving the current crisis in northern Mali.

Any subsequent strategy must commit to strengthening these four pillars:

**A State that protects, ensures justice, assists, negotiates, facilitates, is accountable and responsible, energises and gives a sense of responsibility to people by restoring the meaning of the expression “living together,” recognises diversity, and unites people.**

**A State that is ready to assume its historical responsibilities and respects the traditional systems.**

**Appropriate services that are innovative, agile, economically viable, and respectful of the environment. Services that are socially equitable, able to take account of socio-economic diversity, be deployed effectively in sparsely populated areas, and restore links and exchange systems, and aim to have a strong impact on the local people.**

**A civil society in the North that recognises its own diversity. One that is able to engage in dialogue, even with the State, manage rare resources for the common good, be accountable, capitalise on its cultural and economic know-how, and also evolve in its power relations, forgive, and contribute to a common history.**

**An international system that is able to innovate and take risks. One that can help to engage in fundamental political dialogue leading to sustainable peace, facilitate flexibility, reinforce the involvement of the State, support the institutions created through decentralisation, and facilitate the involvement of civil society.**
1 INTRODUCTION: DEFINITION OF THE "SPARSE POPULATION" ISSUE IN NORTHERN MALI

The area analysed in this study on “sparsely populated areas” has features that make it very unusual, yet at the same time, it is very representative of many sparsely populated areas. In these regions, transaction costs are extremely high, ethnic groups have very specific characteristics, and the authority of the central government is often challenged. If we want to describe “sparsely populated areas” in northern Mali and the issues involved in providing basic services, we must speak of complex systems with the following features:

- vast sparsely populated areas in which ecosystem resources are often managed by very extensive or even mobile production systems, in which livestock raising of all kinds is the dominant activity with small herds around agro-pastoral villages, semi-nomadic herds in non flooded areas, and fully nomadic pastoralism;

- smaller areas used for “opportunistic” agricultural systems (e.g., recessional agriculture in seasonal marsh areas, optimal use of the rare rainfall, oasis agriculture, and even market gardening using groundwater), which enables nomadic populations to set up temporary or long-term settlements and engage in trade;

- more densely populated areas on the banks of the River Niger, where the most dynamic agricultural areas are located (those that use irrigation and inputs), as well as the principal northern cities with their markets and the presence of State and Regional institutions.

A series of maps in Appendix 1 gives a view of the issues at stake in this extremely heterogeneous area.

In these regions, “interface dynamics” at markets and waterholes, in transhumance corridors and places of exchange, and economic, social and human interdependences play a fundamental role in the organisation of space and communities. Analysing how “sparsely-populated areas” function in northern Mali, also requires us to speak of the movement of people and goods, which is difficult, often very “seasonal,” and requires complex and costly logistics. Societies in sparsely populated areas have developed with alternating periods of being isolated and reunited, according to age-old rhythms that the new means of transportation (4x4 and 6x6 vehicles) and communication (satellite telephones, GSM networks, and Internet) have profoundly modified, yet in practice respected. These sparsely populated areas are often peripheral (northern parts of Sahel countries), and frequently in conflict with the central government. For example, there have been many armed conflicts in the Sahel (4 in Mali since its independence), the Maoist insurrection in India and Bangladesh (Chittagong Hills), conflicts between the mountainous States and the authorities in Rangoon, Myanmar, as well as rebellions of the Hmong and other peoples in the mountainous regions of Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

In northern Mali, as in many places, numerous stereotypes shape the way the people in these sparsely populated areas are seen (“whites” versus “blacks”), and include negative dichotomies such as “noble warriors” versus “peaceful farmers.” These visions of differences go hand-in-hand with at best the disinterest of central governments toward those living in the periphery, (economic disinterest that results in a strategic “preference” for what has been labelled the “useful areas”). At worst, fear leads to policies based on control or even repression. The conflicts in northern Mali, like those in Niger and the CAR are examples of situations in which abandonment and disinterest create tensions between wetter and more populated southern regions and more arid and sparsely populated northern ones. In addition, the model for managing institutions and State agencies is weak, undermining the nation-state model that has developed during the post-colonial period.
In spite of the efforts made since the 1990s for a more democratic system, the lack of justice, dialogue, and explanations, as well as social inequalities have encouraged the rise of other models of collective management based on tradition and religion. These processes, which have been developing since the 1990s, have exacerbated the mechanisms of competition already at play for inadequate State resources and contributed to delegitimizing the State itself.

The social, economic, and political dynamics that go with the creation of modern States in these highly specific areas are complex and have resulted in as many links as antagonisms. The aid «toolbox» must satisfy requirements related to the sovereign role of the State (protection, rights, law and order) and those concerning the duty to provide care (in the social, healthcare, and food security sectors), which is one of the keys – amongst others – for legitimising the State. This «toolbox» also shapes the capacity of a State to satisfy the highly specific socio-economic and cultural specificities of an area and the people living in such a complex environment. It must also have a place for key issues, such as the demand for recognition, the end of contempt and discrimination, as well as an affirmation of the supreme role of the State – to ensure peace and security for everyone by promoting justice and national laws that apply to all citizens.

In the case of Mali, its history over the past few centuries has been marked by major upheavals in the social relations of a complex and changing nature, which has been a mixture of exploitation / predation, protection, competition, and complementarity, and led to the existence of a multi-faceted society in the aggressive and highly diverse environments in the Gourma and Haoussa areas. These two areas can be divided according to the radial axis from the River Niger, for the first between “riverbanks” and “inner delta”, and for the other between the banks of the river and pastoral lands extending to immense and arid desert/mountain areas (Taoudeni Basin, Temesna, Timitrin, and Adrar des Ifoghas). Throughout this zone, delicate balances have been built to cope with the major variations in rainfall, and great uncertainties about flooding and resource availability.

These variations are both structural and economic, and correspond completely with the agro-climatic area of northern Mali. They make it necessary to be able to adapt socially and technically, and even as a whole society, which makes it indispensable to adopt sustainable and appropriate political measures. Improving early warning systems, enhancing the pastoral economy, and completely redefining the strategies for providing basic services in areas difficult to access are in the long-term indispensable for the survival of these vast open areas. Changes to the land, modifications in power structures, the emergence of new actors and economic models, as well as armed rebellions and droughts have led to displacements and migrations toward the south or north, toward those “far-way lands” from which people come back changed or sometimes not at all. Since the drought of the 1970s, more than one fourth of the “white” population in northern Mali has settled in neighbouring or bordering countries (Algeria, Mauritania, and Libya) or lives in exile in Arabian Gulf countries, from where they influence the society of northern Mali. All these developments have created a new profile in terms of the demands made on the State and new needs for the State to legitimise its actions. The notion of service in the broad sense of the term (basic services such as
education, healthcare, and water, as well as rights, security, and justice) cannot be analysed without taking account of the historical roots of this relationship based on confidence / mistrust between the people living (sometimes only surviving) in these sparsely populated environments and the State, both as a power and an institutional model. Our study of the issues involved in providing services in sparsely populated areas in northern Mali has attempted to decipher this complex, difficult, and variable situation full of tension and painful experiences by defining some essential interpretive frameworks for anyone who would like to gain a deeper understanding of it.
2 METHOD AND CONSTRAINTS

The methodological approach we used is based on several elements already specified in the inception report delivered in October 2013, which was progressively refined during our fieldwork. We opted for an anthropological, systemic, and qualitative approach in which more importance was placed on listening attentively to those interviewed than on statistical data itself. The scientific strategies we adopted can be explained largely in terms of the choice to conduct our research on the basis of a socio-anthropological and agro-ecological approach taking account of diversity, rather than one based on “statistical representativeness.”

2.1. Sampling

It was important to ensure that all of the various communities and actors would be represented according to the following criteria:

Sampling areas / criteria used to establish the characteristics of different communities

- rural areas (zones in the valley, banks of the River Niger, pastoral areas far from the river (Haoussa), inner delta (Gourma), and desert areas.

- urban areas such as “regional capitals” and “capitals of Cercles.”

- the different social and community components of the groups and individuals (different Tuareg fractions and Arab groups; different Songhai and Fulani groups, other groups in the area such as Bozos or migrants from other regions in Mali who have settled in the north – Bambara, Dogon, Malinke, and others.

- socio-economic characteristics (wealthy and small shopkeepers, poor city dwellers, big herders, small farmers, artisans, and so on), and people who are marginalised geographically, and socially.

- people interviewed by age group and sex.

Due to the complex movements of the people concerned, we had to indicate where people were (in Mali, in exile in bordering countries, etc.). This exercise enabled us to account for:

- on the one hand, the people present in an area through a series of missions in the regions of Timbuktu, Gao and Mopti, as well as interviews in Bamako (notably to cover the Kidal Region). In the Mopti Region, our study attempted to account for the groups of indigenous inhabitants living there: the Fulani, Dogon, Bozo, Songhai, and other ethnic groups, and the displaced populations from the Timbuktu and Gao Regions (Songhai, Bella, black Kal-Tamasheks, Fulani, Bozo, and others). In the Gao Region (including Burem, Ménaka, and Assongo), our study covered the groups of inhabitants who stayed during the crisis: the Fulani, Bozo / Sorko, Songhai, white Kal-Tamasheks, Bella / black Kal-Tamasheks. In the Timbuktu Region, our team met some other groups of inhabitants who were not displaced or had returned from exile (generally from the south), whereas very few returned refugees have been recorded.
- on the other hand, the significant numbers of people still “in exile” (mainly Tuaregs and Arabs). Two missions were conducted in refugee camps in Burkina Faso for this purpose (Coudebou and Mentao Camps) and in Mauritania (M’Bera Camp).

Our approach was intended to “cover diversity.” The socio-cultural characteristics of the people interviewed are presented in the following charts.

People interviewed due to their role in State administration and services
- representatives of decentralised national institutions (governorates, Regional Directorates) as well as sovereign institutions (police, army, and justice),
- representatives of local government / elected officials (MPs, mayors, municipal councillors),
- traditional chiefs and religious leaders,
- public service providers: State, Regional, Cercle, and Commune civil servants in healthcare, education, water and sanitation, and tourism; private service providers in healthcare (ASACO), water (waterhole management associations), telecommunications (Orange, Malitel), banks (traditional banks and non-traditional money transfer systems such as Orange Money and MoneyGram), and trade.
In Mali, a series of “institutional” interviews were conducted with:

- Malian institutions in Bamako: Union des ANESCO, ANICT (National Local Authorities Investment Agency), Comité Dialogue et Réconciliation (Committee for Dialogue and Reconciliation), Haut Conseil Islamique du Mali (High Islamic Council of Mali (HCIM), Collectif des Femmes du Nord (Co-operative of northern Malian women);

- State institutions: Gao and Timbuktu governorates, Municipal government of Gao, Sévaré, and others, as well as decentralised technical services (healthcare, agriculture, herding, tourism), elected officials from northern Mali met in Bamako and in the field;

- The international aid system: the United Nations (MINUSMA, OCHA, WFP, HCR), NGOs (Handicap International, Action contre la Faim, IRC, OXFAM, Doctors without Borders), and the International Committee of the Red Cross;

- Those involved in security operations: Serval, MINUSMA, UNDSS, Malian Armed Forces;

- Bi- and multi-lateral donors (France, Germany, Switzerland, and the European Union).

Our search for people to interview was both oriented (identification of people or groups corresponding to the pre-defined categories), and random – according to the opportunities we had during our visits in the field.

In all, we met 524 people (see detailed table in Appendix 2). The table below presents some figures in terms of socio-professional and community groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Mali</th>
<th>Mauritania</th>
<th>Burkina Faso</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Traditional chiefs and religious leaders/ notables/ griots</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herder</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishermen</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected officials</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State administrative and technical services</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldiers / gendarmes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shopkeepers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthcare professionals</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jurists</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary school teachers</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Tourism, arts and crafts</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veterinarians</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Private sector employees</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>International organisation officers</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Civil society</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students/ University professors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others (hired labourers, computer repairmen/women, traditional well diggers, etc.)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young school children and old people with no job or clear role</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>285</strong></td>
<td><strong>124</strong></td>
<td><strong>115</strong></td>
<td><strong>524</strong></td>
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The chart below presents the socio-economic breakdown of the people interviewed.
## 2. METHOD AND CONSTRAINTS

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>TOTAL MAJI</th>
<th>MAJI Villes</th>
<th>TOTAL GAO</th>
<th>TOTAL IMBERGUL</th>
<th>TOTAL TIMBUL</th>
<th>TOTAL SLAM</th>
<th>TOTAL KIJUL</th>
<th>TOTAL MURARI</th>
<th>TOTAL LAMBI</th>
<th>TOTAL TUMBUL</th>
<th>TOTAL TAMPO</th>
<th>TOTAL MURI</th>
<th>TOTAL BURKINA</th>
<th>TOTAL MAURITANIA</th>
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### REFUGEE CAMPS

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### DISAGGREGATED INFORMATION

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2.2. Interview handbook

Information was gathered based on a handbook designed to cover the overall approach and facilitate discussion. At the beginning of the interviews, there was a systematic presentation of the aims of the study, and a clarification of the conditions in which information was gathered, so that the data collected could be better analysed (posture of the people interviewed, group dynamics, social, ethnic, and professional characteristics, place and language used for discussion). Discussions were conducted based on a semi-directive approach, although an anthropological approach combining observation and listening was also sometimes used. Interviews were conducted individually or in groups of varying sizes (see the number of both kinds of interviews in the table below). As preference was given to a community-based approach, we gave the people interviewed the free choice to be with those close to them.

Most of the interviews lasted between 3 and 4 hours (about 30 minutes per block), sometimes more, particularly when there was a large number of people in the group (up to 30). The part relating what interviewees had experienced since the beginning of the war (Block 2) could take several hours by itself, because their desire to tell their stories -- and sometimes their pain -- were so strong.

2.3. Methods used to process data

The data gathered were processed using several complementary systems. There are several points to mention concerning the quantification of the qualitative differences. We did not attempt to quantify the qualitative data systematically for all of the interviews, either because the length of the interviews made this impossible (initially, indicator points were to be attributed at the end of the interviews), or the assessment system seemed to be too complicated (repetition of the question, hard to remember the assessment system), or there were too many people in the focus group making it laborious to reach a consensus for attributing the points. Based on the assessment points attributed, as well as the interviews, systematic analysis resulted in:

- a “block by block” analysis of the interviews, based on narrative elements (see Chapter 4). Differences can be observed in how the various research teams transcribed what was expressed by interviewees. Some of the interviewers were more accustomed to transcribing interviews using anthropological research methods, while others were more experienced in gathering data in tables. To produce a coherent overall format, these different formats had to be subtly adapted to each other, taking account of the different formats in which the information gathered was presented (information initially gathered in telegraphic style had to be written up, and the formats of recorded interviews transcribed in a more anthropological style had to be simplified). Statements made by the interviewees were included in the texts whenever possible. They always indicate the type of person interviewed (socio-cultural characteristics, economic activity, where they normally live, and place of interview, when it did not correspond to where they normally live);

- the creation of “profiles” of the people interviewed, based on multifactorial analysis (spider chart analysis, see Chapter 3). To create these specific profiles based on the different categories of people interviewed, a series of indicators was defined, and given points from 0 to 4. This assessment was supposed to be done either at the end of the interview, or as a participative tool (individual interviews or in focus groups). It enabled us to create a multifactorial representation known as a spider chart. The indicators on which the assessment of each of them was based, and the overall shape of the multifactorial spider chart analysis are presented below:
## 2. Method and Constraints

### Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTORS</th>
<th>ACTORS (KEY CHARACTERISTICS)</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence of the State</td>
<td>Real presence of the State</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inter-community relations 1</td>
<td>The choice of reference communities was systematically made by the person or group interviewed, so the situations are extremely diverse. The reference communities generally include nearby communities with economic and land relations, or even ones that are competing for resources. However, it may also include communities involved in a conflict, particularly in the framework of the politicization of the situation in northern Mali.</td>
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<td>Inter-community relations 2</td>
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<td>Inter-community relations 3</td>
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#### Intra-community relations (overall assessment)

| Protection by the State | Fair State, presence of security forces that offer protection. | |
| Protection by other actors | Security forces are present, even a militia. | |
| Oppression by the State | State that allows plundering to take place, or even encourages it. | |
| Oppression by other actors | People who commit plundering and acts of violence more or less actively. | |
| Presence of State services | Level of presence of services, police, State institutions, and so on. | |
| Presence of services of other actors (private, NGOs) | Level of presence of services completed by the private sector. | |
| Predation by the State | State actors that plunder or let others plunder. | |
| Predation by other actors | Other actors that plunder or let others plunder. | |
| Quality of services | Are there appropriate, high-quality and affordable services? | |
| Confidence | People interviewed were asked to give a score between 1 and 4. | |
| Hope | Are NGOs, UN, and other such actors present in the area? | |

### Assessment system

#### Overall assessment

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ASSESSMENT OF INTER-COMMUNITY RELATIONS</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT OF HOPE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>Null to very low</td>
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<td>1-2</td>
<td>Low to fair</td>
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<td>2-3</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
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<td>3-4</td>
<td>Very satisfactory</td>
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#### Assessment of inter-community relations

| 1 | Conflict |
| 2 | No relations |
| 3 | Good relations |
| 4 | Very good relations |

#### Assessment of hope

| 1 | No hope, war is going to start again |
| 2 | Perhaps something is going to change |
| 3 | Yes, things are going to change positively |
| 4 | Things are changing positively / satisfactory |
Whenever possible, good and bad experiences of development practices were gathered and are presented in a specific chapter on risks, constraints, and good practices (see Chapter 5). This process enabled us to establish the basic guidelines for working in sparsely populated areas in northern Mali.

**Completion of multifactorial spider chart analyses:**

It is not easy to gather the information needed to establish a multifactorial spider chart profile: either the interviewers made this chart by analysing the information gathered, or they made it directly with the people interviewed (individually or in groups). Both options require a pedagogical effort to explain things to the interviewees, which was not always possible, and time, which was not always available. There was an improvement in the number of spider charts created for Mauritania compared to Burkina Faso, due to the fact that the records were more appropriate (the interviewers asked for the assessment scores as they were completing the questionnaire), and the interviews were longer. We observed that the people in refugee camps are “captives,” and often have a great deal of free time. Meanwhile, those who live in Mali have less time, because they are often obligated to focus on surviving or on completing the tasks imposed upon them, which explains the greater number of complete profiles made in the camps.

For Mali, we were able to complete 44 multifactorial spider chart analyses. The table above presents more detailed facts and figures.

**2.4. Constraints and missions in the field**

The interviews in Mali were conducted from October 2013 to February 2014 near Gao, Timbuktu, Ansongo, Boni, Bourem, Mopti, and Sévaré, and also during the same period in Burkina Faso (in Ouagadougou as well as the Coudebour and Mentao refugee camps), and in Mauritania (Nouakchott, Bassikanou, and in the M’Bera refugee camp).

**Interviews in Mali:** Our study took place in a complex and troubled situation in Mali, with major political events including elections, the Etats généraux de la decentralisation (national conference on decentralisation), and Assises du Nord (national reconciliation meeting), military operations and terrorist attacks (one of our teams was in the field when journalists were killed in Kidal). Access was difficult, and in some cases forbidden (in high security zones such as Kidal). In addition, the complex logistics and dangerous conditions in northern Mali were major constraints. For every interview, we had to crosscheck security information with Malian institutions and the armed forces deployed in the zone. Some of the interviews of northern Malians were conducted in Bamako, the others in the northern zone itself, in regional urban centres (Gao, Timbuktu, and Mopti), in urban areas in the Cercles, and in rural areas in these regions. In the Mopti Region, the interviews took place in the commune of Mopti-Sévaré and the surrounding area, as well as in the Douentza Cercle (Douentza, Boni, and Hombori).

In the Gao Region, we worked in the Cercles of Gao, Ansongo, Bourem, and Ménaka. In the area of Timbuktu, most of the interviews were conducted in the city itself and in nearby rural areas.
People from areas further away from Timbuktu were often still in refugee camps. Interviews of people from communes far from Timbuktu (Diré, Salam) were conducted in Bamako, Timbuktu, or in refugee camps. Security was a major issue and constraint in Mali. We were very cautious when travelling. Despite the social unrest, ongoing banditry, and significant activities engaged in by jihadist groups throughout the zone, we did our best to gather as much data as possible. The interviews of people from the Kidal Region and the Ménaka Cercle were conducted mainly in Bamako and Burkina Faso. The Kidal mission was postponed several times, and in the end could not be conducted due to the time constraints of our study. In the field in Mali, our teams encountered “survey fatigue” by people who had seen many needs assessment teams come and go, but no effect at all on them. We had to handle this situation with tact and diplomacy.

**Interviews in the camps:** On the contrary, in the refugee camps many people, particularly those who had experienced violence, said they were telling their story for the first time. Despite the presence of the HCR and some humanitarian NGOs, no systematic mission had been conducted by researchers or human rights specialists. This issue was emphasized in some of the narratives, and the interviews were unquestionably a chance for people to express themselves. Some people were able to talk at some length about their pain, and benefit from being listened to by an outside interlocutor. Likewise, some interviews had to be interrupted, because the emotions within the group were so strong.

**Burkina Faso:** Our field mission in Burkina Faso was conducted from October to November 2013. The mission in the camps lasted 8 days, then about one week in Ouagadougou. Some contacts were made with political party officials from the MNLA, HCUA, and MAA to understand their perceptions of the issues at stake in re-establishing the Malian State in the northern regions. During our stay in Ouagadougou, a focus group was interviewed with officials and community leaders from areas we could not access (Kidal). Our team met especially refugees.

**Mauritania:** For visits in the camps, the process for obtaining authorisations from the authorities and the HCR was relatively easy in Burkina Faso, but much more laborious and longer in Mauritania. During this time, interviews were conducted in Nouakchott. The mission in the camps lasted 8 days (11 to 19 January), our two consultants were housed in Bassikanou (18 km from the camp), and the visits in the camp were only authorized from 8.00 to 16.30 (HCR security measures). In the M’Bera camp, there were a great number of representatives of the different communities who facilitated our contact with the interviewees. Several interviews were conducted in the evening of people who had professional activities or the means to rent a “real” house in Bassikanou.

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1. The MNLA (Azawad National Liberation Movement), HCUA (High Council for the Unity of Azawad), and MAA (Arab Movement for Azawad) met during this period for a coordination meeting to prepare the peace negotiations undertaken with Mali since the Ouagadougou Agreement that was signed in June 2013. We took advantage of this event to meet some of the political officials.
3 ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVES

Some of the elements we present are common to the people we met in the two countries that sheltered refugees (Burkina Faso and Mauritania), as well as to those we met in Mali. Others are radically different, reflecting different, sometimes opposite experiences and perceptions. Our goal is obviously not to say that one group or another is right. Rather, we wish to reflect on the challenges facing sparsely populated areas in northern Mali, which are currently trying to identify a path that will lead them away from recurrent conflicts, while seeking the options for economic and social development that will re-establish the necessary conditions for “living together peacefully.” Geographic and ethnic specificities are mentioned whenever necessary in an attempt to help others to better understand this mosaic of perceptions.

3.1 A difficult context, and a painful history

3.1.1 Current state of the situation (block 1)
The people interviewed had different personal trajectories and life histories. It is important to put them in a clear timeframe:

(Source: Groupe URD)
Since 2012, the events have made some of the people stay where they were, and others go into exile further south or in neighbouring countries. Other centripetal and centrifugal movements in and out of this area have occurred since this time and continue. In such a complex and volatile context, population displacement dynamics are necessarily highly diverse. Likewise, humanitarian aid must adapt continuously to rapidly changing situations, which will be one of the critical issues in the next few months.

**Outflow of refugees**

The outflow of refugees toward neighbouring countries began in February 2012 with the beginning of hostilities and the fear of reprisals against Tuaregs, which were raised by events in Aguelhok such as the “pogroms” in Kati. This first wave would last until June 2012. A second wave started in March-April 2012, when armed movements took control of all the northern regions, and Islamist movements imposed strict sharia law. These events were responsible for the waves of displaced people in 2012, with 220,000 internally displaced people who headed south, and 165,000 refugees who fled to neighbouring countries (Niger, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, and Algeria). Different stories have been told about this period covering 2012. When the armed groups started fighting, some groups -- generally the sedentary communities (Songhai, Bella) in the valley, which have closer relations with State services and the local representatives, and have placed more importance on maintaining ties with the State -- experienced this activity as a violent act and assault on their integrity. Although few of these refugees say they were actually victims of physical violence, they denounce the plundering and the ransacking of offices, banks, and official State premises.

Tales of rape and forced marriage in the “occupied” areas (Gao and Timbuktu), and of the deprivation of personal freedom greatly increased the feelings of fear and definitely contributed to creating a desire for revenge.

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2 Sources: OCHA, OIM and UNHCR.
“People were fleeing however they could by their own means or public transport, toward Mopti in the south or Niamey in Niger. I wanted to stay in Gao, but when some young Tuaregs threatened me by calling me a Bambara from the south, and with the strict application of sharia law (no music, or cigarettes, or television, etc.), I decided to leave. I travelled for 10 days from Gao to Sévaré, passing by Niamey, Ouagadougou, and Ouahigouya in Burkina Faso. I’m now here in Sévaré at my uncle’s house where I’m a displaced civil servant. I’m not planning on going back to Gao as long as the situation remains unclear.”

Fulani, healthcare civil servant, displaced to Mopti-Sévaré.

Most nomad communities say they were not victims of violence by local armed movements, or even by the Islamist movements (Ansar Edine and MOJWA). Some consider that these movements guaranteed order and security after the wave of plundering in the first months.

Among the sedentary communities, several people observed that the MOJWA, which counted more ethnic groups and was established in Gao, was “preferable” to the MNLA, because the latter was considered to be an exclusively Tuareg movement, and accused of having committed many acts of armed robbery and violence toward women. The trust of certain sedentary peoples (Songhai and Bella) in the Ganda Koy (“Masters of the Land”) self-defence movement was also marked by a kind of ethnic preference.

“Many of our Fulani relatives joined the MOJWA for money, but also in a spirit of revenge against the Kal-Tamashek and certain Arabs. In the field, the MNLA and the jihadists were laying down the law. In reaction, some Fulani groups joined MOJWA and other self-defence groups in the south near Mopti.”

Fulani herder, 58, Ansongo.

However, these “preferences” do not mean the people had adhered to the overall objectives of the Islamist movements (particularly those considered to be foreign, such as MOJWA and AQIM), nor to their methods, which they considered to be brutal. For most of the people who remained, it was more of a question of “compromising with the outside movements and going about their business, as long as their safety and property were not in danger” (interview in Nouakchott with a Kel Ansar Tuareg from the Timbuktu Region).

As for the Tuareg and Arab populations, the kinship relations they have with members of the local movements (MNLA, Ansar Edine, and later MAA) were considered to be a guarantee of security. At the same time, these relations exposed them to being stigmatised by the army and people in the southern part of Mali, who saw in each fair-skinned person “a potential rebel.”

“Even if everyone didn’t join the MNLA, I knew that these people weren’t going to hurt us, because they are our brothers and cousins. They’re not foreigners. Even if we don’t agree with them completely, we can discuss and exchange points of view. Their cause is to improve our life. They didn’t come to fight against the people, but to try to help change our conditions. I didn’t personally join the movement, because I was in the army. At first, I wasn’t going to abandon my post, but as the situation changed and the troops (of the Malian army) retreated from the northern region, I was forced to desert and go to Burkina Faso. The problem for me is the colour of my skin. I can’t go back to Mali, they’ll always say I’m a rebel, even if it’s not true, because of my fair skin. So I’m sitting here in this camp doing nothing.”

Young Tuareg, Malian army recruit, Mentao Refugee Camp, Burkina Faso.

3 The MNLA (Azawad National Liberation Movement) is essentially a Tuareg movement. The MAA (Arab Movement for Azawad) is largely present in the area north of Timbuktu. The jihadist movements are very different: AQIM members are from outside of the area, while some Ansar Edine and MOJWA members are from the local communities.
It is also a complex period in which power relations have been reversed and are constantly evolving. Most of the interviews recorded in the valley, and more specifically in Gao, strongly denounce “the total abandonment of the people by the State and the police.”

“State officials were the first to flee, because they didn't have any more resources. They took the resources of the State, its projects, and left with their families, abandoning all the people they left behind. No more State authority, no more military, and it became the law of the jungle with the armed groups. Personally, I really believed in the State, but with this crisis, I don't trust it anymore because we need a strong country that has resources.”

Fulani, healthcare civil servant, displaced to Mopti-Sévaré.

During this time, these new actors attempted to seduce “the hearts and minds” by aiming to satisfy some of the needs of the people in the areas under their control.

“The Jihadists were able to provide a certain number of services effectively whereas the State had struggled to do so in the past, and these services are still not being provided today. They provided healthcare by helping all the necessary services like hospitals and ambulances, and by making it easier to get energy because petrol was free. They helped farmers by distributing fuel for the power pumps and setting up a bus service to bring farm workers to the fields. Finally, they provided real security since everybody could go about their business without worrying about being robbed or ripped off.”

Farming and healthcare managers, Timbuktu.

This vision, which only represents the point of view of a small portion of the population, shows nonetheless the combined importance of providing services and maintaining order in terms of the legitimacy of whoever may be in power.

With Operation Serval, launched in January 2013, and the redeployment of the Malian army, the situation has changed fundamentally. Some people have been accused of having passively or actively supported the presence of insurgent groups, and have started to be afraid of retaliations. In many cases, they have experienced acts of violence, and serious human rights abuses, and a spirit of revenge is characteristic of both the Malian troops (the slaughter of soldiers in Aguelhok in January 2012 is often cited to justify their actions), and the people who lived through hard times from January 2012 to January 2013.

Arabs and Tuaregs therefore fled to neighbouring countries. In the Mauritania refugee camp alone, the HCR and humanitarian NGOs registered tens of thousands of new refugees between January and March 2013.

According to MSF, based in Mauritania, this new wave had very specific characteristics:

“Contrary to the refugees that arrived in 2012, these people arrived suddenly and empty-handed. In 2012, the people took time to bring a minimum amount of things, sometimes even their animals. This time, we saw families with barely enough to drink. Hundreds of people arrived at the Fassala transit centre every day. For the registrations, the HCR was overwhelmed: it hadn't foreseen such a situation.”

MSF official, Nouakchott, Mauritania.
Returns

Along with these new departures, as northern cities were recaptured and security forces were gradually deployed, other population movement dynamics developed, with in particular the return of people who had been displaced toward the south, who started going back north to the areas they had left. Such movements had already accelerated in mid-2012, because the sedentary communities were trying to go back early enough to be able to stick to the farming calendar, and also to repair their houses before the rainy season. Finally, in July 2013 at election time, and after the Ouagadougou Agreement, returns were observed of people who were particularly desperate from a financial point of view. Today, the figures remain uncertain. For example, the HCR has registered just under 2,000 returns from the M’Bera camp in Mauritania.

“*It is especially Imoushars who have returned from Mauritania (Tegelregief, Telemediess, Akaseli, Tiakh, Ihmen, and Ibouzawa). Refugees from certain communities with cropland (irrigated areas) returned to the country just before the presidential elections (28 July 2013). There were 383 families, or about 2000 people in all, from the following fractions: Kel Essouk from Dofana, Tengueréguéf, Tellimédès, Ibzawan, Kel Tagamart, Kel Tobakat, and Kel Tinakawat-Tigoungouténé. The people from Dofana expressed their will to vote at home.*”

Tuareg, retired teacher, M’Bera Camp, Mauritania.

Many of those who attempted to go back home were herders trying to find some of their livestock that was not lost or stolen. However, due to the atrocities committed and the arrests made by soldiers near Gourma (particularly in Ansongo, Gossi, and Bambara Maoudé), in the western valley of the River Niger (Léré, Lake Faguibine), as well as in Timbuktu and Gao, people started returning to the refugee camps in October 2013. Several testimonies from the refugee camps in Burkina Faso confirm the return strategies used by the herders from Gourma:

“*Most herders that have returned since this summer (2013) are trying to save what’s left. Most return alone and leave their families, the elderly, women, and children in the camps. Every time a father leaves the camps, the atmosphere is like a burial. It’s not joyful because we don’t know if we’re going to see him again. To go back, most don’t register with the HCR, because this allows them to come back if there’s a problem. So they want to keep their place, and especially the families continue getting their rations. When they go back, they hide, and don’t travel on the ‘safe routes,’ the paved roads, checkpoints. They’re afraid, those that go back hide in the forest, around the marshes, wherever they can until they find their home area. And even there, they continue hiding, don’t go to the markets, or any cities, nowhere where they might find the army.*”

Kel Essouk herder from Gossi, Mentao Camp, Burkina Faso.

As for refugees in the Mauritania camp, some have returned because they were motivated by the desire to participate in local elections (the communal elections initially scheduled for April have been postponed until an unknown date). However, the atrocities committed, and especially the shock caused by the lynching of a notable, who was a refugee from the Léré valley, made people stop participating in the electoral process.
“People stopped trying to return when one of their leaders, Bolla Ag Mohamed Ali, was murdered. He went to participate in the peace process, and was killed on 11 August 2013 in Léré by the local community as authorities and the army looked on passively. Everything came to a halt, because he was one of the main architects of the peace negotiations, he didn’t have any debts. He thought people were going to welcome him, because there was nothing bad about him.”

Tuareg, retired teacher in Mauritania Camp.

**Situation at the end of 2013, beginning of 2014**

The latest censuses conducted by the United Nations report 170,000 refugees in Mauritania, Burkina Faso, and Niger, compared to 177,000 when there were the most massive displacements (May 2013). This figure does not include the tens of thousands of refugees in Algeria. According to a report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in February there were still more than 200,000 displaced people, 150,000 less than at the time of the massive displacement in 2013.

For many of the people who fled due to fear or because of the atrocities, the situation remains very difficult. Most of the refugees still in the camps have very limited resources: they are herders, farmers, low-level civil servants, traditional chiefs, seasonal workers, cleaners, and unemployed people. There are many women, a large proportion of whom are either widowed or divorced (several divorces due to the distance separating them from their ex-husbands were reported). They must handle their own affairs, as well as those of their children, and sometimes even elderly people, all by themselves. In addition, most of the people have run up debts to pay for their daily needs. The herders from Léré, Niafunké, the lakes area, Gourma, and Haoussa have lost a large percentage of their livestock, which is generally stolen – some up to 100%. As for the farmers, in some areas, their activities are almost at a standstill. Today, one of the major challenges for the State and its partners is to help the farmers relaunch their seasonal activities and make up for the bad harvest in 2013. In addition, food security is very fragile with major problems in some pastoral areas (very bad state of forage resources), and a foreseeable increase in malnutrition and difficulties in obtaining food products as long as the border with Algeria remains partially closed.

“The pumps are broken here. That’s a problem because there’s no water, and as we say ‘aman iman,’ (water is life). We can’t find any more spare parts. There have been village irrigation projects (VIPs) in the Commune for 18 years, but with the crisis, there’s no more supervision, no more fertilizer or it’s very expensive. Our VIPs, which had driven development, have been abandoned.”

Songhai, Member of an aid distribution committee, commune of Bourem.

“This market garden VIP was created by Pastor X, and he installed everything: the power pumps, distribution networks, and even air-conditioned cellars for the potatoes. With him, we had all we needed to work, and we earned a good living, because we could sell potatoes late in the season, when the price was high. The jihadists arrived and didn’t bother us until they left, but then they broke quite a bit of equipment. The worse thing is that since people don’t have any money left, they are buying fewer vegetables. Besides that, the diesel fuel for our generators has become very expensive, so we can’t run the air conditioner for our potatoes. We have to sell them very quickly, and the prices are low.”

Songhai Farmer and market gardener, Timbuktu.

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Safety at the heart of population movement dynamics

One of the key factors in the movements of people and their possible return to Mali is their fear for their personal safety, which is linked to the reprisals that have occurred and to fear of such violence. These reprisals have come in different forms: arbitrary arrests and detention, theft, torture, and assassinations. Most of the time, these crimes are attributed directly to the Malian army, to groups of armed bandits, in the case of massive theft of livestock, or to self-defence militias or people who had remained in Mali. The role played by the Malian law enforcement agencies in response to these acts is a key factor for creating a climate of fear or security.

“We were at the Almaksam well, 200 km north of Timbuktu, on the road to Araouane. We arrived in March 2013. Before that date, we had never had any problems in our village, so we stayed. Neither the Islamists nor the MNLA did anything wrong to us. We were not harmed in any way. But in February 2013, somebody in our fraction, was coming back from Taoudenni with my three other brothers in two trucks full of salt, along with 50 workers employed to harvest the salt. Our family has been specialised in this trade for a long time. We go to Taoudeni, dig up the salt, transport it to Timbuktu, and sell it. They all arrived in Timbuktu at the end of February, where they stayed for one week. The 8th day, X and his brothers were arrested by the Malian army, and we haven’t heard from them since. We believe they are dead. The salt was taken and probably sold by the soldiers. Our trucks are still in the military camp. We investigated, but got no answers. Seeing that, we got scared, and we all left. Today, we are waiting for peace, and we are also asking for the bodies of our brothers. They left behind orphans, we want to bury them.”

Arab, Ouled ‘ish fraction chief, Araouane, M’Bera Camp, Mauritania.

“Most of the people in my fraction left the city of Timbuktu and went 35 km north-west to Agoun, the main town in the commune of Salam. The mayor of the commune said that he preferred to stay, because as most of us he had bad memories of the refugee camps of the 1990s. They got organised to survive and ensure safety. When the MNLA and Islamists were there, they didn’t create any problems for us. Two specific events occurred: massacres that made us leave our land. In Timbuktu, we know a person from our community who is completely innocent, he doesn’t belong to any movement. He was taken by the Malian army with twelve other people. Among them were a Tamahshek and his son, and a Songhai. The others were all Arabs. The Songhai was taken because he tried to intervene to say that X was innocent. This Songhai was also taken by the army.”

Nwaji Arab, commune of Salam, M’Bera Camp.

In Timbuktu, despite the increased presence of international security forces, trust in the Malian army has not returned, particularly because the people who stayed in Mali have been accused of complicity with the “occupiers.”

“After Serval, the Malian soldiers came to finish us off, not to put us on our feet again. The ‘i’ in Mali fell into Lake Debo, and all that’s left is ‘mal’ (bad). They told us: ‘We’re going to cut off what’s left of your hands!’ They told the people to help themselves to the property of our Arab and Tuareg brothers who weren’t there, to take over their shops. The considered that whoever had stayed behind was a jihadist, no matter what ethnic group they belonged to. >>>
It was difficult for us Songhai notables to hear that after such hard times. We asked ourselves how this army could possibly represent us. During the war, we had created a crisis committee to handle things. After the return of the army, our meetings were forbidden, (and) they refused to allow us to create our association. They did not take account of those who were originally from Timbuktu.”

Songhai notable from Timbuktu, Timbuktu.

In many cases, this violence reignites the violence of the 1990s and considerably decreases the possibility of a return to normal after two similar experiences. Those whose parents had already experienced exile and reprisals in the 1990s, talked to us about a “nightmare that’s repeating” (young Arab, Mauritania).

“Among these families, there’s a man X who went to the market in Timbuktu with two donkeys. He had no food left, so he was obliged to go to the market to see how he could sell them. In the first district (he entered), he was picked up by a Malian army car that brought him to a camp for a week. Then he was transferred to camp 1 in Bamako. He died as a result of being tortured. His wife and children joined us here in the camps. His father died in similar circumstances in the 1990s. He had been tortured and burned.”

Arab, refugee in Mauritania.

In addition to these forms of insecurity, we identified other “equations of violence”:
- in Gourma and the Niger Loop, at the junction of the Mopti and Gao Regions, with numerous difficulties linked to the control of islands and wooded areas where small armed groups can easily escape from the forces pursuing them.
- the Ansongo area has been the centre of conflicts over pastoral resources for several years between local Fulani, or ones from Niger, and Tuaregs (mainly from Dawshahak), resulting in scores of deaths and the theft of hundreds of heads of livestock that were taken across the border. This conflict is therefore not a new one, but it has been exacerbated by the intervention of armed movements (MOJWA, Imghad pro-government militia), local elections, and the increasing scarcity of pastoral resources.

“Before, during the dry season, I would come with my animals especially between Gao and Bourem. But this year, since there is not enough grass near Ménaka and toward Niger, there are lots of animals near the river, so with several families, we came to the Burgu pastures close to Timbuktu. People told us there were plenty of Burgu pastures here, and it’s true all the more since the herds of Tamasheks and Arabs are not here. They had to go to Mauritania. We were very careful on the way here, because there are lots of rumours about livestock thieves. However, we don’t know if the veterinary services will be able to help us if our animals get sick. We don’t have any contacts here. In our villages near Ménaka, there was lots of tension with the Dawshahak and the Imghad, especially because of the assassination of members of General Gamou’s family. Since the sub-prefects do not come here on a regular basis, there are sometimes patrols by the Malian army and sometimes by the MINUSMA, but that doesn’t change anything. Everyone is afraid.”

Fulani herder, Burgu pasture area, near riverbank, Timbuktu Region.

- Recurrent problems of security have also been observed in the principal cities in the Timbuktu and Gao Regions. Most commercial activities in the area are in Timbuktu, where nearly all of the shops owned by Arabs were plundered and ransacked. Suicide
bombing attacks and are still common in the city today, and it is still being hit by shells and missiles.

“The Arabs entrusted their property to the sedentary Bella, and asked them to look after it. In many cases, not all, but many, the Bella stole their shops, sold their goods, and spent the money, and now they don’t want these shop owners to return, and to prevent them from coming back, they say whatever they want about them.”

Songhai notable, Timbuktu.

- The issue of Malian army recruits from the northern regions is still unresolved today. Most of them were accused of desertion, but many had to leave at their own expense because of the progressive withdrawal of the army from the northern regions, and they could not find a place in the army that had withdrawn to the south.

“Most of the former soldiers (foresters, police officers, guards) are here as refugees with us. About one thousand are in the camps or are internally displaced. Here, some have become carters, others herders in Mauritania, while others live thanks to the solidarity of their family. They did nothing wrong, but are unfairly considered to be deserters. If the people return before they are reintegrated into society, it’ll be hard to reintegrate them. If they are left out, they might join the fundamentalists. That’s a subject in its own right, because they are not in those movements, but they must be taken into account in the negotiations. They’re neither here nor there, but we must deal with this issue. We can’t simply abandon them.”

Former MP in the Timbuktu Region, Tuareg, M’Bera Camp, Mauritania.

Acts of extreme violence against soldiers from the north have been reported, particularly in the Sévaré barracks. These acts have created a climate of mistrust and fear within the military itself and are preventing some soldiers from going back to their posts.

With the absence of certain communities, which are still in refugee camps, there have been reports of expropriation of land, commercial premises, and seasonal pools. Therefore, the return of refugees will require legal assistance and security for the restitution of this property. In any case, we must expect there to be conflicts in relation to land ownership issues.

“There were about thirty families of Tellimédés, Inataban, and Imgrhad Edawragh, settled in the Office du Niger area since the drought of 1984. We had a lease on 350 hectares of land outside the embankments, part of which we had developed at a cost of 37 million CFA (€56,000). We left in February 2012. Our community leaders returned in 2013. They observed that our houses had been plundered and ransacked. We don’t know how to recover our property. There’s nothing left, and even our leases are being contested today by the people who want to take our land. Some malicious individuals went and said that our land is their land, people said that we were never going to come back, so they dug a canal that cost 10 million CFA (About €14,000). Somebody told us that these people said that there was no more place for us, that they had to share the land among themselves.”

Tuareg, farmer, Tientienbougou, Office du Niger, Mauritania Camp.
Inter- and intra-community relations: why understanding complex societies is essential for peace

Social relations in northern Mali are complex processes made up of contradictory relationships, which could be expressed in terms of exploitation/complementarity, domination/protection, and so on. Perceptions vary in the different areas, but for many of the interviewees we met, inter-ethnic relations were presented as very tense, even violent, particularly between Tuareg/Arab herders and sedentary groups, as well as between Tuareg and Fulani groups, particularly near Ménaka. The core of this tension is both social and political, and linked to the control of resources in the ecosystem, and of those injected by the government and international aid programmes. The situation left behind by the conflicts in 2012 and early 2013, characterised by insecurity and atrocities, has greatly undermined confidence and inter-ethnic relationships in certain areas. These relationships, which are sometimes exploited on the basis of “identity” or “ethnic group,” are perceived differently according to the area, experiences of living together, and the tensions stemming from sharing ecological, economic, and political resources.

- For some Tuaregs and Arabs, the deterioration of these relationships does not date from the latest crisis. It is due to national policies based on division and coercion, in which the preferences made by the State seem to be based on skin colour (black), and a way of life similar to that of the groups that live in the south.

- Among the sedentary groups, there are several different perceptions:
  - for the Songhai and Fulani, the deterioration of inter-ethnic relationships is especially due to the struggle to gain access to natural resources.

“What happened in Djebock is the result of a latent conflict, relating to land and livestock, which opposes Fulani and Tuaregs. This is an area of insecurity where weapons circulate freely and the State is still too weak. We have also witnessed the degradation of State representatives. That’s why conflicts can erupt at any moment. It’s neither terrorism, nor banditry. It’s a settling of scores between Fulani and Tuaregs, and if we’re not careful, the two groups might exterminate each other by the end of the week. The Fulani complain that the Tuaregs are stealing their livestock through a network they have set up. Some in the bush steal animals from the Fulani and slit their throats, while others go to find meat to sell it here in Ansongo with all the risks such behaviour imposes on the people. Fed up with this situation, the Fulani have decided to defend themselves.”

Administrative official in Ansongo.

- These inter-ethnic confrontations also have a political dimension. The Ganda Koy self-defence movement is an illustration of these conflicts. It organised a militia during the last conflict, which has become active again during the current conflict. Created as an instrument of protection against the Tuareg independence movements, its members have a positive vision of its relationship with the State, in which they consider themselves to be well-integrated stakeholders.

- In the caste system (iklan = descendents of former Tuareg slaves), it is more the impact of the social hierarchy and the will to free themselves from their debasing condition and image as slaves that are mentioned, and are considered to be what deteriorated their relationships with the dominant Tuaregs. In general, these types of relationships are more obvious in the river valley area, where there is the greatest mixing of communities, and a higher demand for labour. The closer one is to an area with a single pastoral activity, the less need there is for labour, the fewer options for freedom exist, and the less impact the tensions have on the established order.
“The relationships between nomads and sedentary groups have been seriously undermined for a long time, already by the French colonisers who presented themselves as the liberators of the Songhai and Bella. They created ‘freedom villages’ for the Bella. When Modibo Keita was President, Mali continued in the same direction, dividing the ethnic groups, exploiting the theme of the fight against slavery, and presenting Mali as a ‘black’ nation. He also undertook the famous agrarian reform meant to achieve the slogan ‘land for those who farm it.’ However, this reform only touched the land of the Tuaregs, whereas sharecropping is practiced by everyone (Songhai, Arma people, and city dwellers). They were trying to make people believe three false ideas. That the sedentary people have been on the land longer than the nomads. That the land near the river is for farming, and that the Tuaregs are not interested in farming. There are also the administrative subdivisions. The first measure taken separated villages and the Tuaregs: Mazilier said ‘no Tuaregs less than 20 km from the river,’ because their military forces were on the edge of the river”

Tuaregs from Timbuktu: MP, former mayor, veterinarian, shop keeper, M’Bera Camp, Mauritania.

The existence of relationships based on exploitation / domination is not always considered to be a problem, and other more complex kinds of relationships are mentioned. Nonetheless, during the crisis, there were also inter-ethnic solidarity nets that prevented the outbreak of widespread violence. We were informed of certain communes where the local officials, mayors, or even chiefs (mostly Songhai) protected the “whites” against attacks, and provided security so they could buy the essential products they needed.

“Before more than now, every person had his or her role in society. A Bella man did not only work for his master. His master had to provide him security, feed and clothe him, and respond to all his needs when he was sick or getting married. Entire families lived together and complemented each other. Here where you see me, there is no serious problem or marriage for which I have not been consulted, or played a role in terms of advice, mediation, or reconciliation. Nobody divorces without consulting me, without asking me to try to do something. Today, everybody does what they want, running after their small salary, and we all expect the State to provide security, and protect and advise us. We can keep waiting, our traditional and social system is disappearing, and that’s because of the State. But besides that, the State isn’t compensating for that loss. It destroys, but does not build anything…”

Songhai griot, Timbuktu.

The following two cases are examples today of cohabitation and preserving the possibility of living together harmoniously:

“Neither Serval, nor MINUSMA should be congratulated. Only the mayor and the village chief of Douëtchiré should be congratulated: in spite of pressure from the Malian army, they allowed the ‘nomads’ to come to the market in Douëtchiré. He showed his nobleness before God and men. During the first rebellion in 1991, it’s the commander who was good, this time it’s the mayor. The mayor welcomed them, he’s Songhai, he’s the son of the village chief Arma Touré. He protected people, people come to him from Ber to get fresh supplies.”

Tuareg herder, Commune of Lafia, M’Bera Camp.

[5] Doctor during the colonial period
3. ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVES

“In our commune in Diré, there have been problems, but we were spared the worst. It’s thanks to citizen education. Our family, we used to be herders, and with the droughts, we settled in one place and in the 1980s, we became farmers. We live in Diré, where all the ethnic groups are mixed: most are Tuaregs, there are lots of Bella, and the mayor is Songhai. It’s certain notables that helped us to evolve; in particular Michel Sidibé and Nokh Ag Attia. They made us love our land and our country. For that reason, nobody in our family left, and we haven’t had any problems with our neighbours, who know us very well.”

Kel Essouk Tuareg, farmer, Diré, Bamako.

These cases of protection are not new. We were reminded of similar cases during the war in the 1990s.

“I am a Kal-Tamashek from the Kel Guia fraction, and it’s due to successive droughts that we ended up in southern Gourma and in the Boni grazing area in Haïré. I settled in Boni in 1985 with my children and grandchildren, and I’m a herder and sell livestock. In fact, in Boni, relations have always been very good between the nomads and Fulani. In fact, during 1992-1994 rebellion, it’s the Boni village chief who came in person to defy the soldiers so that they would not touch the nomad communities. With the current crisis, we were sad because the MNLA and then the MOJWA committed atrocities and lots of vandalism. In reality, it’s the Fulani and other ethnic groups that suffered, but we nomads were spared of these acts. Often to avoid problems, we sent part of our families, especially children to the refugee camps in Burkina Faso.”

Tuareg, herder and livestock seller, Boni, Gao Region.

In addition, awareness-raising activities were organised with sedentary groups and nomads during the period just before the current crisis, and again just when the events began, when armed men started arriving from Libya in September 2011.

“We had already lived through war and inter-ethnic conflicts in the 1990s, in the Gao Region. That’s why when we felt the tensions rising, the men coming back from Libya (September 2011), and the discussions with the State that weren’t going anywhere, we decided to do something at our own level so we could avoid the repetition of the violence of the past. We organised a combined emergency mission in the nomadic and sedentary areas to raise awareness. Our idea was to make sure that a climate of trust would prevail and that no matter how difficult it would be the people must not be allowed to fall into a climate of revenge and slaughter. This mission visited the sedentary communes of Gounzourey, Soni Ali Ber, Gabéro, and the urban commune of Gao. For the nomadic and mixed communes, the mission visited the rural communes along the river; in particular, Soni Ali Ber, Gao, N’Tillit, and Gounzourèye. This work focused on social cohesion, making people meet each other, and it certainly contributed to avoiding the worst in this area.”

Songhai fraction chief, Bamako.

Today, everyone agrees that reconciliation between the different ethnic groups is essential. However, for most of the people we interviewed, it will require extensive dialogue on the underlying causes of the conflict. Some – mostly in the refugee camps – fear that an attempt to reconcile the different groups, without negotiations, will not result in a long-term solution, and that the reasons behind this violence will resurface. Others, particularly those who stayed...
behind or have returned from exile, feel the need and duty to start “putting things back together” without waiting.

“In my area, we tried to revive inter-ethnic dialogue, because there are 4 groups where we live: Tamashek, Songhai, Arab, and Fulani. We were able to organise a big meeting on 18 January 2014 to hand over our arms to Serval. The MINUSMA was completely absent. There are about 200 families still living in refugee camps in Burkina Faso and 75 in Niger, and we hope our example will make them come back”

Tuareg, municipal councillor in Tissit, and fraction chief, Gao.

**The return of refugees is also a political question**

All the people we met talked to us about their desire for peace and security, but also their lack of trust in the security forces. For some people, insecurity was worse in 2013 than during the 9 months of occupation by the Islamists (in both the Gao and Timbuktu Regions). For others, however, the atrocities committed by certain Tuareg groups and the imposition of sharia law were considered to be unbearable.

For many of the people we interviewed, and particularly in the refugee camps, the beginning of 2013 did not bring the peace and security expected. As a result, there was a great deal of criticism about the return of the Malian government to these territories, and probably a missed opportunity for the State to reconnect with some of the local inhabitants by ensuring law and order. Perceptions are in fact very different:

- More than one year after Operation Serval, most refugees still live in fear of reprisals and say they do not want to return until a definitive peace agreement has been reached between the State and the armed movements.

- The presence of the MINUSMA does not seem to reassure either the refugees or a large proportion of the people interviewed in Mali. There is a limited capacity to deploy forces in the difficult rural areas, and it is very hard for the non-African forces like the Chinese and Cambodians to understand the situation. Finally, the discipline of some of the troops deployed is creating serious concerns. For example, prostitution is on the rise, and there is a risk of aggressive behaviour toward young girls, as reports from Gao say (the MINUSMA set up a base near the middle school and high school in Gao, where there is a high number of young people, particularly young girls).

- For the sedentary groups and some of the pastoral groups, which do not identify with the political movements (MNLA, MAA, etc.), the perception of insecurity is more linked to the incapacity of the State to regain a foothold in the territories.

“In the area I’m from, we never see technical agents of State services. It’s true that we’re far from Gao, and even to come here from the city of Ménaka takes a long time because the roads are very bad. But they don’t have any means to come and see us. When we have a serious problem, we have to go to Ménaka, or even to Gao. In general, people die on the way, so we prefer to keep them in our camp. The sub-prefect doesn’t come to Ménaka often, and he generally stays in Gao. Occasionally, there is a patrol by the Malian army and sometimes by the MINUSMA, but that doesn’t change anything. With insecurity and the livestock thieves, everyone is afraid.”

Fulani herder, Ménaka Cercle.

In addition, the election process was a politically sensitive question, which could be exploited by some officials who stayed in Mali, with those “in favour of the return” of the
refugees and those “against.” At stake is a fundamental question of security, since the elections exacerbate the tensions between those who stayed in Mali (mainly Songhai, Fulani, and Bella) and were therefore able to vote, and the refugees (Arabs and Tuaregs), who feel excluded from the local political process.

“The question of the local elections has become an additional problem. We have seen certain elected officials say ‘Be careful, if you don’t vote for my party, you’re going to have the patrols on your back.’ What’s happening now is to scare the Arabs and Tuaregs in view of the elections. That commits them for 5 years, thing will be calm for them ... These elections are another facet of the violence in these conflicts. As soon as the elections are over, people are certainly going to be more relaxed. These elections have been monopolised by certain individuals who are not working for cohesion. On the contrary, their bread and butter are fear and revenge, which means that reconstruction is going to be difficult. How can we consider them to be democratically legitimate when some of the people are absent?”

Tuareg, retired teacher, M’Bera Camp, Mauritania.

3.2. Various survival mechanisms (block 2)

The interviews showed that a wide range of survival and adaptation mechanisms were invented in response to the past two years of strife.

Situation in northern Mali

In the different parts of northern Mali, and all the more due to the insecurity there, aid organisations generally work either with assistance from Malian NGOs, or with national teams and African expatriates. Our assessment shows that the quality and especially the appropriateness of the aid for the nomads are of mixed interest. Some NGOs (MSF) have been able to adapt to specific conditions better than others. The deployment of emergency humanitarian aid for isolated people (either distant or hiding) in remote areas remains weak.

“International NGOs are under a great deal of pressure from embassies and from their own security protocols. Everyone is afraid of having hostages taken, because when that happens, it’s the end of their programme, and it’s very expensive to resolve. International NGOs only send expatriates that are ‘invisible,’ because they are African. But in fact, they’re just as visible as the whites; simply they are worth less on the hostage market”

Malian staff member of an international NGO, Timbuktu.

According to many interviews, the State did not provide much in terms of humanitarian aid, protection, or even simply listening to the situations of the people concerned. State services are themselves in a rather pathetic state, with no equipment or means of transport.

“We are facing people who are very poor after all these years of drought and conflict. But we have no means to help them. The MINUSMA troops have taken over our offices, and this briefcase is my only office. Every time I want to do something, like printing a document or sending an e-mail, I have to go beg for help from the NGOs, which fortunately provide great assistance. But it’s very humiliating.”

Regional Director of livestock raising, Gao.
Within the country, people who fled from the north to settle in the south were in most cases housed by their families. There were very few “displaced persons camps” within the country. This situation complicated the deployment of national and international aid, because it was difficult to find, easily identify, and target the displaced people. A major part of the work was carried out by the Malian Red Cross, which with help from the ICRC, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and some National Societies was able to mobilise and deploy a very significant amount of resources thanks to its network of volunteers.

In some areas, humanitarian operations and access to the people were facilitated, and the results were better appreciated:

“Thank God, here we received help from the State, humanitarian organisations, and our relatives, otherwise, in the northern cities, there was no more State and the traditional authorities were under the control of the occupiers. It’s especially here in Sévaré that I saw what the State can do. With the return of peace and support from foreign troops, I now trust the State and I hope to return peacefully to my family in Diré”

Dogon woman from the commune of Diré, housewife, Sévaré.

International support networks have developed, like the Christian network in Mali and abroad.

“We left Timbuktu as soon as the war started. Most of the Christian community left in April 2012, to go south, most often to Bamako. There, the Protestant Christian community created three sites: Niamana, where the archbishop of Bamako offered his Catholic centre to house people; the Baptist mission in Bamako; finally, in the Djicoroni district, there was also a housing and food distribution site. We came back on 25 October 2013. It’s above all the economic situation that pushed us to come back, not the security, because it’s easier to live with our meagre resources here than to live in Bamako. During this whole period, Christians from the north have been helped by a support network in Mali and abroad. We were helped by the National Office of the Evangelical Church. Pastor Nokh (pastor of an evangelical church in Timbuktu) set up a crisis committee that was effective and promoted solidarity. The government also gave direct or indirect support”

Healthcare worker at the Timbuktu hospital, Bella from the Christian community, Timbuktu.

Those who chose to stay behind say they did not have the means to pay for the trip. Fear of the unknown, not being able to find enough to meet their needs, made people adopt other strategies of survival and protection. There are many cases, in which families decided to separate: the husband went to find work somewhere else while the wife stayed behind with the children.

“I didn’t personally suffer from the other rebellions, but this crisis is more profound, because it called into question the viability of the State. In addition, this crisis is targeting women excessively because of issues linked to the application of sharia law. In general, the men fled and left the women to fend for themselves with the children. I’m a grain seller, and from time to time, I sell fresh and smoked fish... My husband was away on business in Ghana, and I stayed with my children; that was my only choice. Instead of wasting my savings to go somewhere else, I preferred to get organised where I was with my children.”
In many cases, on the other hand, women and children were sent to safer areas, while the heads of the family remained behind to continue the farming activities or protect their herds. Such cases were observed among both refugees and displaced people.

Again concerning the people who stayed put, and in particular civil servants we met in the field, they felt like they had been totally abandoned by the central government, with very little coordination to ensure what remained of emergency services (hospitals, healthcare services, water and electrical maintenance, etc.), even if there were many telephone calls and the high-level officials were often in permanent contact with the ministry in charge.

A great deal of frustration was experienced by the government employees who stayed behind. They complained of a lack of recognition and sometimes even of being victims of suspicion stemming from the fact that they kept doing their job while AQIM and MOJWA were present in Timbuktu and Gao. The fact that the staff who came back to their job received a financial incentive, whereas those who stayed on the job, “refusing to abandon the ship,” were neither given recognition, nor remunerated for the services rendered, exacerbated this feeling of iniquity. This first-hand account by one of the only government doctors who stayed behind helps us to understand how complicated it was to manage the basic services during the war:

“My name is X, I’m a doctor. At the beginning of the crisis, I was appointed Director of the hospital in Timbuktu. At that time, the State sent me 10,000 CFA (around 1000 US$), which is in fact all I received. As for the hospital staff, only 30% remained, no specialists, only the nurses, I was the only doctor in Timbuktu. The CSREFs (reference healthcare centres) and CSCOMs (community healthcare centres) in the city were reopened starting in May 2012. At that time, the jihadists had arrived. They were not against healthcare. On the contrary, they protected the hospital and brought back a generator. They provided fuel and paid for the medicine. In April, they even started providing ‘motivation’ in the form of 30,000 to 50,000 CFA per month for the staff, which was not receiving any help from the State. Meanwhile, the national healthcare administration contacted me to tell me to continue working, and even asked me to become the regional healthcare coordinator. After that, I didn’t receive any kind of recognition. On the contrary, when the State returned, I was pushed aside, and nobody was interested in us, even though we stayed despite the situation. Today, we see humanitarian workers who change every two or three weeks, whereas we need to train the staff that is already here, strengthen it.”

Songhai man, doctor, in charge of Timbuktu hospital.
Situation in the refugee camps

In the first year in the camps, one of the principal means of survival was inter-commu-
nity and family support, coming in particular from the Tuareg and Arab diasporas (in
Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and the capitals of countries sharing a border with Mali). Some
fraction chiefs, religious leaders, and notables were also cited for having helped, par-
ticularly at critical moments such as when arbitrary arrests were made and demands
for ransom for the liberation of people or livestock by the army. In the M’Béra Camp,
there are various craftwork (leather), and commercial and market gardening activi-
ties. We were able to visit these gardens, which are most often developed by women.
These small-scale productive activities enable the women to earn some money and
to diversify the basic food they eat with some vegetables. Some refugees, in particu-
lar the notables, have settled in capitals (Nouakchott, Ouagadougou) and seconda-
ry cities (Bobo, Dori, Bassikanou) in neighbouring countries, because these families
had the means to rent a house or relationships with Malian families that never re-
turned after the conflict in the 1990s. Some refugees have started small businesses or
continued their studies, or live off their past savings, while others over the past two
years have sold much of the property they were able to keep (livestock, houses, and
vehicles) simply to survive. All the refugees we met told us they had run up large debts
over the past two years. Most of them have not yet been able to pay off these debts.
For the herders, these debts are contracted based on a promise to sell the livestock
they left behind.

“The nomads have waited for two years, but seen nobody help them. The State hasn’t
done anything for us. Only people have helped each other. People run up debt with the
shopkeepers and their relatives, then pay back their debt little by little. In Lerneb, you
give your animals to somebody who sells them off for 1000 CFA a head. That’s what we
do to survive”

Arab, herder, commune of Lerneb, Mauritania Camp.

In the cities very close to the refugee camps, numerous economic and social activities have
developed: there are markets and basic services such as hospitals and schools. The shopkee-
pers in Timbuktu who were able to save their goods have opened shops in these nearby ci-
ties. Price speculation is widespread, particularly for housing and basic foodstuffs (rice, millet,
and sugar).

Both in the refugee camps and within the country, most of the food aid – as well as the services
associated with water, healthcare, and education – are provided by international organisations
(United Nations, notably the WFP and UNICEF), NGOs (MSF, MDM, ACF, Solidarités, Handicap
International, World Vision, etc.) as well as by the ICRC and the Malian Red Cross.

“Extreme poverty is gaining ground. We acknowledge the aid given by the HCR, but it’s
not enough. Our people are not used to these products, they are not what we need.
This aid is 12 kg of rice per month, 0.75 l of oil, and 3 kg of lentils. As it’s not enough, we
have started selling our animals, if they haven’t been stolen, or disappeared, or died.
In the beginning, we lived with help from our wealthier relatives who would send us
money, but after the first few months, it was hard for them to continue supporting us,
so we fell into the debt cycle. We aren’t even sure we can pay back the debt, because
we don’t know what has happened to our herds. For many people, everything has
already been lost”

Termouz fraction chief, Arab from Ras-el-Ma commune of Goundam, Mauritania Camp.
3. ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVES

I

“Was there help from the State for these waves of exiled people? In the case of Dofana, before 28 July, the initial returns to the country did not result in any material assistance. And the sedentary groups in the commune told us: ‘we don’t accept your group, neither in the city, nor in the markets... and everything that goes wrong will be your fault’. Even the trucks were paid for by the people themselves. We left like animals. It’s especially inter-community support that prevailed. The Red Cross completed meaningful actions in Léré, not the other humanitarian groups.”

Fraction chief, commune of Léré, Mauritania Camp.

3.3. An area with recurring turbulence (block 3)

There were many difficulties before the current crisis, which were mentioned during the interviews:

The principal sources of insecurity for herders and farmers before the war were the difficulty in getting to the grazing areas, aridity, and unpredictable weather. According to most of the people we interviewed, in spite of the improvements made over the past 20 years with power pumps and more wells, herding has survived thanks to resilience, traditional knowledge of the environment, and channels of solidarity to overcome problems (such as family loans to rebuild the herds).

Land problems near Burgu pastures, pools in the valley and lakes, particularly between old Bella and herders, are central to many conflicts. This is what our interviewees called “the problem of agreements.”

Several people help to resolve these problems, notably the qadis and traditional chiefs who know the landowners and can find appropriate solutions. People systematically reported that the justice system favours those who have the financial means to win a trial by corrupting the judges. The problem of taking account of agreements and the expropriation of land was often mentioned in the interviews. These questions are considered to have been resolved historically in favour of the “sedentary” groups, and provide an example of how the justice system has made problematic decisions vis-à-vis the farmers (Arabs, Tuaregs) causing them to distrust the State.

The division of administrative entities, through the creation of artificial communes, has created new combinations of power around a three-prong system, landownership / power / administration, which has undermined the power of the traditional chieftainship systems and the modes of organisation established by the traditional herding system.

“Since colonial times, all the agreements concerning the land of Tuaregs and their land rights, have been repudiated, disappeared from the registers, destroyed, and certainly not recognised by the Malian government. Likewise, the ransacking of the administrative archives during the rebellion has been very useful to Mali... Decentralisation finished off the job: the same spirit has prevailed in the creation of certain communes intended to separate the Tuaregs from their former slaves to enable their emancipation. Even when the conditions required to create a commune are not satisfied. We have seen communes emerge that separated entire fractions, separated activities that used to be done together, and made the people independent of each other. That’s how the relationships came unravelling. Then there were the projects: some for the farmers, others for the craftspeople, whereas in the past they would exchange with each other. Now, they don’t even know each other... Land, power, and administration: this is the three-prong system that has enabled domination and favoured the sedentary groups. The question of land is crucial – it’s the most important one. If we deprive people of their ‘terroir,’”

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Theft and racketeering of livestock and products from herding activities were regularly mentioned by all of the herders. Mafia-life practices (‘we pay so that the security forces won’t bother us’ / Tuareg herder from Goundam, Mauritania Camp) were mentioned several times. People feel like they are abusive, but they have become common practices, which has led the people concerned to no longer consider the security forces as protectors, but rather as predators. According to them, there is no legal recourse for this kind of problem. Due to a lack of justice, victims say that in many cases, they are obliged to offer animals to mobilise the security forces and justice system, but these people are sometimes even accomplices in the crimes committed. In this case, it is a total loss, with no return on investment.

Resolving disputes in court remains a challenge in northern Mali, as in many other Malian regions. Disputes are more common in northern Mali due to existing tensions between ethnic groups there. People often call on the Islamic justice system to settle disagreements between individuals, members of a family, and ethnic groups. The State justice system is considered to be corrupt and unsuitable.

“Here it has become very complicated to settle legal problems, because we have at the same time the traditional system, the Koranic system, and the modern system, without counting corruption and various threats. Before, if there was a problem the heads of family were unable to settle, we would go see the fraction chiefs, who would sit together and look for a solution. We had to find compensation as fast as possible to avoid any attempts at revenge. Now, things take too long, and people aren’t even sure there’ll be a solution, because they have to pay so much. So they prefer to do justice themselves, and that, that’s not good”

Tuareg fraction chief, elected official in the commune of Djebock, Gao Region.

There are frequent problems of leadership linked to rivalries for local political positions, rivalries between traditional chiefs and local elected officials, and the transposition of these problems to inter- and intra-community concerns. These issues are partly counterbalanced by the capacity of ethnic groups to reach a consensus and handle relationships in a way that enables them to avoid conflict. The State is considered to be incapable of arbitration and remaining impartial, therefore it almost never intervenes when there are inter- or intra-ethnic problems. On the contrary, the State is considered to abuse its power unfairly and exacerbate some of these problems (duality between Arabs and Tuaregs in the Timbuktu Region, between vassals and aristocrats in Ménaka and the Kidal Region, and between herders and sedentary Bella in the valley).

3.4 A challenged State’s quest for legitimacy (blocks 4 and 5)

A peace process seeking a way forward

Another recurring story is the lack of trust in the State. Some consider that the central State is engaging “reluctantly” in the political negotiations that will enable a final and sustainable resolution of the crisis. Others feel it has already gone too far by negotiating with the Movements. It will therefore be very complex to find a «Peace of the Braves» in sparsely populated areas that are very difficult to control, where conflicts are recurrent, and the challenges for development are tangled up in all kinds of stereotypes.

Some accounts even seem to describe a crisis of confidence between, on the one hand, com-
munity chiefs and officials who play a regulating role, and others who have contributed to impunity and the fundamental causes of the conflict.

“Even the positions we obtained in State services and especially in politics, have not helped us. Most Tuareg and Arab officials you see in Bamako can no longer play their role and defend the interests of the most vulnerable and oppressed people, because their jobs and their salaries come from the State that is oppressing us. And the State uses them to show that it is integrating us. There’s a term we use to describe this situation, ‘Elemkara’. It means to take the skin of a baby camel and make its mother feel it to be able to milk her. The State uses these people as mediators to divide us and create problems between us. Even if they have high positions, we also consider some of them to be part of our woes, because they remain silent and participate in the injustice”

Kel haouza Tuareg from Mopti, fraction chief, Burkina Faso Camp.

What model of governance?

People see opposition through democratic instruments (elections, and political parties) as both an opening to gain access to power and a mechanism for deconstructing traditional power, which is considered to be legitimate. Elections are based on vote buying and produce clientelism.

Some ethnic groups see the State as a vector that is progressively undermining the local, traditional power, which can still regulate social relations effectively.

“In these highly stratified societies, the roles played by traditional civil and religious leaders, who are in essence local leaders, are very important.

“Our traditional chiefainship system was completely destroyed and replaced by a system in which power is bought, but is not legitimate and does not settle the problems of the local groups. The traditional chief was deposed, he was not integrated into the State, which put itself in competition with him, and replaced him by force. Yet, our traditional and religious systems still function, and are able to settle many of our problems. They are what we acknowledge as legitimate, and what we want. It’s a well-adapted and reliable system, which was not called into question by the French colonists. In my commune, between 2004 and 2009 we wrote to the State prosecutor to tell him that we had appointed 5 qadis so people here could have a local system of justice, and also one that was not corrupt. We did it on the request of the representatives of the ethnic groups present. For 5 years, they applied the principles of Islamic justice. And during all of that time, we resolved all our problems, with not a single case of corruption, or any complaints. There was order simply on the basis of >>>

Sherifen, shopkeeper in Timbuktu, Bamako.
Yet this traditional power is sometimes considered to be inegalitarian and unfair.

“For young people like me, particularly the descendants of former slaves, this power of aristocrats and warriors is getting more and more unbearable. They don’t know the world is changing, they don’t see that we too would like to express our opinions and have a choice. These big shots have to accept that times have changed. They can’t control everything like in the past”

Bella, middle school student in Gao.

Faced with the question of power and how it is represented, the transparency of the electoral process is a key issue, but the challenges are tremendous in a society in which people sometimes say that it is democracy itself that brought all the bad things.

“Conflicts in leadership and power are two of the reasons behind this conflict, political problems. Besides that, the sedentary people who pillaged do not want to be held accountable. These people tell those running for office ‘if you cover me, I’ll vote for you.’ The breakdown of voters for the different political leaders is based on various deals, which include immunity. ‘I’ll vote for x, and as soon as he’s elected, he’ll cover you.’ The army is the third corner of the triangle. The elections really exacerbated things.”

Tuareg, retired teacher, Mauritania Camp.

The State: between protection and predation

Generally speaking, the State is perceived to be rather unable or not having the will to protect and ensure the security of people in the northern regions. Interviewees systematically referred to their great deception with how the previous crisis was handled, with a two-tier legal system and discrimination based on skin colour. Nevertheless, according to most of the interviews of sedentary people and nomads, the State has not been active enough in the resolution of the current crises. For the different ethnic groups, traditional chiefs and religious leaders seem to play an important role, either in the resolution of local conflicts, or in the management of everyday problems.

“For me, a Bella herder, living especially in the bush, nobody protects us, it’s God and our traditional chiefs, with whom we have good relations, that protect us. We don’t know the State, because it is especially in the city, and doesn’t take care of poor people, and even less of Bella. In our area, there are tense relations between nomadic groups and the Fulani, with bloody conflicts. With the crisis, the situation has become tenser. In the bush, we live in peace, and during a crisis, you have to avoid the markets and the cities… I don’t know either the State or its services. I don’t know the State’s partners. I don’t know the mayor, but I pay my livestock taxes to the fraction chief. I mean, it’s the fraction chief who is everything to me. My trust and hope depend on the fraction chief”

Bella herder, 42, Ménaka.
Nearly everyone said that State institutions and the social contract with the State must be rebuilt on new foundations or reformed.

The question of security/legal/justice services was recurrent. The redeployment of the Malian army is still an issue causing tension and/or being exploited for particular interests, although there is a consensus to refer back to the principles established in the National Pact of 1992 (notably the recommendations stated in Title II of the Pact). At the same time, changing security issues (taking of hostages, presence of AQIM) has made it necessary to redefine how security forces are deployed in terms of local services, méhariste camel corps, army barracks, and other questions.

**Security measures stated in Title II of the National Pact of 1992**

Within the framework of measures for restoring confidence, eliminating factors of insecurity, and the installation of a permanent state of security:

- all the combatants of the Unified Movements and Fronts of Azawad will be integrated into the various uniformed forces of the State, on an individual and voluntary basis and in accordance with criteria for assessing competence,

- special units of the armed forces will be created for one year, composed mainly of integrated combatants from the Unified Movements and Fronts of Azawad,

- an internal security corps will be instituted {Gendarmerie, Goum Guards, Police} composed of all sections of the local populations including integrated combatants from the Unified Movements and Fronts of Azawad, which will be provided to local authorities within their police powers,

- special units of the army will be created, open to all sections of the local populations, whose mission will be limited to the preservation of the integrity and external security of the country’s frontiers.

Those dispositions which refer to the integration of all the combatants and members of the Movements and Fronts mentioned above, are contingent upon the return of the latter with their arms. This operation will be carried out in conjunction with the Ceasefire Commission;

The security and physical protection of the re-integrated combatants and members of the Movements and Fronts, as well as that of the repatriated displaced populations, will be entirely guaranteed.

Meanwhile, the idea adopted through the Algiers agreement of mixed security units remains controversial, and is even openly criticised. Finally, we noticed that people are very fearful of the risks of collusion linking the armed forces deployed and the reconstruction of basic services, particularly because of an approach that defines the army barracks as the central station for providing basic social services. Several interviewees reminded us of the stormy debate in 2010-2011, between people from the northern regions and the State, around a security programme backed by the President, which considered that building an army barracks would stimulate economic development. This approach was hotly contested by the people, reminding everyone of the need to stop treating the northern areas only in terms of State security and military affairs. Likewise, some tourist service managers observed:

“It’s a strange idea to think that the presence of the army is a factor for development. If we take the example of the MINUSMA here in Timbuktu, all the advantages are for themselves: their healthcare service, their equipment, and even security – they take care of their own security more than that of the people. Their presence has made life more expensive”

Arma notable, Timbuktu.
One of the causes of frustration and anxiety for everyone is the potential return of corruption, corrupt practices, and nepotism, which have seriously tarnished the image of the State in the past.

“Everyone in our area and the Gourma give animals to live in peace. When somebody is stronger than you, it's a bit like you have a duty toward him, a life-long ransom to pay. That’s how it is with the Malian State. And when I say the Malian State, I mean the army, administrative services, the judges, and so on. Why do we feel obligated to give animals and gifts all the time? It's not even to buy a particular service, it's so they leave us alone. Every year, we set aside a certain number of animals to offer them, simply so they won’t bother us. That happens when we go to the market, to the wells, when a patrol arrives near our camp, and when we go vote. Every time we run into State officials somewhere, and fortunately, we stay as far away from them as possible, we know we have to give them something. I no longer even ask myself if it's normal. I imagine that in other countries, these people would be paid to protect us, here it's different, we have to pay so they won’t harm us.”

Imghad Tuareg, herder, Gossi, Burkina Faso Camp.

“We feel like it's we the people who support the State, the administration, and the authorities. We give them animals and money all the time and unconditionally. We can consider that everything we have belongs to the State. We give to the State instead of it giving to us. You can't feel like the citizen of a country where meeting the authorities is a source of fear, and where you must always pay something in exchange for your security.”

Touareg/éleveur/ Goundam/Camp du Burkina Faso.

We also observed a feeling of major injustice stemming from the differential treatment of the different social groups.

“The State must protect everyone, but it only protects the bosses and the wealthy... The poor have to get by on their own, because they don't know anything.”

Songhai, farmer, Gao.

The changing nature of the crises mentioned attributes an increasingly significant role to money as “king,” particularly when it comes from drug trafficking and more generally from the illicit economy linked to trans-Saharan trafficking, which brutally undermines local regulations. The amounts of money concerned are so large that the local and traditional management of problems is sometimes powerless when confronted with the corrupt legal system, which releases some bandits for money. Interviewees also mentioned the bribing of administrative officials and local politicians, because it makes it impossible to establish a consensus and makes any recourse to justice difficult.

“There has never been anyone to protect people in the nomadic groups. I’m an experienced gendarme. Normally speaking, we provide public safety, protection, and anti-crime services. In terms of our services, things got worse during the presidency of Amadou Toumani Touré. In 2002, I spent 2 years in a military academy in Algeria. When I came back, I noticed that things had changed, and that the climate of insecurity had worsened, partly due to the degradation of our services. Our services do not help the destitute, which has tarnished the image of our...”
As far as the justice system is concerned, the fears correspond to expectations.

“What happens in the courts is appalling. The judges pull all the strings. There’s often a network of corruption, which goes from the law enforcement agencies (gendarmerie/army) to the politicians (elected officials/ministers), and results in abuses and the trivialisation of infractions, even when they are serious offences. Laws are increasingly undermined and broken. For example, the nature of criminal offences is transformed by the State prosecutors to avoid following the standard legal procedures (going from a simple investigation in the appeals chamber to the criminal court). That makes it possible to avoid the penal court: serious offences are downgraded and handled more easily. Some files are deliberately “misplaced” for 10 years, until the statute of limitations is over. These wrongdoings are carried out in exchange for large sums of money. That’s how impunity has developed for cases of murder, corruption, buying votes for the elections, etc. We’ve also seen many examples of people who aren’t dangerous, but who were jailed for 48 hours and threatened. They were told they could only be liberated if they paid – often a large amount of money. That’s how small-scale corruption has developed around the authorities in collusion with the law enforcement agencies and the justice system.”

Tuareg, former law enforcement officer, Timbuktu.

Based on information gathered during the interviews, the following sections will explore more technical issues, as well as how the situations, practices of aid stakeholders, and services provided have evolved. Some are rather technical, others deal with these themes in terms of how people perceive them. We will illustrate the second approach with narrative elements. All of these observations come from our discussions, and are not due to a division between sedentary people and nomads. In most of these cases, our assessment of the methods of administration and management of the services (local authorities, basic services) shows the same weaknesses.

The State and local government

The weak presence of the State is a reality for many people to the extent that State services lack resources. The absence of State administrative services in remote areas, and weak presence of decentralised powers in the field, because civil servants and elected officials continue to live in the regional capitals instead of where they have been assigned, represent a major challenge for rebuilding a legitimate State. In addition, several important questions rapidly emerged in the field. In particular, what relations should there be between “traditional” institutions and the new decentralised institutions?

“On the whole, the State invests very little to provide us with security, protection, and support, while it is the biggest predator, because we have to pay all kinds of taxes. The support services are poorly equipped with inadequate resources and are only able to implement short-term projects. Decentralisation has resulted in political divisions and a weakening of traditional chiefs and religious leaders, who are very little involved in the management of problems.”

Songhai, farmer-herder, Bourem.
The type of collaboration that should exist between the decentralised institutions and local State representatives is of course enshrined in the legislation. However, in the field, things work even less well, because a significant proportion of those who should be present are simply not there.

“The first source of State legitimacy is its presence. The prefects and sub-prefects must carry out their services in the places where they are assigned... We must strengthen the capacity of the municipality by providing technical services.”

Arab, Timbuktu, officer in Health Ministry, Bamako.

Set up in the framework of the agreement established in the 1990s, decentralisation was supposed to help the State be in closer contact with local people and at the same time a factor of peace.

Many positive results appeared in the field very quickly; however, many difficulties remained, and misunderstandings were frequent. The development of local democracy in the political and institutional landscape remains a complex process that is not taking root very easily., Bamako).

In northern Mali, local governments have met with great difficulties in implementing a policy that would provide more services to people in the social (healthcare, education, and water) and commercial sectors, while contributing to the development of local areas through an economic, social, and cultural development plan. Local residents remain sceptical about decentralisation, which has not been very convincing in terms of the allocation of taxes, decision-making processes, or a transparent management system.

“The presence of the State and its services are worthless if there aren’t enough equipment and human resources. Our State doesn’t have the means to apply its decentralisation policy while meeting the needs of local governments. With no State authority and no system of security, the northern areas have been abandoned to armed groups and jihadists. In the Cercles and especially the Communes, where there are many significant conflicts over land, the State is nearly absent as regards this issue and traditional practices are losing their appeal compared to political manoeuvring”

Fulani, senior civil servant, sub-prefect, Gao.

Discussions with elected officials from the north, whether in refugee camps, Bamako (displaced people), or in their jobs in the field, show they have good knowledge of the coordination, orientation, support, and monitoring mechanisms for local development, particularly the Technical Support Facility) and the Fonds National d’Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales (Local Government Support Fund).
The elected officials we interviewed have also heard about the beginning of a regional economic development programme, but they consider the way it functions to be very complex. The funds available through a specific mechanism linked to the investment subsidy of the Local Government Support Fund are added to the financing of actions covered within the framework of the PARADDER (programme to support the reform of administration, decentralisation, and regional economic development) to boost the regional economy.

For these elected officials, though the process of transferring State jurisdiction and resources to the local governments has begun (”Etat civil –registry office, censuses, archives and documentation, administrative police, health and sanitation), it still remains limited to areas such as education, healthcare, water management, and natural resource management.

“We have a problem of competences, project management, and training, even if the technical services have provided some good ideas. The communes are unable to do everything they need to, due to a lack of resources, and also because the (transfer of competences has been limited to healthcare and education. There is also a problem with the communal budget: communes are not authorised to levy taxes or use them. There is a gap between when the resources are provided and when the activities are scheduled, and even then, they don’t cover the needs, salaries, and so on. What’s absurd is that more money is spent to collect taxes than what is ultimately collected. There’s also a problem of confusion between the decentralised government technical services and the communal councils”

Imghad Tuareg, former elected official, Gossi, Burkina Faso Camp.

While some policy measures in the National Pact have been implemented, others such as the investments promised for infrastructure and economic and social development have been advancing less rapidly. Ultimately, the efforts made for the north (roads, schools, healthcare jobs, the improvement of urban areas, and others), have not been adequate to prevent doubts from arising in the minds of people in the north. Territorial inequalities persist in terms of accessibility, distance, and economic viability. Administrative subdivisions have been established all too often in a way that is detrimental to socio-economic relations, separating the communes from their inter-community economic basins. The economic and financial viability of a large number of rural communes lacking the potential natural, human, and financial resources that could enable them to start development activities is a daily concern for the people there and elected officials.

“To create an administrative entity, there should be preliminary surveys, and the history of the place must be studied: find out who owns the well, the cemetery. Yet, quite recently, regional cercles and communes were created that do not respect the norms found in Malian legislation. Some cercles were created in violation of the constitution. This way of governing has ended up creating problems among the Tamashek by dividing their fractions, between them and other ethnic groups, by separating herders and farmers, as well as in the very system that manages State security”

Tuareg from Timbuktu, former mayor, M’Bera Camp, Mauritania.

The inter-ministerial steering commission has been unable to prevent the countless obstacles that have slowed down the process for transferring jurisdiction and resources from the State to local government authorities. Only the Ministries of Health and Education have signed agreements with the Agence nationale d’investissement des collectivités territoriales
- ANICT (national investment agency for local governments) for the funding of infrastructure and equipment. The involvement of administrative officials in supporting local economic development has been complicated and irregular, particularly in terms of the general context.

In some areas, most of the work carried out by decentralised administrative services since they were set up has been limited to issuing administrative certificates, managing public land, and building infrastructure. Drafting PDESC (economic, social and cultural development plans) has become a necessary formality to respect regulations and be eligible for support from the ANICT (national investment agency for local governments). In other cases, on the contrary, elected officials have made great efforts to work together dynamically, and have sometimes been supported by decentralised cooperation. Given the often very imperfect preparation of the documents and budgets, the PDESC (economic, social and cultural development plans) are frequently more like catalogues of actions than true strategic visions. This weakness is largely due to the lack of planning skills within local governments.

“We were given decentralisation after the rebellion in the 1990s. At that time, the watchword was local power. This orientation corresponded to our desire for self-management, and our hope that at the same time the presence of the State would be more effective. We imagined that by being closer to the people, and better understanding their specificities, things would work better. In reality, what we observed was that the State transferred all its responsibilities to the local governments, but without giving them the financial or political means to manage things correctly. As a result, this decentralisation, which was supposed to bring peace, became a problem in itself.”

Former officer in the Malian army, Arab from Timbuktu, Nouakchott.

Recent debates, concerning the national conference on decentralisation and the Assises du Nord (national reconciliation meeting), show how important this question is for resolving the crisis. Placing local development management at the heart of the debate has given rise to many ideas.

“In terms of the local development model, looking at the results, people said that things must be done by the people and evaluated by the people. That’s what we call ‘participative forms’... What’s ideal is to work with local government authorities, who manage things with the different groups of people. In reality, all of the resources pass through the ANICT (national investment agency for local governments), which centralises things. We had many debates to find an intermediary solution, and we came up with the following idea. It’s what we call ‘village site management committees,’ which are created by the administration. It’s a committee with 11 members (fraction chiefs, women, young people, herders, imams, and other people of different sensibilities), which receives and manages the resources. This approach must not be seen in terms of money, but in terms of viability, they must contribute to development actions. They are both beneficiaries of and actors in the process. In this case, the State ensures that this mechanism works well and makes sure it becomes part of national policies. The idea is to make the local people “appropriate” this mechanism. At the same time, the procedures for mobilising public funding must include the public treasury. It would be ideal if the money went directly to the local community. In the beginning, there will be some money lost, but then things will improve. When the system relies on large organisations, too much money is wasted.”

Tuareg, researcher and administrator in an international institution, Nouakchott.

For some, the whole system of decentralisation must be redefined:
“We would like to have a political debate about decentralisation itself: is this really the tool we need? We feel like we’ve been given a formula that can’t work because it’s weak. People told us it was a self-management tool, but in reality, it has complicated everything: the decentralisation services and control mechanisms mean that nothing is autonomous, neither the instruments, nor the funds. We want real autonomy for managing our areas; we want administration by and for ourselves. We’ll feel more directly involved, and our failures will be our own. We won’t need to have to convince others or explain that we live off herding, and in this process we’ll strengthen the local economy.”

Arab from Timbuktu, merchant, Burkina Faso.

For others, decentralisation is an established legal framework, which must be further developed:

“In reality, the laws on decentralisation already offer us a full palette of tools we must put to good use. We must transfer jurisdiction, as it is stipulated by law. We must also strengthen the technical services and encourage decentralised cooperation that will enable us to establish partnerships, which we haven’t yet developed very much. Inter-regionality does exist, even if it is still too limited. As far as the plan for implementing local development is concerned, the main obstacle blocking the way is often a lack of skills. We must apply the measures in the law and develop it further.”

Former elected official from the commune of Gao, Tuareg, Bamako.

3.5 Development issues in sparsely populated areas

3.5.1. Economic issues in an area with a weak natural resource base (block 6)

The introductory chapter of this report presents the key reasons why the sparsely populated areas of northern Mali are regions that help us to understand the requirements of a specific approach for working in particularly difficult and sensitive contexts. In this section, we will insist on some particular issues more specifically linked to the challenges of managing scarce resources.

**Aridity and scarcity of resources**

The climatology of the area studied features very low rainfall, and precipitation that is highly irregular spatially, temporally, and interannually. First, there are the Sahara regions, where the economy is based on herding and nomadic pastoralism with camels, oasis systems, and major caravan routes. Their important roles in organising the space and the economy have been significantly modified by the increasing number of modern 4x4 vehicles.

Then there is the Sahel, where the scarcity of resources and their unpredictability result in low population density and the preponderance of pastoral systems. This pastoralism is based on the mobility of herds according to the availability of pastures and water sources.

Further south, there are also agro-pastoral systems in which rain-based agriculture is extremely risky given the random nature of the precipitation. In these vast expanses of land, systems for exploiting the biomass have been developed. They are based on low demographic pressure, the mobility of people who live there, and very resilient species (herds of sheep, goats, and camels), as well as very specific agriculture systems around seasonal pools. The movements of people and herds, as well as certain agricultural practices, are linked to recessional agriculture systems around seasonal pools (west and south of the Gao Region) and lakes (Faguibine - Léré), which fill up normally during the winter and can
be cultivated when the water recedes (a hazardous process linked to how much water accumulated during the winter). The presence of the River Niger modifies the context significantly by creating farming systems along the banks and in the inner delta. These areas provide local mitigation to the severe conditions in the immense desert areas, and important opportunities for agriculture: irrigated areas, rice farming in submerged areas, lake systems in the Goundam Region (Faguibine), Burgu pastures (areas in which burgu grass is grown, the basic fodder during the dry season). In addition, the areas along the banks and the more distant pastoral areas are very different but complementary to each other.

“Farmers have always had animals, but never this many. Contrary to Gao, all the herders in the valley have become farmers. So with the different activities, each farmer also has a herd, but not like in Gao where there are big herds. The Tuaregs were herders, but with the drought, they converted to farming, and that has created conflicts for using the land, which was often lent to people within a kind of sharecropping system. In the past, all the farmers were near the river. There was a borderline with the pastures. But over the past ten years, the pastures have been transformed into irrigated areas. These areas belonged to the Tuaregs, but the farmers used them, because they considered them to be abandoned. The same is true of the seasonal ponds that belonged to the Tuareg herders. Today, there are similar problems in other areas like Gourma Rharous, and Nana. The conflict in Djindé is typical of this trend... Near the lake, there have been problems creating a corridor for herds to pass through the area, which has obliged herders to take their animals through the irrigated areas, and that has caused conflicts. The technical services do provide a monitoring system, but the redefinition of these corridors still leads to conflicts, and the herders feel more and more rejected as the farming area expands.”

Regional Agriculture Directorate, Timbuktu.

The herds move along axes that are perpendicular to the river, going from the banks toward the Haoussa (left bank) or the Gourma (right bank) during the rainy season, and coming back to the strip along the river where there are Burgu pastures during the dry season. The distribution of herds beyond the strip along the river is conditioned by the wells and boreholes scattered throughout the area, within complex land-use systems, where there is a real forage management system. The diversification of activities in the valley and the increasing number of livestock were cited several times as having exacerbated the problem of access to pastoral resources.

Throughout the area, people insist that the presence of groundwater or surface water is one of the keys to the human geography and population distribution. It is de facto one of the main factors in sparsely populated areas. The oases and market-villages in the Haoussa are all linked to the exploitation of groundwater, via wells and boreholes, except for certain zones close to mountainous areas where there are springs. Local people prefer combined wells (large diameter wells for pastoral and human use), but the NGOs prefer wells that are used for one specific purpose to prevent contamination.

“My area is rather dry, but the climate is becoming increasingly harsh. Since the major drought of 1973, during which many nomads lost almost everything, we have been having increasingly difficult years. Even kram kram sometimes has a hard time coming back up from one year to another. The seasonal ponds are dry as of January, whereas in the past, there was water for animals until late February or early March.”

Elected official from the Commune of Djebock, white Tamashek.
Urban areas like Kidal have already reached the limits of their deep groundwater and are requesting access to other water resources. Several interviewees reminded us of the urgent need to deal with water supply problems, and place this issue among development strategy priorities:

“15 billion CFA, that’s what it would cost to install a pipeline that could transport water to Kidal. That represents the cost of having soldiers in Kidal for one week. So is it a question of resources or of development priorities?”

Tuareg, Director of a government organisation, Bamako.

Trends in exploiting natural resources in northern Mali

The old people remember that until the 1970s the development and integration of these sparsely populated areas was accomplished exclusively with help from the Office du Niger, based on a principal system of cooperation, the *Office des Produits Agricoles du Mali* - OPAM (Malian agricultural products office), because nobody was interested in the pastoral areas. The economic policy based on price controls and buying supplies only from State companies had begun changing the economic relationships in place, and the complementary relationships between the different areas (lacustrine and non flooded pools) and social groups (herders, farmers, and merchants). The 1973-74 drought changed the situation fundamentally, in particular by modifying the economic relationships between the sedentary farmers and nomadic herders who had lost all their capital. Subsequently, an agricultural system emerged that is nearly risk-free because it is based on irrigation. However, the cost of pumping water has proven to be increasingly expensive, which jeopardizes the economic reproducibility of these irrigated systems.

“In terms of agriculture, it was better before, even if it was less modern and productivity was lower. For the farmers, it hasn’t improved their living conditions, because the machines are expensive. They have to invest, farm, pay the fees. The power pumps and facilities are hard to keep up. There are lots of management problems, water problems, and the price of fuel is high, especially right now, in an area where evaporation is the highest in the world... Socially speaking, some farm owners have gotten rich, but for others, most of them, their standard of living has dropped. For example, the fees, which are paid in kind, are set according to the investment, and the bigger the investment, the lower the fees. So the poor farmer does not have cash flow for even a month”

Regional Agriculture Directorate, Timbuktu.

The Burgu pastures, which used to be farmed and shared by Fulani herders and Tuaregs, have been transformed into irrigated rice growing areas. This change has resulted in decreased forage resources for the dry season, while undermining the “social contract” between farmers and herders in terms of access to forage and fertilising the plots with animal manure. It has also led the herders to move on to other pastures, as well as causing considerable inter-community tensions. To offset the movement of pastoral groups inland or to other areas, there has been an increase in the number of village herds, which has made it possible to make up for the lack of manure, but made the inter-ethnic rift irreversible in terms of this land-use issue. At the same time, labour exchange has been replaced by mechanisms based on wages, while the social contract linked to access to land has been transformed into a private system based on sharecropping.

Starting in 1979, investments were concentrated in the areas where there were many voters, that is to say the strip alongside the river. There was an attempt to diversify agricultural production (introduction of rice and market gardening to replace the traditional crops of millet and sorghum), and introduce power pumps and installations in the seaso-
nal ponds to replace rainfall that was becoming increasingly irregular, while at the same time starting later and shortening the growing season. However, these changes made people dependent on fuel, and require the constant maintenance of equipment, which is costly.

After the drought in the 1980s, many herders who had lost their animals came back to the river to reoccupy their land and begin farming activities while attempting to rebuild their herds. With international aid, several such projects were set up, as in Timbuktu by AVSF (agronomists and veterinarians without borders). This period also marked the beginning of land conflicts and what has been called the “war of agreements.” Up until today, many fields are still subject to litigation and many families that used to be landowners (as recognized in colonial administrative documents) have had their land expropriated. Several interviewees spoke to us about these conflicts, with different perceptions (see block 3). The increasing population and scarcity of crop-growing areas available within the river valley have exacerbated the tensions. With the major droughts of 1973-74 and 1984-85, and the losses of livestock that occurred, a new activity emerged as an option for those who had very limited access to land or no crop-growing experience: market gardening.

“Market gardening is generally practiced near wells and seasonal ponds. Technical monitoring by agricultural services was provided near Lake Faguibine, but there was a major problem in terms of personnel. More money used to be allocated for personnel by sector, sub-sector, and basic sector. Since 2000, with the geographic and administrative reorganisation stemming from decentralisation, there has been a regrouping of communes in terms of where staff is assigned, and as a result a decrease in personnel. These changes coincided with the retirements of many civil servants, who were not replaced. Market gardening is a very viable activity, but resources are still inadequate. A drip irrigation system should be installed everywhere. What we see here is the disproportion between the economic potential and the means invested. And there’s an imbalance between the areas traditionally used (farms), and the market gardening areas, which are generally profitable in the dried out temporary pools.”

NGO project manager, Kel Ansar Tuareg, Timbuktu.

There are also more and more nomads settling in the valley, as well as along the route between Gao and Algeria, with an increasing number of villages that depend on trade with Algeria. Most often based on subsidised products, trade along this route now accounts for a large proportion of the cross-border commerce with the exchange of livestock against fuel, dates, and pasta. More efficient means of transport have transformed the caravan trade. While most trade routes remain unchanged, some transit areas have lost their commercial importance (Araouane) compared to new border towns (Borj al Mokhtar, Khalil).

“Today, sedentary people have also become herders, so they no longer need to buy livestock or barter with the herders from the non flooded areas, like they used to do. These changes in economic activities have had a strain on social relations and solidarity, which used to be maintained by living together more or less seasonally and the trade of economic goods and services. Over the past fifty years, development aid strategies have identified sedentary activities on the one hand, and pastoral ones on the other, but without rebuilding the relations between these two groups. These projects must therefore be reconsidered in terms of integration.”

Fulani, agronomist, Agriculture Directorate, Timbuktu.
Tourism and arts and crafts

According to the Director of the Timbuktu office of the Office Malien du Tourisme et de l’Hôtellerie (official Malian government tourism bureau), tourism and arts and crafts were the key sectors of the northern Mali economy in the 1980s. These activities are particularly well suited to these sparsely populated areas where infrastructure is limited: tourism is a high added value activity, and the arts and crafts sector produces goods with a high relative value per unit of weight. After the armed conflict in the 1990s, this sector developed again, particularly in Timbuktu with a progressive increase in the number of tourists. According to the senior official interviewed, between 2002 and 2006, this sector represented nearly 70% of the economic activity in Timbuktu, nearly 100 million CFA in revenues per month. The arts and crafts sector developed in parallel to tourism: arts and crafts centres were created in the big regional cities, and special cooperatives were developed, mostly by women for basketwork and fabrics. The major drop in the number of tourists decreased the relative production and trade coming from arts and crafts.

“The government policy on tourism has always been very weak, with no strategy, and no communication on the question of safety (the region was placed in the red zone before the war). All of that went together with a catastrophic tourism development and investment policy. For example, in 2002, Timbuktu applied to be a candidate for the African Cup of Nations (football). 150 billion CFA were invested, but neither Timbuktu, nor any other city in the north was selected. Yet, Timbuktu had lots of strengths at a time when tourism was buoyant, and it would have been a good idea to further develop the sector and increase productivity. But that was a political question, and the northern cities were not considered to be a valid choice.”

OMATHO Director, Songhai, Timbuktu.

2006 was a particularly important year, with the designation of Timbuktu as the capital of Islam for the African zone, and the celebration of the Maouloud prayer by Gaddafi. According to the OMATHO office in Timbuktu, the city received 45,000 visitors in one week. In 2007, the number of tourists dropped by 50%, and then by 25% in 2010.

As of the first signs of insecurity, the three northern regions were placed in the orange zone, or even red at certain times, which resulted in the collapse of tourist activity in 2010. The problems linked to this sector are not only related to the “security barometer:” according to the specialists, for more than a decade the government has been unable to implement a long-term action plan in spite of the numerous documents and reports produced by the OMATHO. Indeed, the OMATHO has imagined an alternative strategy to offset the drop in foreign tourists, namely the development of national tourism and tourism from the Maghreb (the idea was to have two flights per week from Fez in Morocco). The issue of opening up this area remains crucial: the question of laying several hundred metres of asphalt for the airport runway is still in everyone’s mind.

The tourist professionals we interviewed (notably a hotel manager in Timbuktu) also mentioned a lack of investment, in terms of infrastructure for visitors and for professional training for the hotel and tourism sectors. The valuation of heritage (architecture, museums, and manuscripts) has always stemmed from a certain awareness of its cultural and historic identity, particularly in Timbuktu, a prime example of Islamic culture. In spite of the numerous foreign projects for valuing the exquisite heritage, notably architectural (Agha Khan Foundation) and manuscripts (LuxDev, South African project, Afro-Arab Foundation, etc.), the lack of investment by the government’s cultural policy has limited this issue to nothing more than making Timbuktu a tourist attraction. The inhabitants of Timbuktu we interviewed complained about a cultural policy which they felt locked them in a museum, resulting in the loss of their identity. Several intellectual and civil society organisations have
organised activities for preserving the local cultural identity, sometimes even condemning the presence of alcohol in certain hotels.

3.5.2 Services (block 7)

Healthcare, education, and security were the services mentioned the most by the people we interviewed. Meanwhile, recording civil status and creating identity cards were not considered to be priorities. For some social groups, such as the nomadic herders, agricultural and especially pastoral services are a major priority, sometimes more than education.

“There are three service units in rural areas: healthcare, livestock, and agriculture. In fact, these are the only ones that benefit from technical support in each main town. But in reality, it’s completely inadequate: there’s a lack of resources and equipment, particularly for travelling, and a gap in the operating budget. The quality of the services is not bad, and some technicians are very competent. It's just that they can’t work as they would like to, which creates frustration and makes them leave the State services to go work for international organisations. In addition, the basic service strategies are generally devised far from where they work. Each ministry defines its sector-specific policy, then the local governments are supposed to draft their budget and define their social and economic development map. But here again, the lack of means and skills transfer means that they do not work this way and the supposedly good coordination and transmission are not achieved. They hardly have any room to manoeuvre to change things. That’s what makes us say that decentralisation, which was called ‘power at home,’ is an empty shell. In reality, we don’t have any power…”

Imghad Tuareg from Djebock-Gao, NGO administrator, Burkina Faso Camp).

Healthcare

The Malian healthcare system has a pyramid-like structure with CSCOMs (community healthcare centres) and CSREFs (reference healthcare centres) at the base, intermediate district hospitals, and prefectural (or regional) and national reference hospitals at the top. At the bottom of the pyramid, the demand is satisfied by associative, community-based, and confessional healthcare centres, and a private sector, which has developed haphazardly with no control particularly in the urban areas.

In sparsely populated areas, where communication infrastructure is inadequate, healthcare centres do not have the resources needed to make the reference system functional (i.e., send patients to the district and regional hospitals). Consequently, the rate of people listed is very low (some sources speak of barely 2%, as was the case of an official from the FENASACO (national federation of community healthcare associations) interviewed in Bamako). De facto, the healthcare map devised for more densely populated areas is not appropriate for the sparsely populated areas. These services are not very attractive because of the long distance between the healthcare centres and the hospitals, which is one of the principal healthcare problems in northern Mali.

“First of all, we noticed that the healthcare pyramid was poorly designed. The healthcare policy was defined before decentralisation. Later, other measures were added that complicated the Bamako system. These are ‘self-blocking’ measures; they may work in the south, but in the north nothing works. It’s utopian to think we can have a healthcare system that is well adapted to the north, because the State’s not ready to create it, and that’s for political reasons. Unless there’s a specific institutional scheme, we can try out strategies, but they will never be complete...”
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In our experience at MDM, we have set up what we call Postes de Soin Avancé (Early healthcare units). It’s a system just below the CESCOMs, but with nearly the same functions. We would like to call them basic healthcare units.”

Tuareg, former MDM coordinator in Mali, Nouakchott.

“If we want to speak of services, they’re all minimal. And sometimes we’re the ones who asked for them. For example, we heard that Caesarean delivery was free. Once, we accompanied a woman who was giving birth, and we had to fight to have it done. To get healthcare you must travel, pay, and know your rights if you don’t want to be ignored. It’s so expensive, far away, and hard to go there, that we have resolved to get minimal care, except when there’s a real emergency. And even then, you have to pay for the ambulance that comes to pick up people, even if they’re dying. If you don’t pay, they won’t take you”

Tuareg women from Gourma

The working conditions, lack of medical supplies and medication in the north, as well as the low population density all contribute to making it difficult to institute a “preventive” healthcare policy, and translate into low quality healthcare. In addition, costs per act depend on numerous factors, including the ratio between the healthcare access distance and the catchment area. Budget constraints for patients are thus very high in the north, due to the low population density, difficult transport conditions, which make the healthcare costs high for patients, and the difficulty in reaching financial equilibrium in the framework of the cost recovery strategy. Even in areas where the population is denser, the absence of government aid has been observed, and cost recovery can be challenging, especially in this difficult period of reconstruction.

“Our commune is one of the most highly populated in the region. We have a well-developed agricultural economy with recessional and off-season crops on the islands and riverbanks and raising livestock in the bush. NGOs have been active here for a long time, which has given us quite a bit of support. During the occupation, we were left alone, but there was nearly no more external aid and the supplies of medicine became extremely low. The situation has improved since 2013, and the NGOs like ACF and MDM support us with medicine and products for malnutrition. Here it’s the ASACOs (community healthcare associations) that ensure healthcare support, but in the 4 CSCOMs (community healthcare centres) in our commune, there’s nearly nothing. People were impoverished during the crisis, because recessional farming didn’t work well. We could no longer pay for the medicine. We don’t know what we’ll do if the State reinstitutes its cost recovery policy. We don’t see many civil servants, and besides the local people who work in the CSCOMs and certain schools, there are very few services, although we’re close to the city. As soon as we move away from Gao or the centre of the commune, there’s nobody”

Songhai, CSCOM Manager from Soni Ali Ber, Gao.

The same abuses and absence of consultation exist in terms of sharing cost recovery risks in the pharmaceutical supplies system put in place by independent entities that basically have vendor to client commercial relationships. For each link in this logistics chain (pharmaceutical buying centre, Regional Pharmacy, healthcare centre, and hospital pharmacy) a cost price was calculated to cover all the expenses involved from the beginning of the chain to once the product is sold to a patient. All of these expenses were added together to establish the sales price, which is sometimes two or three times more than the initial purchase price (and even
more in the north). One of the characteristics of a public benefit, such as healthcare, is the non-exclusion principle, meaning it should be available to everyone.

“The State didn’t send medicine, or refresh the supplies, or even provide support. The State declared that medicine was free, but was unable to provide it, to anticipate the needs. Recently, in one week in the Timbuktu Region, there were more than 1000 cases of malaria, but only enough free medication for 300 people. The other 700 had to go buy their medication.”

Administrator, Timbuktu Hospital.

Yet, the cost recovery fee (which is often in addition to an informal payment made in a world where people are involved in a daily fight for survival) created a financial barrier making it impossible for the poorest people to afford these services.

According to a FENASCOM (national federation of community healthcare associations) Manager interviewed in Bamako, part of the northern population, and also of the southern population (5% to 30%) is unable to pay, and therefore does not have access to healthcare.

If in general the most vulnerable social groups like the elderly, children, and the poverty-stricken were the most severely affected by the cost recovery policy, this trend was even more exacerbated in the north. Care for the poverty-stricken remains a thorny issue for all the relief programmes. The criteria for identifying the destitute seem to be hard to define.

It is a paradox that exemption measures for the poorest ultimately result in more free goods and services for the “non-poor” than for the poor, because when it exists the exemption is given more on a discretionary basis by the healthcare personnel than on the basis of standards that are clearly defined and managed outside the healthcare centre. According to the healthcare personnel interviewed during the study, most of the users of healthcare services in northern Mali would have had to make tremendous sacrifices to pay for them if the decision to provide free healthcare had not been taken. This decision required the active involvement of the State in terms of its national budget, support from donors (ad hoc programmes and targeted aid budget), and a certain number of stakeholders on the ground (NGOs, etc.) able to ensure the quality of the healthcare, «grease» the supply chain, and, in the end, monitor the situation to reduce the risks of the situation spinning out of control. However, it is obvious that this system is neither viable nor fair for the rest of the country, therefore solutions must be found. These solutions will necessarily be organised around a social health insurance system, compulsory contribution in the institutional economic sector, a mutual health insurance system in the rural world and in the informal economic sector, and “third-party payment” mechanisms, the guiding principle being to determine the equity of funding, the percentage of what is prepaid by the user in the overall cost.

Equity in access to healthcare (and not equality, which is unfeasible given the extremely different conditions in the northern desert and the highly populated southern areas) was one of the important issues in the negotiations in 1991. While a great deal of progress has been made based on positive and negative experiences in terms of cost recovery and how the reference systems work, this subject is still being debated today.

“We have to improve the technical platform, that’s going to increase the number of patients considerably, but to decrease the mortality rate, we must bring healthcare to the heart of the family. Our reflections were formulated with this in mind. When we consider the amount of money allocated to healthcare per person per year, it amounts to about €30, or 20,000 CFA. When we look closer, we realize that the administrative system absorbs €25 of those €30. And here, I’m not even talking about money that is embezzled, but the financial management system, and the cumbersome processes of bureaucracy and centralised governance. In Gao, we developed a programme that consists in actually spending those famous €30 per >>>
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>>> person allocated to healthcare in Mali. With the doctors and the medical care provided, we arrive at that figure. In addition, we provide better services than the traditional CSCOM (community healthcare centre) 80 km away, where there are not necessarily any medical personnel. Us, we bring a doctor, a nurse, an entire mobile team. In reality, it isn't more expensive, there are just more logistics”

Tuareg, former healthcare NGO coordinator, interviewed in Nouakchott.

Education

Schooling remains very limited in sparsely populated areas. Among nomads, the parents feel that they have to choose between school and herding activities, particularly in pastoral areas where little labour is used, because schooling does not necessarily translate into a future job.

“The money that was intended for the Hijrat school, granted by the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation), was embezzled by the ministries. As a result, everything that could help to improve secondary education in the northern regions and create an elite with the will to serve and work for the development of these regions, was nipped in the bud. And in any case, since all the progress made is achieved by indigenous people, if we don’t help them in terms of training and resources, the State won’t do anything for us. We’ve been asking for a professional training programme in the hotel, arts and crafts, and even environmental sectors for years, as well as in other sectors. In the end, we learn that it’s Mopti that’s been chosen. So there’s a double standard in terms of investment for education. You can’t just build schoolrooms then say there’s education; schooling is a whole system. And now, we’re losing all of the historical value of Timbuktu, which had an influence because of its large number of students, and the knowledge created and transmitted there.”

Hotel director, Songhai, Timbuktu.

Many pastoral families went to school in the refugee camps in the 1980s (drought) and 90s (conflict). Since then efforts have been made by the government, which created the PRODEC (ten-year education development programme), increased the number of student enrolled, and so on. Nonetheless, the enrolment rates in nomadic areas remain very low: the senior civil servants interviewed from the education system, who were originally from Kidal, said that in some areas the enrolment rates in the north are 20% lower than in the rest of the country. Official statistics from the MEBALN (Ministry of Education, Literacy, and National Languages) indicate that this rate is lowest in the Kidal Region (about 15% of the students finish middle school, compared to 65% in Bamako).

“The future of our youth is gloomy, because our system does not have solid foundations. The lack of education is the common denominator for all of the problems facing the Tuaregs. We will be ‘saved’ the day our rate of education is more than 50%, and the enrolment rate of girls is at least as high as that of boys.”

Tuareg, elected official in Kidal.

There has also been diversification in terms of the teaching institutions with an explosion in the number of private schools, and especially in sparsely populated areas of the community school model. According to the MEBALN, from 1998 to 2006 there was a 26% increase in the number of enrolments in community schools per year, thus concerning 41% of the students.

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The centralised national education system has been called into question:

“Education went the wrong way in Mali after its independence. Muslims were forced to attend a school that did not correspond to their values. In the 1970s and 1980s, the population increased and government resources were low, all the more because of the structural adjustment programme. During this time, the State completely neglected the north and the education system. There was a wave of droughts. There was no programme for the nomads, no bridge between the Koranic school and the traditional school, no pilot schools with a curriculum. In 1991, people went to school in the refugee camps. The ideal school for the nomads would be a centre for dropping off the children, bilingual French-Arabic schools with classes about Islam, a dormitory, and a canteen”

Arab, Health Ministry official, Bamako.

The Koranic school (madrasa) represents a very common traditional way of learning, and therefore remains a source of education that is considered to be legitimate, in both sedentary and nomadic groups. This legitimacy can be an advantage in terms of enrolling girls, along with the good measures in terms of diversification (of languages and disciplines taught) and teaching in Arabic as of the middle school, given the fact that job opportunities after the madrasas are very limited.

“It’s difficult to speak of the State, because it wasn’t there when we needed it. The priority of the State is to ensure the security of people and their property. In Mali, we’re not lucky enough to have this kind of State. The same is true of State services—you have to pay, even for school… Thank God the Koranic school is free and many parents and children give us lots of support”

Songhai, marabout and headmaster of a Koranic school in Gao, displaced in Mopti.

The school must be adapted to the nomadic lifestyle with a cafeteria, system for picking up and dropping off children, and childcare centre. It must also adapt to the pastoral calendar and to the seasonal movements of their camps. Very close consultation with the nomadic communities is also necessary for developing the right formula in terms of education and obtaining their full and active participation.

“For school, all the women you see here, we finished middle school. But our life as herders didn’t allow us to continue. Besides that, as young girls, our parents wouldn’t leave us alone in the city without supervision. In the camps, we stay with the young children and the elderly, when our men leave, so sending a girl to school is complicated. Us, we were able to go because there was a small ‘bush school’ on our site 11 km from Goundam, with a teacher from our group. During the grazing season, we would all travel together. He gave us Tifinagh classes (Tamashek writing), French, and Arabic to learn the Koran. That’s how we got a basic education. But later, we didn’t continue.”

Group of Tuareg women from Gourma, Burkina Faso Camp.

“After colonisation, there was never a viable school for nomads. There were some community schools, but they were quite rare. Among the Arabs, there’s almost nothing, except for the walls. In Timbuktu, there are 18 schools funded by the technical and financial partners (TFP). They’re all located on sites within 30 km of the city. However, the Tuareg and Arab herders are in more remote areas. The basic schools are not functional, and all the resources are given to Timbuktu. Before, things worked better: the old senior civil servants all went to the nomadic school. After them, the next generation was sacrificed. It’s in the 1990s that we saw a minor improvement, but all of the people from my generation who studied were in the sedentary schools, outside of the nomadic areas. Many of them never returned”

Arab from Timbuktu, doctor, Mauritania.
“If we analyse the history of education in our regions, we see that people are reticent about going to school, but things are progressively improving. We nomads, we think that if things are free and simply dropped on us, they are worthless, because we didn’t discuss the way of doing things. During colonial times, schools were set up in sedentary areas. There were some nomadic schools, but they only covered primary education, so we couldn’t go very far. So it’s the sedentary communities who benefited from them. The Tuaregs, Fulani, and Arabs are the big losers in terms of education, and they are also the most marginalised at the national level. At a certain level, all of the qualitative aspects of the school cannot be seen: the question of access is difficult... At that time, we had a 3000 CFA scholarship. All the Tuaregs who didn’t have one, who were far from the cities, and could therefore not be supported by a relative in the city (food/housing or financially), left for Algeria or Libya. They discovered that in those countries, there was not suffering like here. That generated other visions, and therefore also other demands on the State and what it must provide people in terms of services...The problems of education today in Mali is that it is not well adapted to people’s situation: it does not improve access to the job market, therefore it has no value for the people. As there is no higher education except in Bamako, it’s hard to send students there and support them financially. In Bamako, it is the senior civil servants and elected officials from the north who house these students. Each one has ten or twenty students that must be housed and fed, and supported for their studies. The boarding schools have a limited capacity, and are too expensive for the parents. So most students stop their studies, even when they have their baccalauréate. Most families teach their children Arabic and about Islam, whereas, they study neither of these subjects at school, so the families don’t want to send their children to school, because they’re afraid they will forget what they’ve learned. Yet, even an imam who studied until grade 7th needs additional education to be more open minded. We need a school that combines knowledge and languages, not a school that excludes and discredits knowledge. That’s what has pushed parents to mistrust them.”

Imghad Tuareg from Djebock-Gao, former administrator of an NGO, Burkina Faso Camp.

Support for the productive sectors

In the sparsely populated northern regions, the systems for exploiting natural resources are either:
- very primitive, particularly in the herding and fishing sectors, where food is not transformed,
- in the form of highly diverse investments, some of which are very old (the oases), and others more recent (the irrigated areas along riverbanks or lakes).

Support for the production system is systematically understood to be projects supported by international aid.

Herding (livestock raising): Herding is by far the principal activity in the rural agricultural systems in the northern regions of Mali. Nearly all animal species are concerned (cattle, sheep, goats, camel, and to some extent donkeys and horses). The pastoral systems in these sparsely populated arid zones are one of the only ways to exploit most of this vast area. Nonetheless, herding is under-developed and there is not a political will to value it by making investments that can support and create jobs, because the development of these northern areas in not generally considered to be good value for money.

“Herding must be developed with the sale of meat and milk. But to do that, the area must be connected to the rest of the country, and energy must be provided to preserve these products.”

Arab, Health Ministry official, Bamako.
The question of veterinarian services was also mentioned by all the herders we met:

“We consider the health of our animals to be more important than our own.”
Tuareg herder, M’Bera Camp, Mauritania.

As much in terms of animal health as agricultural production, the personnel must go beyond the role of the traditional civil servant to become an agent of development who promotes the agro-pastoral world.

“The veterinarian services have been long absent from the remote pastoral areas, because they don’t have the resources to be present throughout this area, and there was really too much insecurity. As a result, a specific system was set up of ‘private veterinarian services.’ The State subcontracts healthcare, vaccination, and epidemic monitoring services to these veterinarians. The State was in charge of supplying vaccines, the cold chain, and quality control of the drugs. Alas, today these services have no means. We don’t even have our offices, because they have been taken over by the MINUSMA; first the Nigerian troops, and now the Chinese battalion. I rent a house and my office is my briefcase. When I want to print a document, I have to go beg the NGOs. I found an insulated box for the vaccines, but that’s all I have. How do you want people to take me seriously?”
Regional Director of livestock raising, Gao.

For example, in the Kidal Region, the State veterinarian service has 6 to 8 agents in the field, and most services (treatments, animal vaccinations, support and advice) are carried out by veterinarians recruited by NGOs and aid projects.

“One of the really important services for us is animal healthcare. It’s mandatory, otherwise you get a fine. But either they come whenever they want, or they give you an appointment, and if you’re not there you have to pay. We’re nomads, if we’re in the bush, there’s neither a telephone, nor (other means of) communication. Often, we feel like it’s a sanction.”
Kel Essouk Tuareg, Djebock, from Gao-refugee in Burkina Faso.

“Here, the State services exist, but they don’t have any resources. We, herders, we do as much as we can, and it’s when it’s really necessary that we go see the veterinarians. There are private veterinarians who don’t have the means, and who exploit us instead of helping us. When there are free distributions, they often think of us, but it’s not enough. In the bush, we herders, we live in peace, everything is between the herders. The quality of services, that’s in the city… Out here in the bush, there’s nothing.”
Fulani herder, Ansongo.

Today, the personnel in northern Mali lack supervision both in quantity and in quality. The various projects and actions have not adequately strengthened the herders’ capacities.

“I’m a veterinarian. I resigned because I saw the agricultural intensification projects take the resources from the north and invest in the south, with no profits for the sectors that provided them. For example there’s milk. All the livestock in Mali is concentrated between Nampala...”

Fulani herder, Ansongo.
Throughout the sparsely populated areas in northern Mali, exchanges of animal products for the goods nomads and other agro-pastoralists need in their daily life (sugar, tea, clothes, kerosene, cell phone credit, medication, etc.) as well as any for other regularly necessary expenses, depend on the smooth functioning of the livestock market. These markets are highly dependent on the traders who bring products and those who bring livestock.

“We must develop the livestock market. There are two sites that work very well in our region, Tichift and Inagozmi. In the past two years, 20 times more animals were sold on these two markets. For us, it was a way to open up our area, as well as a market for the products we bring back from Algeria and Mauritania. It has also enabled us to establish a viable supply chain, and sell the livestock as close as possible to the local populations. Markets are also places where people meet each other, the herders in the area, as well as healthcare professionals, and people from the schools.”

Arabs from Ber and Timbuktu, merchants, notables.

Recessional farming and irrigated areas: In northern Mali, recessional farming includes several crops: recessional sorghum or from Djebock for the seasonal ponds and branches of the river, peanuts, cowpeas, and pearl millet. In practice, all of these crops are grown traditionally, with no major investments or State supervision.

With the increasing number of market gardening groups and associations of women, there are now many irrigated market gardens both individual and collective. This development has been a factor in strengthening income-generating activities.

More major investments have been made for crop agriculture than for herding with the development of the great plains in the Timbuktu and Gao Regions, and the creation of several irrigated areas. Many of these installations, which require pumping systems with generators and power pumps, were sabotaged during the crisis. An in-depth study of the agricultural system should also be conducted, taking account of the Kidal Region, where there is a great deal of unexplored potential. As for herding, what is also needed is the strong and long-term commitment and involvement of the farmers themselves.

“Economically speaking, in normal times, it’s impossible for the farmers to cover the costs of the irrigated areas all by themselves. This year is even worse, because of the higher price of the inputs (diesel fuel, fertilisers). 1.5 kg of rice costs 800 CFA. Yet, a litre of diesel fuel costs three measures of rice. The difference between the gain made and the cost of fuel is very small, it’s catastrophic. People couldn’t sell because there was a food distribution operation. For others, they couldn’t buy. Yet, it would have been necessary to buy the local rice to absorb the local production and save the farmers. Since 2008, the State has been subsidising only fertiliser (50%: 12,500 CFA instead of 22,500 frs for 50 kg). But this year, it stopped giving subsidies because of the food donations. In 2013, when there was very little rain, the State cut off the subsidies, two months before, because the NGOs were supposedly going to be providing fertiliser for free. At that time, they had analysed the situation and evaluated that the NGOs had only covered 13% of the needs that concerned 47% >>>
>>> of the people. For us, it’s the worst possible farming year: bad rain, the high water stage was one month late, rise in the price of diesel. And what does the State do? It cuts off the subsidies. In terms of agriculture, 2013 was catastrophic”

Regional Agriculture Directorate, Timbuktu.

Financial services to assist development: with the difficulties inherent in the circulation of cash in sparsely populated areas, where a certain degree of insecurity reigns, it is an essential issue to create or reinforce micro-finance institutions and develop fund transfer systems. In such areas where transfers are long and hazardous, mechanisms have developed based on trust, inspired by the “Hawala” (Islamic credit) system. Banks providing microcredit were analysed (Haousa Finances in the Attara area, and Sahel Finances at Tonka in the Goundam Cercle and Gari in the Diré Cercle).

“The example of the creation of banks started here in 2002, with the establishment of Azawad Finance in Léré. In 2007, they divided up the bank between them, it was bankruptcy. In 2008, the question was raised about stopping the system, the 5 financial groups in the north were concerned. Since then, it has been difficult to get back their trust and obtain credit lines. The savings and credit bank in Diré was created in 2005; the shareholders are the owners of the irrigation projects. They wanted to create that to ensure continuity after the Mali-Nord programme, which provided diesel, inputs, and so on. The management committees wanted a financial system to enable them to manage the transition. They submitted the request to the GTZ (German Agency for Technical Cooperation), which constructed the building, and they bought the shares. They're all local shareholders. When it was launched, there were 335 shareholders for 69 million CFA; later on, the capital was fixed at 120 million CFA. In 2007, the 120 million CFA were bought by the shareholders, thus obliged to buy back the capital at 300,000 million. There are about 50 million left. Today, anyone can be a shareholder. The share was worth 10,000 CFA when it was launched, and in 2007, it went up to 13,500. 435 million CFA were lent, the repayment rate is 42%. At the start, the money was lent through the BNDA (National Agricultural Development Bank) which allowed 12 months to pay it back. For them, the loan is 8 months. The interest rate is 2% per month, that’s 24% per annum. It works everywhere except with the management committees of the irrigation projects. It’s there that determines how things go: whether it works or not. Some of them don’t repay because they say it’s the money of the whites. One shopkeeper from Diré hasn’t paid back 17 million CFA, he received a legal summons but he has a lot of political support so it didn’t lead to anything, he doesn’t intend to pay it back. He sells spare parts for vehicles, motor pumps, and motorbikes”

Tuareg, former microcredit project manager, Bamako.

Agroforestry: Northern Mali is an arid region par excellence, and agroforestry should play a major role there. The reality is often disappointing, because the overall situation is poor, apart from a few projects. Specific investments using beneficial plant species combined with an environmental development programme would considerably reduce the loss of rangelands.

“Before, there were projects that worked on the reconstitution of the tree cover, soil, and water resources. We planted half-moon micro-catchments, cordons pierreux (lines of stones). We planted trees, especially Acacia and Prosopis. In the past, there were even gum arabic programmes, with nurseries and all that. All these projects were stopped with the 1990s conflict, because there was too much insecurity and the donors didn’t want to pay any more because, every time, the NGOs got their vehicles stolen. Nothing’s really got going again since”

Manager from the Regional Agriculture Directorate, Gao, Songhai.
**Fishing:** In addition to the Niger Valley, the regions of northern Mali are rich in water bodies: branches of the Niger, ponds and lakes. Fishing has remained at the gathering stage, with very little development of added-value fish products. Fish farming is therefore a promising sector, because there is a large population of fishermen who are sometimes idle.

"Us, we are fishermen and transporters. We spend our time on the water and on the beach. Our lives follow the rise and fall of the river. Now, it’s the low-water season, and we only catch the fish that remain in the branches of the river, with our cast nets and some lines. It’s very different in the high-water season, because the river is very dangerous but full of big fish. Every year, there are people who get killed by trees washed down by the river. The big difficulty is commercialisation, because here we no longer have any ice so we have to sell very quickly. We also produce dried or smoked fish, but that takes a long time, and it’s the women and children who do it”

Bozo fisherman, Gao.

**The State caught between the north and the south**

In the face of productivity differentials linked to very different natural conditions, there is a permanent idea of unequal treatment among the people of northern Mali, whatever the ethnic group. The idea sometimes persists that the south pillages the resources of the north. Certain refugees from the Niger Valley recalled that the diversion of the water from the lakes (Diré, Faguibine) to irrigate land developed by the Office du Niger accentuated the idea of a “useful” Mali and a “useless” Mali. This vision of two Malis, one deserving, the other useless, is still very widespread among certain major funding organisations, which, seeking to make “value for money” investments, prefer the major dam projects and the “cotton”, “Shea,” and “peanut” areas of the south to the pastoral lands of the north.

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4 MULTIFACTORIAL ANALYSIS OF PROFILES

To highlight the diversity of points of view presented in the previous section, multifactorial analysis was carried out using the data collected from some of the interviews. This gave rise to graphical representations, called “spider charts,” which very clearly show the diversity of profiles and a certain number of “trends” that provide a better understanding of the main families of points of view.

4.1 Stay behind or go into exile: major differences of perspective

The analysis reveals highly contrasting situations in function of whether people chose to stay behind or leave.

We observe a wide variety of “profiles” within the country, which reflect both different categories (for example, managers from the south versus nomads from the far north), and very different personal trajectories during the recent crises (individuals who stayed behind or who fled to the south and are still there or who have come back). The multifactorial analysis generally shows a certain equilibrium for the whole set of criteria, which indicates a diversity of points of view.
On the other hand, we observe greater homogeneity of profiles among the Malians in exile, whether in Mauritania or Burkina Faso, whatever their socio-economic profile. The relatively high level of homogeneity of the profiles, and the distinct half-moon appearance, are quite symptomatic of a situation where people generally have in general strong views. The profiles of the Malian refugees show that they attach great importance to inter-community relations and have very little confidence, even very little hope, in the future and in their relations with State organisations (basic and sovereign services).
Combined multifactorial analysis of the profiles of Malians in exile in Burkina Faso. Each colour represents one person or the choice of a homogenous group.

Combined multifactorial analysis of the profiles of Malians in exile in Mauritania. Again, each colour represents a particular case.
4. MULTIFACTORIAL ANALYSIS OF PROFILES

4.2 Diversity: socio-professional categories, agro-ecosystems and gender

Analysis of the profiles of individuals produced by means of the survey and the production of multifactorial representations (“spider charts”) reveal a certain number of categories:

Profiles of “important personalities, traditional chiefs and opinion formers”

For the important personalities of the ethnic groups of the Niger valley and Lower Delta, as shown for example by the multifactorial analysis of a Songhai marabout interviewed in Mopti, there are clearly a certain number of gambles: between hope (the hope and confidence score is 3) and a lack of protection, between risks of predatory behaviours and inter-community relations that are still present but in need of partial reconstruction. On the other hand, both the quality of State services, and its very presence, remain a real challenge.

For those who stayed in Mali but belong to desert groups, a different profile is observed. In the multifactorial analysis of a Tuareg griot encountered in Timbuktu, who is very representative of this group, it can be seen that the indicators linked to fear, hope and lack-of-confidence factors indicate that these individuals are on the defensive, with very low scores. This is all the more worrying because they are in essence either “whistle blowers” or directly involved in dialogue (role of traditional chiefs and griots).

For others, generally from pastoral areas, who chose exile and have not come back, the skewed shape of the “spider’s web” strongly indicates the observation of the incapacity of the State, and the fear that it provokes. It underlines the importance attached to inter-community relations, which form a safety net in the absence of the State.
Profiles of civil servants

The profiles of the managers and civil servants who stayed in Mali show that they choose hope and confidence even if fears of predatory behaviours and the possibilities of oppression are not at all neglected. These various profiles also show that they choose to be confident in the capacity to maintain good relations with the other communities. The vision concerning public services and their quality show a certain degree of satisfaction, together with optimism.
For the Malian officials who went into exile, once again the profiles are highly skewed. On the whole, the fear indicators are maximal and those of dissatisfaction with State services and their quality receive rather low scores.

Profiles of project officers (NGOs, para-public sector)

Malians who stayed in Mali

Some clearly made the choice of allying with and being part of the official system, but remain marked by the inter-community crisis. Their lack of trust in the State, its services and its protection capacity, is compensated by their clear choice to “remain an actor in the system.”

Others who stayed have less hope and confidence, and still show the symptom of fear. The pillaging and acts of violence that marked early 2013 in both urban and rural areas, as in the region of Timbuktu, remain very much on their minds.
I STUDY ON SPARSELY POPULATED AREAS - CASE STUDY: MALI

The Malians in this category, who went into exile once again, have very skewed profiles in which we see very clearly that all the fear indicators are at a maximum, whereas all those linked to possible hopes for the future are at a minimum. Those people who are from the least inhabited areas give a very low score to the presence of State services and their quality. This is all the more interesting when it concerns NGO managers involved in the setting up of services, during which they have undoubtedly experienced a great deal of frustration.
Profiles of shopkeepers

Here again, the profiles are rather varied, and enable a certain number of categories to be identified:

The shopkeepers who stayed, from the Fulani or Songhai ethnic groups show more hope and confidence in the State, and the men express a better perception of basic services, though this is less true of the women. The protective aspect of the State receives a lower score from the women than the men. For all of them, relations with all the groups are and have to be good, because that is the key to commerce.

For the Arab shopkeepers that stayed behind, who bore the brunt of the 2013 reprisals, the situation is much more difficult. The fear indicators regarding both the State and other communities in the area are at a maximum, which can be explained by the high levels of pillaging committed, sometimes by their own neighbours.
For people in the commercial sector who fled to neighbouring countries, the profiles are once again quite characteristic. There is inter-community solidarity in the camps, but the other indicators are rather negative. The perception of the low quality of the services provided by the State and limited protective role is obvious and leads to new investment strategies “in a safe place,” in other words in the host country.

Profiles of people in the private services sector

**Fulani, Veterinarian, 65 yr old, Executive of an engineering firm, Mopti Sévaré**

**Male (50 yr old), manager of an hotel, Songhai, Timbuktu**

**Fulani, 35 yr old, Male, Telephone operator, Mopti Sévaré**

**Songhai, 45 yr old, Male, private radio speaker, Gao**
People in the private services sector have taken a gamble on the future, so their confidence and hope indicators are often high. The protective role of the State is much less highly rated. The vision of the quality of services is variable, but not negative, which is linked to the fact that these people are often from ethnic groups that were not affected by the acts of violence in early 2013, and they are all based in urban centres.

Once again, there is a big difference between the global service providers and those from Tuareg communities, who are less confident. This explains why they went into exile. The low scores for confidence, and the high scores for predation, and oppression are very significant in these cases.

Profiles of herders

The main ethnic differences, as well as differences concerning where the herders live and how they make use of ecosystems are well illustrated by their specific profiles.

For the herders from the interface areas between the Niger Valley and the non flooded areas (Haoussa), whether around Gao or around Timbuktu, there are three striking factors: the importance attached to inter-community relations, and fear of predatory behaviour and oppression, and lastly low confidence in the State and its services.
For other herders, particularly those from the confrontation zone east of Gao (Ménaka area and the lower valley of the Tilemsi), fear of predatory behaviours is combined with very low confidence in inter-community relations.

The herders who have to deal with the additional inter-community issue of managing the river-banks present intermediate profiles, with significant but less marked levels of fear.

Among the herders in non flooded in the remote Haoussa, there are typically two groups:

- Those who are extremely fearful, essentially Arab and Tuareg herders from the Timbuktu, Goundam, Léré, and Kidal areas.
- Those who have much less fear, in particular the black Kal-Tamashek (Bella). They have often opted to distance themselves from the armed groups and become more integrated in Mali, a de facto defence against their “former masters.”

Profiles of farmers

The farmer profiles are quite diverse, but more open and balanced regarding all the criteria, because they have less to fear regarding the tensions developed on the basis of skin colour. While they retain a little more confidence and hope, issues concerning the quality of services remain considerable. When the farmers are based in areas far from the major urban centres, where there is no law and order and few services, the confidence and hope indexes drop sharply.
Profiles of fishermen (Bozo)

The profiles of the Niger River fishermen are relatively homogenous in shape, with a less negative perception of the presence of the State than others, but on the other hand a considerable problem concerning inter-community relations and predatory behaviours.
5 GOOD PRACTICES, RISKS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

5.1 Difficulties and risks

As we analysed these numerous interviews and discussions with humanitarian aid and security sector stakeholders, it became very clear that working in the sparsely populated areas of northern Mali involves a certain number of difficulties and risks:

• One of the characteristics of sparsely populated areas is the difficulty of establishing and maintaining law and order, especially when the area is both regularly disrupted by conflicts and used as a transit route, or even support base, by numerous black market and international terrorist networks. In the context of northern Mali, all this leads to a highly insecure situation and permanent difficulties regarding the presence of both State representatives and aid providers;

• The very poor condition of the infrastructure means that outside the towns close to the River Niger and, to an even greater degree, further from the river towards the Gourma or Haoussa, the state of the roads is appalling, often leading to very considerable transport costs and delays;

• The low population density and remoteness from urban centres create very high extra costs that cannot easily be supported by the people themselves, for example in the framework of healthcare cost recovery policies;

• The low population density and long distances make it difficult to establish security and maintain order in these areas. Consequently, any movement of resources of whatever kind (vehicles, goods, and obviously money) is a hazardous exercise. In recent months, attacks of merchants on the roads and the pillaging of fairs and markets in the Ménaka and Bourem areas have seriously affected the access of goods to local markets (according to an interview with an NGO employee).

• In northern Mali, the sparseness of the population is combined with high levels of mobility. Some of these movements are predictable (those linked to the seasons and the availability of grazing land and water), others much less, particularly those linked to fear and avoiding the risk of physical aggression.

• Part of this mobility is linked to regular movements of individuals and groups between remote grazing areas and the places where there are markets and fairs (either in the strip of land close to the River Niger or the livestock markets in the Haoussa heartland). This definitely provides opportunities for making contacts (at the markets and fairs, and elsewhere), but also creates attractive phenomena that increase the risk of predatory behaviours.

• This low population density and high mobility result in numerous difficulties for meeting people, keeping regular contact - which is often necessary for both carrying out development projects and maintaining relations between the people and administrators - and, in general, for ensuring basic services such as updating individuals’ civil status, vaccination campaigns, education, tax collecting, or issuing administrative documents.

In these areas, international aid practices entail a certain number of risks:

• Food aid can bring down prices and prevent farmers and herders from selling produce at prices that remunerate their work and investment. NGOs such as Oxfam and ACF, in liaison with the Malian Agriculture Ministry’s early warning system (Système d’Alerte Précoce, SAP),
World Food Programme (WPF) and Food Security Cluster have therefore set up mechanisms for monitoring markets, prices, and supplies so as to be able to react if negative secondary effects appear;

- While State services are often grateful for the aid that NGOs can provide, there is a certain risk that the presence of aid workers willing to live and work in difficult isolated and remote contexts, notably because they are equipped with the logistical resources required and receive pay incentives to do so, can have a disincentive effect for the presence of basic State services.

5.2 Good practices

Faced with the various constraints encountered in northern Mali and described above, a certain number of interesting experiences, even examples of good practice, were identified during the interviews with either local people or aid workers.

5.2.1 Decentralisation

These sparsely populated areas are characterised by very high administrative operating costs and fundamental issues regarding the taking into consideration of micro-diversity. In these contexts, one of the key development factors is bringing levels of decision-making closer to citizens, and also bringing those responsible for managing resources closer to the people they administer. That is the challenge concerning the principle of decentralisation and transfer to the competent authorities of both the responsibilities for local development and the resources for carrying it out. With the pressures linked to the implementation of structural adjustment measures and after the events of the 1990s in the north, in 1991 Mali embarked upon a vast decentralisation process. This decentralised management via local government authorities vested with legal personality status and financial autonomy, administratively independent and with powers transferred to them by the State, was seen as one of the most audacious in Africa and one of the keys to the peace process after the previous conflict. The transfer of powers, responsibilities and resources from the State at all these levels was very quickly placed at the core of the promise made by the State concerning decentralisation. This process, as it was set up in the early 1990s, had two declared objectives:

- The further development of the democratic process was intended to adapt the institutional framework to the objectives and requirements of political pluralism through the emergence of local democracy;
- The promotion of local and regional development was intended to favour the emergence of initiatives among the various stakeholders, and the setting up of a new development framework derived from the preoccupations, resources and know-how of local people.

These fundamental issues, placing the management of local development at the most local possible level, are now at the heart of the political resolution of the conflict, broadening the question to include the role of local stakeholders in an appropriate political and institutional formula. That will certainly be the main aim of the forthcoming peace talks provided for in the Ouagadougou Agreement (signed in June 2013), which stipulates the need for discussions regarding the terms and conditions of institutional reforms.

Two elements should enable this mechanism to support direct actions:

- Reinforcing the budgetary mechanisms to enable the transfer of resources that will accompany the transfer of responsibilities. The ANICT (Agence Nationale d’Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales / National Local Authorities Investment Agency) will have to be consolidated in order to support the infrastructure reinforcements. The right tools need to be found for transferring funds so as to support local dynamics. Mechanisms such as “local initiative funds” could be envisaged:
5. GOOD PRACTICES, RISKS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

“Ideally, the ANICT is an instrument designed to reinforce infrastructure and provide equipment to decentralised entities, such as municipalities and regions, and to support the construction of buildings such as schools. The ANICT’s intervention mechanism is based on the financial resources of the State and the external resources made available to the FICT (Fonds d’Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales / Local Authorities Investment Fund). The management of grants to communes, in particular financial commitments, payment mandates, and settlement operations, together with control procedures, are implemented for Malian local governments in compliance with current regulations. These resources are redistributed between the regions as drawing rights that can be carried forward from one year to the next and mobilised over a three-year period. Three criteria determine the equalisation of local governments’ drawing rights: the size of the population, which unfortunately discriminates against the sparsely populated northern regions, and levels of equipment and isolation. The final two are, on the contrary, favourable to the long-forgotten north. The local authorities have to provide 20% of the budget, which often creates problems and leads to the risk of corruption, as certain companies do not hesitate to pay the 20% in order to secure the deal, even if it means raising the price. The procedures that existed before the crisis are not appropriate for rapidly re-establishing the tools of the State in northern areas because they were designed to prevent corruption and ensure the transparent implementation of contracts, which doesn’t really work, by the way, and to reassure financial backers with our procedures. But it was not done to go quickly.”

ANICT Manager, Kal-Tamashek, originally from Kidal.

Facilitating decision-making mechanisms that combine traditional systems with the tools of local democracy. This process involves the reinforcement of the regional and local committees for the orientation, coordination, and monitoring of development actions (Comités Régionaux d’orientation, de coordination et de suivi des actions de développement, CROCSAD, and Comités locaux d’orientation, de coordination et de suivi des actions de développement, CLO-CSAD). The work of the Local Government Support Project (Projet d’Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales, PACT) could provide impetus in that direction.

“In our area, the idea of decentralisation was very welcome at first, because that meant ‘we’re going to manage our development ourselves.’ The problem is that, while we have been able to identify our problems, we have received very few resources to put in place solutions.”

Tissit town councillor, white Tamashek, fraction chief.

5.2.2 Settlement sites: integration opportunities

There has been a great deal of consideration regarding the elements that could make economic “sites” or “poles” more viable without entering into a mechanism of sedentism. Since the 1990s, we have witnessed the creation of a multitude of sites usually set up on settled lands around components such as wells, basic solar and hydraulic equipment, and small shops. Many services that need to be redesigned and adapted to the pastoral world have taken root in these sites, which are areas with more concentrated economic activities - many sites now have markets of livestock and/or grain, and also potentially the provision of services.

For example, the movements of the mobile healthcare units largely follow the calendar of markets, and the concentration of human activities at the settlement sites, which ultimately become local sites for the social integration of people who live in sparsely populated areas.

“We must develop the livestock market. There are two sites that work very well in our region, Tichift and Inagozmi. In the past two years, 20 times more animals were sold on these two markets. For us, it was a way to open up our area, as well as a market for the products we bring back from Algeria and Mauritania. It has also enabled us to establish a viable supply chain, and sell the livestock as close as possible to the local populations. Markets are also places where people meet each other, the herders in the area, as well as healthcare professionals, and people from the schools. The mobile healthcare units, in conjunction with the local authorities and the AVSF teams, regularly come to these two markets. Now, the people living furthest away come not only to get supplies, but also receive healthcare.”

Notable and Arab merchant from the commune of Ber, Timbuktu.

5.2.3 Mobile healthcare units

Certain medical NGOs have set up mobile healthcare units based on two complementary operating procedures:

- Circuits planned in advance targeting specific places (villages, markets, water sources) and delivering healthcare (preventive and curative);
- The capacity to respond to an emergency by going to a particular site for a serious case requiring specific care (which may include transfer to a structure higher up the health pyramid).

“It’s necessary to set up a mobile clinic there, in other words a healthcare unit capable of providing clinical care. In addition to the obstetric care, the emergency ambulance is also paid for, so the driver and fuel have to be paid for too. We need to find a solution, and develop more appropriate and accessible emergency care systems.”

Arab from Timbuktu, doctor, Mauritania.

The travel costs of these mobile units are quite high (due to the distances involved and the condition of the roads) and would be a very heavy burden on the decentralised health services budget, if the NGOs did not cover them in their projects.

“With technological progress and changing needs, we no longer have the same environment; the nomads need healthcare, such as the polio vaccination that needs to be stepped up. We need to move towards a health education strategy, and that can only be achieved by adapting to ways of life, particularly those of livestock raisers and herders.”

Arab, Health Ministry official, Bamako.

“Professional training for healthcare personnel in northern regions needs to be developed. There is a nursing school in Gao, which has trained many of the personnel originating from the north; it needs to be further developed. Because that’s an asset: while a public sector worker from the south objects to working in the north under the mobility conditions of the mobile healthcare units (10 days in the bush, 10 days in town), on the contrary most nomads like it. That was my case, I was a doctor in the mobile healthcare units supported by the AVSF in the Timbuktu region, and I really liked serving the nomadic communities, in the most remote areas. I felt at home, and I felt like I was doing something useful for the most under-privileged.”

Arab from Timbuktu, doctor, Mauritania.
5.2.4 Combined human-and-animal mobile healthcare units

In sparsely populated pastoral areas where nomads often attach a higher price to the health of their herds than to that of their families, some NGOs have tried to set up combined human-and-animal mobile healthcare units.

The joint presence of healthcare workers and veterinarians attracts attention, and they have provided considerable services. This inevitably leads to the consideration of how to depart from the traditional approach to healthcare centres, and seek a new way linked to the pastoral and nomadic systems.

"Healthcare requires proximity. The ones that worked were AVSF. During the crisis, they doubled their mobile teams, they created 4 healthcare units. Experience shows us that with regard to mobile healthcare units, the only constraints are those of resources."

Timbuktu Hospital healthcare worker.

The experience of AVSF in mobile healthcare carried out in the communes of Ber and Salam is described below by one of its former managers, originally from Timbuktu:

“The idea came from a group of NGOs, based on a maternal healthcare project for northern Mali in 2004. Research-action work was carried out in Timbuktu: it was MSF who came up with the strategy (a team of anthropologists, doctors, etc.) After a year of work, they drew up a strategy. The conclusion showed that the sector-specific healthcare policy in nomadic areas was not appropriate, but that resources were available. ADESA, a local NGO, set up a mobile Community Healthcare Centre (Centre de Santé Communautaire, CSCOM). After evaluation, they realised it could only be funded with the help of local authorities. They therefore considered how to set up a financing system involving the State, local authorities, and communities. After several appeals (there were difficulties convincing them to accept a mobile system, especially one working between the two communes of Ber and Salam), it was decided to set up a total of 10 sites: 5 for Ber, 5 for Salam. The CSCOM was accepted, its CSCOM status was managed by the intercommunal body (difficult to operate, but it works). The coupling of human health and veterinary care was very successful in terms of a minimum package of activities. One of the biggest major challenges is to achieve acceptance by the healthcare system at Ministry level. The most costly part concerns human resources. For 10 days’ work, you need to allow for 5 days’ rest.

For doctors, it’s a bit difficult. Instead of recruiting a doctor, we recruit a state nurse, if possible from the community. The vet is from the area and it works very well. We also need an experienced doctor. You need to budget 21 million CFA a year for the costs of the mobile CSCOM for the 10 sites. Plus the vehicle and petrol. You need 200 litres/month, multiplied by 12 that’s 2 640 000 CFA/year.

At the start, the idea was to move from camp to camp, now our logic is more site-based. There are some difficulties with the conservation of vaccines, at first we took several doses, which got spoilt. The ideal solution would be to incorporate a little fridge with a solar panel, which can conserve the vaccines for 10 days.

We should have a formal system, have a referrals agent, a sort of dispensary with a person who would be trained and could do the follow-up. Those are things to be developed.

The calendar is generally respected, but the communication system needs to be improved. The programme is defined by the site chiefs who, every three months, define the site in function of the movements and concentration of the population. Livestock markets have been created, the CSCOM has joined them and it works very well. The site chiefs are notables and fraction chiefs, it works very well with them. We inform people about delays when there is a problem of insecurity or with a vehicle, they’re the ones that apply the local security measures, or fix things for when we need it. They are very involved because we are finally providing healthcare for their most remote groups. The CSCOM operating the mobile healthcare units has never been robbed, no problem. The CSCOM is indispensable for the population. It has been in existence since 2007/2008."

Former AVSF manager, Arab from Timbuktu.
5.2.5 Single-Teacher Schools

In isolated and sparsely populated areas, where it is difficult to have several teachers given the low number of pupils per age group, single-teacher schools (Ecoles à Classe Unique, ECU), with several different grades taught by one teacher, seem to have been successful, though rare, experiments. They only concern primary education. The teacher responsible is sometimes a State civil servant, but is paid by the communities that send their children to the ECU.

5.2.6 Combined Schools “Koran school – standard school”

In numerous sparsely populated areas where people are mobile, the testing of “co-locating” the standard school with Koran schools has sometimes enabled considerable economies of scale, and made standard education more attractive and easier to put in place. Various examples have been mentioned, from those that take place in remote camps to the mixed middle school of Timbuktu where teaching is given in French as well as Arabic.

“In my camp, there is no modern school building because we move too often. And there are too few school age children to have several primary teachers. Those who have the money now send their children to study in Algeria or Niger, because the situation in Libya is too difficult. Those who are a bit less well-off and have relations in Tessalit or Kidal send their children there, where they are looked after by the family. For the others, there is only the Koran school. It would be good if the marabout could give them a bit of teaching about arithmetic and French, because with only the Koran learned by heart you don’t get very far. Myself, I was lucky enough that my family had some money, like that I was able to go to middle school in Kidal, and because I worked hard and I had an uncle with a trading business in Bamako, I was able to go to high school.”

Kel Ifoghas Tuareg, originally from Kidal.

5.2.7 Setting up of a money transfer system by telephone

In such sparsely populated areas where the bank network is almost non-existent outside the large towns (Timbuktu, Gao), money transfers via mobile telephones are a new and interesting aspect of the way the economy operates, tending to supplant “Hawalla” systems.

“Life here is quite complicated. During the whole occupation period, I took refuge in Bamako, and I came back as quickly as possible. But there was no bank, no way that I could receive my salary, and I had to go get it from Bamako, with all the costs involved. And also the absence. During Ramadan, the whole month of the fast, the only way to have money to buy sugar, tea, dates, and meat, the only solution was with Orange Money, which had just launched its money transfer system. During that month, life is very expensive because we eat and party after sunset. If there’s no money, Ramadan is very hard”

Manager of the Regional Agriculture Directorate, Gao.

5.2.8 Development of private providers of veterinary services

Given the importance of pastoralism as an essential means of making use of natural resources and a way of life, the demand for support regarding animal health and productivity is considerable. The Malian State cannot itself provide all the veterinary services and all the interfaces with the pastoral and agro-pastoral world. While the regulatory role of the technical services, and their support in the management of major endemic diseases are
essential, the day-to-day provision of “support for the pastoral world” is largely the work of efficient networks of veterinarians and para-veterinarians who provide support to the herders, charging a fee for the visit and for medicine. These agents are the real vectors that promote and enhance the value of the herd.

“In the northern areas, the State does not have the resources to intervene. For some time now, a parallel system has been set up with people like me, private veterinarians who have become service providers for the State and NGOs. If we’re paid, we’re willing to take risks, to work in very difficult conditions, because we really love our job as a vet. We therefore go deep into the Gourma, the Haoussa, we look at what’s happening around the ‘cursed lands’ (area contaminated by anthrax) and the situation of the ‘salt lands’ (which provide a natural mineral complement for the livestock). People respect us and even protect us, because their herds, that’s what’s most important for them, sometimes even more than their children.”

Fulani, veterinary service provider, Sévaré.

5.2.9 Development financing mechanisms

New communication technologies and the development of mobile telephone networks have enabled many areas of Mali to benefit first from easier telecommunications, and more recently, the financial services provided by those mechanisms. Recently, Orange Money, Money Gram, and others, have enabled the transfer of salaries, payments of purchases, and resources linked to international aid, which has replaced the traditional aid in kind. In 2013, when the banks were closed in Gao, the only way for people to have access to cash during a very delicate period when needs are greater than usual (the period of Ramadan and the great feasts that go with it) was via Orange Money.

5.3 Options to be explored

5.3.1 Work on the animal products sectors

De facto, under-investment has meant that the main livestock sectors (meat, milk, leather, and hides) have continued to use traditional production and commercialisation systems, and are far from generating additional income for the pastoral communities.

Milk sector

There have been attempts to establish mini-dairies in Ménaka, Kidal, and Gao, and to transform leather and hides, but they have failed due to the lack of follow-up and committed involvement on the part of their actual beneficiaries. Nonetheless, successful examples in the past, notably in Niger, and others that still work very well in Kenya and Mauritania; show there is real potential for the pasteurised camel milk sector, and even the production of camel milk cheese. The milk production of a female dromedary (one-humped camel) averages 6 l/day. This milk, very rich in vitamin C (25 to 100 mg/kg, i.e., at least three times more than cow’s milk), is an essential component in the diet of the inhabitants in the desert, where sources of vitamins are very scarce (outside the oases, there are neither fruit nor fresh vegetables).

In Mauritania, an industrial dairy to pasteurise camel milk was launched in 1989. The aim was to address a new need, resulting from the fact that the droughts of the 70s and 80s had accelerated the urbanisation process, and that more than 70% of the Mauritanian population is now concentrated in the urban centres, notably around Nouakchott. The UHT milk produced by Tiviski (camel milk, but also goat and cow) and sold under a Candia franchise is produced by a network of local herders, who live within a radius of 80-90 km around the dairy. The milk is collected twice a day by trucks that go to the camps because in the
nomads’ environment there is no way of conserving the milk more than a few hours, apart from the traditional smoked goatskin containers or the production of dry cheese (which can be found at the Timbuktu market).

Tiviski has opened two production units, with a transformation capacity of 45 tonnes of milk per day, and sells many products: pasteurised milk, UHT milk, fermented milk, crème fraîche, yogurt, fresh cheese, camel cheese. In 2006, milk deliveries averaged 14,000 litres/day, with peaks of 20,000 litres. Today, the dairy has 230 employees, and provides more than 1000 nomad families with regular income. On average, thanks to Tiviski, the herders providing the milk earn €175/month (the average salary in Mauritania is €125/month -- source: Syfia, May 2007). In 2007, Tiviski planned to export camel milk cheese to Europe for the first time, particularly to Germany.

Another innovation is the development of a product combining the substances used to curdle camel milk, in small easy-to-use packets: “Camifloc.” This product is starting to circulate in a certain number of countries where camel raising is important, and opens up interesting opportunities for northern Mali if combined with the setting up of a “collection-transformation” network. Finally, it may be worth testing the portable cheese-making units launched by the FAO and introduced in Niger for cow’s milk.

**Meat sector**

The sale of animals for meat is one of the herders’ main sources of income. The selling or slaughtering conditions are one of the key factors for establishing the price, and therefore the Nomads’ revenue. This is all the more important because there are frequent critical periods for feeding the livestock, and therefore for the condition of the animals, which has a major impact on the selling price during the destocking process.

“Before the current crisis, thousands of living animals left for Algeria and Nigeria, whereas the hides were loaded on trucks and sent to Ghana. In fact, even the abattoirs were defective, with dirty killing floors and no water to clean them. If we want to develop the north, we need to invest in the meat products sector to create interesting opportunities for our herders, particularly the people of the Haoussa. Indeed, it is their only resource. If we don’t manage to do that, we won’t be able to develop jobs for the young ones. And they’ll go join the criminal networks or rebel bandits.”

Regional Livestock Raising Director, Gao.

Experience shows that meat from a clean, well-kept abattoir sells better: there is less sand, and fewer flies and blemishes. The work done to improve the abattoir of Gao, for example, seems to have been successful. It is therefore a major issue, which becomes even more crucial when destocking programmes are put in place.

In the 1970s and 80s, the NGO Veterinarians without Borders launched the first destocking programmes, with the meat being either dried or distributed fresh, always within the context of support programmes for vulnerable groups (who thus had access to a source of animal protein they could never have bought otherwise). However, the process requires considerable sanitary monitoring, which makes the programmes difficult to set up, and therefore not very attractive for humanitarian agencies.

**5.3.2 Working toward the joint management of pastoral area resources**

Herding is fundamental in all the sparsely populated areas of northern Mali. Not only is it one of the keys to enhancing the value of nutrient-poor ecosystems, it also remains important for transportation, and for ploughing with draught animals especially in the Niger valley. In these arid zones, conflicts over fodder resources are quite frequent, both between indigenous and non-indigenous pastoral communities living in Mali, and in border areas (with Niger, Burkina
Faso, and Mauritania). With the increasing scarcity of resources during droughts (2011 and 2014) and the increasing number of firearms throughout the region, these conflicts have become numerous, bloody, and violent. The issue of these conflicts, which are so characteristic of sparsely populated arid areas, quickly aggravated by movements linked to climate changes, and can easily take on the appearance of inter-ethnic confrontations, deserves the full attention of the State, neighbouring countries, and partners. In any case, this management of natural resources is at the heart of the dynamics of the social contract and complementarity between communities, and should therefore be at the heart of the strategies of the State and its technical and financial partners in these difficult regions. Investment is required to enhance the value of Burgu pastures, restore degraded grazing areas, deepen pools, and improve pastoral hydraulics.

During the post-crisis period in the north, a thorough diagnosis should be performed so as to take account of these preoccupations, which concern all regions and grazing areas.

“There are several options that need to be pursued in parallel. On the one hand, we must continue to improve the Burgu pasture systems in the strip of land along the Niger and the Lakes area. From there, we need to renew negotiations on the transit corridors from the non-flooded areas to the areas that have rainy season fodder. After that, we need to take into account the evolutions, notably the increasing livestock pressure on the River area, and invest massively in the regeneration of the fodder areas of the Haoussa: sowing kram-kram and other very hardy cereals, restoring fodder tree strata, redeveloping the pastoral water sources of the Haoussa, and so on. All these measures to slow the descent of the herds towards the south and the River area will contribute to reducing the amount of time the herds are near the River, and thus the risks of conflict.”

Zootechnician working for an NGO in Timbuktu.

The means must be found to re-establish the resolution mechanisms for conflicts linked to land-pressure tensions, wandering livestock, and rustling. There were mechanisms in the past, when incidents did not often end up with people being killed, and there was less danger of someone escalating from the spear to the Kalashnikov. The experience of work carried out in Chad by the Sultan of Wadai and the Abéché herder-pastoralists’ Conflict Resolution Committees show that it is also necessary to rekindle the belief in the need to respect elders and intergenerational dialogue. The aim is to see what could be revived in the Malian context, in addition to modern penal law.

5.3.3 Oasis agriculture

One specific and unusual aspect of the northern regions of Mali is that oasis agriculture, one of the ways of creating added value in sparsely populated areas, could be much better taken into consideration, particularly in Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu. The Malian State and its partners have not really invested in this particular type of desert agriculture, even though the valuation of oasis areas could create economic development centres that would generate jobs and income. There is a large body of technical knowledge about oases that could easily be applied. The lack of interest in these oases has meant that they have become stop-off points monopolised by traffickers and black marketeers.

5.3.4 Water management in arid zones

One of the causes of the low density and very uneven distribution of the population of northern Mali is obviously directly linked to the existence of water resources. Various projects have endeavoured in the past to improve water catchment in different ways. These include drilling, improving traditional wells, and collecting spring water, but there is a serious lack of effort to
reinforce mechanisms for replenishing the water table and restoring soils (small dams, half-moon microcatchments, etc.), despite the fact that they have proved their worth in other countries in the Sahel (Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad).

Water is life. There are numerous approaches available: human powered pumps (HPP), worked either by hand or by pedal, solar pumps, or motor pumps. The water can be permanent and drawn from underground water tables at varying depths, or seasonal like the water in the wadi beds. It can be high-quality, like that of the major boreholes, or polluted, like most surface water. It is above all water for human and pastoral consumption that should be collected and stored under good conditions.

“Water is really very rare in our area. There are not enough deep boreholes and in bad periods, particularly at the end of the dry season, we have stagnant water. In the urban centres, as in the commune itself, we try to leave it for a time in water pots. We other nomads take it with us in leather water bags and normally, after hours on the back of the camel, it has taken on the taste of leather but it is no longer polluted.”

Municipal councillor from Tissit, white Tamashek, fraction chief.

Attempts to use solar systems have shown many advantages, but also some drawbacks, especially the risk of deliberate damage and the stealing of panels or batteries. It remains an important avenue of inquiry, and a challenge, particularly because the photovoltaic panels concerned generally supply energy for electric motors that can power other essential infrastructure, such as a healthcare unit, lighting in public areas, a school, or even a cybercafé.

The other important aspect is that of irrigation water. In a certain number of cases, the fact that it has to be pumped using a motor puts a serious strain on the profitability of the crops. Certain NGOs are exploring the option of pedal-powered pumps that could be manufactured locally and facilitate small-scale irrigation without having to depend on buying motor pumps, and paying for fuel and maintenance.

The region concerned has one of the highest evapotranspiration rates in the world, and efforts to reduce agricultural water requirements are indispensable (less water-consuming plant varieties, staggered cycles to take advantage of cooler months, mulching of crops, etc.).

“UAVES has been working on agro-ecological issues for years with the support of NGOs such as Terre et Humanisme and Oxfam. We realised that we could work simultaneously on soil fertility and the capacity to manage scarce water supplies thanks to compost and agro-ecological techniques. Many farmers in the area between Gao and Ansongo have tried it out, with promising results. But we must also introduce systems like drip irrigation. We saw a film about it on TV5 Monde, and it made us very excited.”

UAVRES Facilitator, Gao, Songhai.

5.3.5 Access to microcredit systems

To re-establish production activity, especially when pillaging has depleted the original capital, access to credit is indispensable.

“An irrigation project that buys a motor pump for 9 million CFA can’t pay it back in 9 months. The viability for repaying a motor pump is 3 years. Motor pumps are a good opportunity because rice is very profitable and requires less effort (the practice of submersion, which facilitates weed control). For other crops, you’ve got to have >>>
5.3.6 Developing cash or coupon transfer systems

Optimising the banking systems (cash transfer) and/or improving commercial transfer channels (coupons) seem to be appropriate solutions for addressing the multiple needs of the people and replace aid-in-kind, which often ends up penalising the most vulnerable people. The risks and costs of a chain of transactions needs to be shared, in order to provide people with optimum access despite the constraints imposed by the geographical and human context in these sparsely populated areas of northern Mali.

“The NGOs here propose cash programmes where you have to target people. Us, we’re in the habit of sharing, but the NGOs don’t like that. Even before, in the time of the local development support project, there were stories of sharing, and they had to get used to it. At any rate, if you give a bit of money to someone very poor, he’ll eat it all. If you give to people who can (do something), they’ll start a little shop and be able to get by.”

Member of an aid distribution committee, commune of Bourem.
This study makes a considerable contribution to understanding the challenges for life and development in the regions of northern Mali, in particular, and sparsely populated areas in general. It is based on meticulous interviews of 520 people in Mali and neighbouring countries, selected in function of their social, cultural, socioeconomic and political characteristics, thus covering fairly completely the wide range of social groups found in northern Mali.

As in numerous contexts, these sparsely populated areas of northern Mali are also regions where the State is challenged. Likewise, development dynamics are regularly called into question with regard to their cultural adaptation, technical feasibility, and socioeconomic viability.

In terms of method, one conclusion is the importance of seeking a sample that is not statistically representative, but rather represents the existing diversity. Social science tools proved essential in that respect, together with thorough knowledge of the context.

The various perceptions of the war analysed in this study may lead to conflicts of memory with one form of suffering excluding another on the grounds that it is not shared or quantitatively unanimous. In the same way, there are several different perceptions of the State and the services it provides, wants to provide, or can provide. In reality, there is no single historical truth, or homogeneous vision of the State and its legitimacy: there are several, depending on the group to which the person belongs, the frequency of exchanges or confrontations with the various forms that the State can assume (protective or oppressive, strengthening or weakening, supportive or exploitative). In compiling this study, we have therefore strived to respect the diversity of others’ perceptions, their singularity, their full existence, and the recognition of their suffering. These are also essential conditions for constructing peace. History, as an instrument for recognising these multiple realities can play a decisive role in that respect.

Another conclusion is the importance of tackling fragile areas and the people who live there with great humility. Living, even surviving, in these regions so hostile to human beings is a permanent challenge, and requires ingenuity at all times, which deserves to be treated with respect. This humility, prudence, and respect are even more necessary in the aftermath of a crisis, when wounds are far from being healed, and the crisis resolution process has only just begun.

Working in sparsely populated areas requires perseverance, because the benefits of development are achieved slowly, commitment, because investing in such areas is costly, and a high capacity for innovation, because these regions and their constraints often call into question the standard “recipes” of international aid. Aid often arrives with ready-made solutions that frequently lead to an impasse. It is therefore necessary to be more attentive to the aspirations of the people concerned.

Lastly, this study was carried out in a context of crisis resolution. Yet crises are often the opportunity to analyse the difficulties that contributed to the genesis of the crisis, and to learn lessons about the things that did not work as they should have. Rather than being inventive, it remains imperative to take into consideration people’s expectations, their diverse perceptions and their common history to construct the legitimacy of the State. Services must also be considered in these terms. The thousands of refugees, and some of the people that stayed behind, hope there will be a political peace agreement between the Malian State and the armed rebel movements.

Others deny this need, and refuse the idea of dialogue with the armed opposition. This Gordian knot is as much a concern for the international community as for Malian politicians. Paradoxically, the model of governance that could arise from this stalemate situation may be the fruit of in-depth dialogue about the roots of the conflict in the hope of achieving fair and sustainable peace. In the event of failure, it will be a forced march towards the next crisis.
Working in sparsely populated areas involves a good understanding of them, not only their constraints but also their potential: remoteness, poor communications and difficulties encountered establishing any contact, and also stereotypes, disregard, and misunderstandings. It also involves remediating disparities between such areas and others that are more densely populated and often more productive, thinking more in terms of complementarities and integration strategies than seeking to subdivide sector-specific activities and social services in connected geographical areas with permanent exchanges between them. It also means redefining development strategies that accept the issue of delivering certain services in relatively inaccessible areas, and compensate for the costs with coverage measures for specific niches (development aid, private sector support, etc.). Finally, in such crisis resolution contexts, there is a second timeframe in addition to long-term development issues: dealing with the scars opened during the recent conflict.

That is the challenge: promoting a crisis resolution process that does not just lead to the next crisis, and a development model for the areas concerned. Northern Mali - complex, sparsely populated, politically sensitive, environmentally fragile, and socio-culturally wounded – requires a subtle approach. Confronted with a partially challenged State, services whose legitimacy needs to be reconstructed, or even in many places built from scratch, and a society still bearing raw scars, listening must be a priority. That includes listening to the voices of people in southern Mali, who have their contributions to make for the resolution of the crisis in the north.

Any subsequent strategy must seek to construct the four basic pillars below:

A State that protects, ensures justice, assists, negotiates, facilitates, is accountable and responsible, energises and gives a sense of responsibility to people by restoring the meaning of the expression “living together,” recognises diversity, and unites people.

A State that is ready to assume its historical responsibilities and respects the traditional systems.

Appropriate services that are innovative, agile, economically viable, and respectful of the environment. Services that are socially equitable, able to take account of socio-economic diversity, be deployed effectively in sparsely populated areas, and restore links and exchange systems, and aim to have a strong impact on the local people.

A civil society in the North that recognises its own diversity. One that is able to engage in dialogue, even with the State, manage rare resources for the common good, be accountable, capitalise on its cultural and economic know-how, and also evolve in its power relations, forgive, and contribute to a common history.

An international system that is able to innovate and take risks. One that can help to engage in fundamental political dialogue leading to sustainable peace, facilitate flexibility, reinforce the involvement of the State, support the institutions created through decentralisation, and facilitate the involvement of civil society.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: KEY MAPS

REGION DE GAO
Densité de population des commune et centres urbains, année 2009
REGION DE TOMBOUCTOU
Densité de population des communes et centres urbains, année 2009

Légende
- Limite de région
- Limite de cercle
- Limite commune
- Route nationale
- Fleuve Niger

Densité de population (hab / km²)
- 30 - 170
- 15 - 30
- 5 - 15
- 0 - 5

Centre urbain
- Secondaire
- Principal

Sources : DINCT, DANS (RGPH), ARP ; Réalisation : ARP Développement, septembre 2010
## APPENDIX 2: DESCRIPTION OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

### BAMAKO FIELDWORK

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Place</th>
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<th>Other characteristics</th>
<th>Spider plot performed? (Yes/No/Partly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Bamako</td>
<td>Tuareg, Taghat Mellat fraction (from Kidal)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Woman, notable, artist</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Bamako</td>
<td>Tuareg, Imghad (Kel Oulli-Imidideghen), from Timbuktu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shopkeeper and his wife</td>
<td></td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Bamako</td>
<td>Tuareg, Idnan from Kidal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man, manager and head of a state institution (ANICT)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Bamako</td>
<td>Tuareg women, Taghat Mellat from Kidal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 women; 1 unemployed, 1 girls’ Koran school teacher at Kidal, 1 student</td>
<td></td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Bamako</td>
<td>Kel Essouk, from Diré</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Former international NGO manager</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Bamako</td>
<td>Tuareg, Sherif from Timbuktu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Herder, livestock seller From the Tuareg diaspora in Saudi Arabia</td>
<td></td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Bamako</td>
<td>Kunta from Anefif (Kidal)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 community chief, 1 university lecturer, 1 shopkeeper</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ouaga</td>
<td>Tuareg (Kel Essouk, Ifoghas, Kunta, Idnan, Berabich)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>- Men, between 26 and 55 years old - Fraction chiefs, top military personnel, former elected officials, students</td>
<td>Members of the MNLA, HCUA, and MAA movements</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ouaga</td>
<td>Berabich Arabs (Timbuktu, Ber, Araouane)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>- Men, between 40 and 50 years old - shopkeepers, notables</td>
<td></td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ouaga</td>
<td>Berabich Arab, Ouled Omran (Timbuktu)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Man, 38 years old - Doctor of Pharmacy, has worked with the AVSF mobile health programme</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ouaga</td>
<td>Idnan Tuareg (Kidal)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Widow, 32 years old - degree in economics, unemployed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ouaga</td>
<td>Berabich Arab, Ouled Omran</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Man, 39 years old - legal specialist</td>
<td>Member of MAA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Coudebo Refugee Camp</td>
<td>Kel Essouk from Intahaqa (Gao)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Men, between 50 and 70 years old</td>
<td>Religious leaders, Ulamas, Directors of madrassas</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Camp de réfugiés de Mentao</td>
<td>Kel Ansar (Goudam, Léré, western Gourna)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Men, between 25 and 70 years old</td>
<td>Mainly herdsmen, also 1 fraction chief, 2 young former soldiers</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED BAMAKO** 16 persons including 4 women

### BURKINA FASO FIELDWORK

**Ouagadougou / Coudebo Camp / Mentao Camp**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Place</th>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ouaga</td>
<td>Tuareg (Kel Essouk, Ifoghas, Kunta, Idnan, Berabich)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>- Men, between 26 and 55 years old - Fraction chiefs, top military personnel, former elected officials, students</td>
<td>Members of the MNLA, HCUA, and MAA movements</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ouaga</td>
<td>Berabich Arabs (Timbuktu, Ber, Araouane)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>- Men, between 40 and 50 years old - shopkeepers, notables</td>
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<td>Partly</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ouaga</td>
<td>Berabich Arab, Ouled Omran (Timbuktu)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Man, 38 years old - Doctor of Pharmacy, has worked with the AVSF mobile health programme</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ouaga</td>
<td>Idnan Tuareg (Kidal)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Widow, 32 years old - degree in economics, unemployed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Ouaga</td>
<td>Berabich Arab, Ouled Omran</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Man, 39 years old - legal specialist</td>
<td>Member of MAA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Coudebo Refugee Camp</td>
<td>Kel Essouk from Intahaqa (Gao)</td>
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<td>Men, between 50 and 70 years old</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Camp de réfugiés de Mentao</td>
<td>Kel Ansar (Goudam, Léré, western Gourna)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Men, between 25 and 70 years old</td>
<td>Mainly herdsmen, also 1 fraction chief, 2 young former soldiers</td>
<td>Partly</td>
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### BURKINA FASO FIELDWORK

**Ouagadougou / Coudebou Camp / Mentao Camp**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>November</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mentao Refugee Camp</strong></td>
<td>Kel Essouk (Gao : eastern Gourma, Djibok, Gossi)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Men, between 35 and 70 years old</td>
<td>Among them there were Bella, who spoke several times</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kel Essouk Gao</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Woman, 22 years old, 2 children.</td>
<td>Wife of a shopkeeper with a small shop in Djibo</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Imghad (Western Gourma, Gossi, Ntillit, Tessit)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Men, between 35 and 80 years old</td>
<td>One case of a man tortured by the Malian army</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tuarreg (Kel Ansar, Bella, mixed race Songhai)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>- Women, between 25 and 70 years old, several are widows or far from their husbands - Most lived in camps / herders</td>
<td>- Case of a woman where the army executed 5 men from her camp (brothers and cousins), then her husband and son</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tuarreg, Sherifs from north of Timbuktu</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>- Women (between 17 and 45 years old) - Lived in camps / herders</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tuarreg, Kel Temouleyt Imoushar from Aghlal (west part of the valley)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>- Men and women (between 20 and 75 years old) - Mainly herders, fraction chief</td>
<td>Former migrants who returned from Saudi Arabia 8 years before</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tuarreg ; Bella</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Man, about 55 years old - Former manager of a Church of Norway programme in sedentary villages (health, education, agriculture)</td>
<td>Lost his sight some years ago</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tuarreg ; Kel ansar (Timbuktu)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Young Man (22 years old) - Former soldier posted in the Gao region</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tuarreg ; Kel ansar (Timbuktu, Goudam)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>- Young woman (between 16 and 22 years old) - Come from a camp</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed Race Kel Ansar and Arab</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>- Former soldier (37 years old)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED IN BURKINA FASO: 115 persons including 26 women**
## GAO TIMBUKTU FIELDWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Community/ fraction</th>
<th>Number of persons</th>
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<th>Spider plot performed? (Yes/No/Partly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Timbuktu</td>
<td>Songhai and Bella, Timbuktu</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Men; managers in the administration department of Timbuktu Hospital</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Timbuktu</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Head of OMATHO (official Malian government tourism bureau)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Timbuktu</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Director of a hotel</td>
<td></td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Timbuktu</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Regional Agriculture Directorate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Timbuktu</td>
<td>Tuareg, Kel Ansar from Timbuktu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Project manager at Handicap International</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Timbuktu</td>
<td>Tuareg, griot</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Griot, notable</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Timbuktu</td>
<td>Bambara</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Governor of Timbuktu</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Mopti Town</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Married man, 48 years old with 2 wives and 5 children, retailer: lubricants business</td>
<td>Displaced with all his family to Mopti / life difficult in rented accommodation</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Mopti Town</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Divorced woman, 42 years old with 5 children</td>
<td>Displaced with her children and living at her uncle's home in Mopti</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Mopti Town</td>
<td>4 Bozo and 4 Songhai</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4 Bozo women between 35 and 56 years old and 4 Songhai women between 32 and 62 years old. The Songhai women displaced from the Timbuktu region.</td>
<td>The women work together in the fresh fish trade (purchasing, processing, and selling).</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Sévaré</td>
<td>Songhai, Bella, Fulani</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8 Songhai, 4 Bella, 3 Fulani: young students between 14 and 25 years old, displaced because of the crisis</td>
<td>Young people accepted by schools in Sévaré / high schools and professional schools</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Commune of Fatoma</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Persons between 25 and 60 years old, herdsmen from the Mopti region: arrested after the attack on Konna.</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Commune of Fatoma</td>
<td>Diawambé</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Persons between 32 and 65 years old, herders and shopkeepers in the livestock raising sector, from the Gourma region</td>
<td>Affected by the crisis due to the closing of markets, including cattle markets</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Sévaré</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Persons between 45 and 68 years old, herders and shopkeepers in the livestock raising sector affected by the crisis</td>
<td>Refuges, partly with their families, in Sévaré Town</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Sévaré</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Married women between 22 and 52 years old, refugees with their children, living in the Sévaré IDP camp</td>
<td>IDPs living with their children, some of them victims of reprisals by the jihadists.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Sévaré</td>
<td>Fulani, Dogon, and Bambara</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>High school and university teachers between 25 and 46 years old including 6 displaced from Gao</td>
<td>Head teachers and teachers seriously affected by the crisis in the North</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED MOPTI-SEVARE: 100 persons including 34 women**
### DOUENTZA – BONI - HOMBORI FIELDWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Douentza</td>
<td>Dogon</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Civil servants at the town hall between 32 and 45 years old, all married</td>
<td>Lived through the crisis in Douentza frequently going back and forth between Douentza and Sévaré</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Douentza</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Deputy to the Mayor of Douentza 53 years old, married with 2 wives and 5 children</td>
<td>Sent part of his family to his village and others to his brother's home in Sévaré</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Douentza</td>
<td>Dogon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Head of the Douentza livestock raising sector, 48 years old, married with 1 wife and 4 children.</td>
<td>Left his post and sent his family to Koro</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Douentza</td>
<td>Bambara</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male teacher, 25 years old, single</td>
<td>Lived through the crisis between Sévaré and Douentza</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Douentza</td>
<td>Dogon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Married woman, 58 years old, 7 children, manager of a restaurant at the station</td>
<td>Lived through the whole crisis in Douentza</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Douentza</td>
<td>Dogon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shopkeeper with a shop and restaurant at Douentza 45 years old, married with 3 children.</td>
<td>Lived through the whole crisis in Douentza, his shop was pillaged by the rebel forces.</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Douentza</td>
<td>Dogon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Manager of a tourist hotel and restaurant in Douentza, 58 years old, married with 2 wives and 5 children.</td>
<td>Lived through the whole crisis in Douentza to try to save his property</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Douentza</td>
<td>Dogon and Songhai</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Young people between 25 and 35 years old, former tourist guides and young unemployed</td>
<td>Stayed in Douentza to do goods handling work and odd jobs</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Douentza</td>
<td>Dogon, Songhai, Bella</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Between 35 and 50 years old, herders and traders of small ruminants in Douentza and various markets</td>
<td>Persons who remained in the area, but very seriously affected by the crisis due to lack of markets, robbery, theft of animals and reprisals</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Boni</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Village councillor 70 years old, married with children and grandchildren</td>
<td>Stayed at home with all members of his family to endure the rebel attack</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Douentza</td>
<td>Dogon and Songhai</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Women between 23 and 43 years old, married and single shopkeepers at the Douentza crossroads</td>
<td>Stayed to continue their business, and look after their families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Boni</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Marabout, 30 years old, married with 1 wife and 2 children, has 8 young Koran students</td>
<td>Displaced with his family and students to neighbouring villages</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Boni</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief veterinarian, 40 years old, married, 1 wife and 2 children</td>
<td>Stayed at home with his family to endure the rebel attack</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
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<th>DATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Boni</td>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Woman, 48 year old widow with 5 children, seller of kindling wood and acacia pods</td>
<td>Displaced from Gossi to Boni with her children, living off the charity of the villagers</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Boni</td>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bella women between 28 and 48 years old, kindling wood sellers</td>
<td>Women who left Gourma for the village of Boni, which welcomed them</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Boni</td>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Herder, livestock seller, 62 years old, married with children and grandchildren</td>
<td>Stayed in Boni, living harmoniously with the village populations</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Boni</td>
<td>Kal-Tamashek</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Herder, livestock seller, 58 years old, divorced</td>
<td>Stayed in Boni, but his children left for refugee camps in Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Boni</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Young herdsmen between 13 and 23 years old who look after the family cattle</td>
<td>Had animals confiscated by the jihadists, some of their colleagues disappeared during the reoccupation of Konna by the Malian and French military</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Hombori</td>
<td>Malinke</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26 years old, single, manager of a tourist hotel and restaurant instead of his parents, who have left for Bamako and Kayes</td>
<td>Had to endure to rebel attack to save his property</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Hombori</td>
<td>Bambara</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chief veterinarian, 32 years old married, 2 children</td>
<td>Sent his family to Mopti and stayed behind, going back and forth between Douentza and Mopti</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Hombori</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>68 years old, village councillor and notable, married with children and grandchildren</td>
<td>Stayed in Hombori and sent part of his family to Sévaré and Bamako</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Hombori</td>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42 years old, married with 5 children, herder of small ruminants</td>
<td>Stayed in Hombori with his family</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Hombori</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Young retailers (between 15 and 35 years old) around Hombori square</td>
<td>Young people who earn a living from trade with travelers. They did not leave and were not too badly affected by the insurgents or the military.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED – BONI and HOMBORI: 71 persons including 12 women**
## GAO, ANSONGO, BOUREM, AND MENAKA FIELDWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Community/ fraction</th>
<th>Number of persons</th>
<th>Characteristics (gender, age, social category, profession)</th>
<th>Other characteristics</th>
<th>Spider plot performed? (Yes/No/Partly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Prefect of Gao, sub-prefects of Meneka and Assango</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Senior civil servants</td>
<td>Recently returned</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Regional Director of the Health Department</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Senior civil servant</td>
<td>Did not leave</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Directors of agriculture, Regional Director of livestock raising, director of veterinary care</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Senior civil servants</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Mayor and his team</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Senior civil servants</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>65 years old, married, 2 wives and 6 children 1st deputy to the Mayor of Gao</td>
<td>Remained in Gao, but sent part of his family to Sévaré</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50 years old; herder at Gao, married with 2 wives and 5 children</td>
<td>Remained throughout the crises in Gao</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50 years old, civil servant, head of the agriculture service, married with 3 children</td>
<td>Left his job and departed with his family for Sévaré and Bamako, retuned after the liberation of the city of Gao</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Songhai, Fulani, Bamanan, Bella</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Young students between 15 and 20 years old / 10 girls and 6 boys from professional schools and high school</td>
<td>Fleed during the crisis, have returned to go back to school</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Sorko / Bozo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Married woman, 58 years old with 6 children, fishmonger at the port of Gao</td>
<td>Continued her fish selling business without too many problems during the crisis</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40 years old married with 2 children, Secretary General at Gounzoureye Town Hall</td>
<td>Spent the crisis in Gao, but evacuated her family to Sévaré and Bamako, retuned after the liberation of the city of Gao</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45 years old, married with 3 children, director of private radio station</td>
<td>Remained in Gao despite reprisals by Islamists</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Songhai and Bambara</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Women between 25 and 52 years old, married, widowed and single, vegetable stall holders at Gao Market</td>
<td>Remained in Gao despite harassment by jihadists</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Ansongo</td>
<td>Bambara, Fulani and Songhai</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Between 25 and 35 years old, public and private sector veterinary technicians</td>
<td>Went back and forth between Gao, Sévaré, and sometimes Niamey</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Ansongo</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Herder, 58 years old, married with 1 wife and 5 children</td>
<td>Left with his animals for the Gourma region to avoid the jihadists</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Ansongo</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shopkeeper and manager, 43 years old, married with 3 children</td>
<td>Sent his family to Niamey and stayed in Ansongo</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Ansongo</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Widow, 48 years old, 5 children, manager of a restaurant on Ansongo town square</td>
<td>Remained in Ansongo, hid in a village on the other side of the river to avoid the jihadists</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Ansongo</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Herder, 58 years old, married with 2 wives and 5 children</td>
<td>Mainly stayed in the bush with his animals, returning by night to see his family</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### GAO, ANSONGO, BOUREM, AND MENAKA FIELDWORK

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Ansongo</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shepherd, 25 years old, married with 1 child</td>
<td>Preferred living in the bush to avoid problems, had part of his herd confiscated by bandits.</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Ansongo</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Songhai woman, 34 years old married with 3 children, shopkeeper</td>
<td>During the crisis was obliged not to go out and to do her trade at home, her husband abandoned the household</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Ansongo</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Herder, livestock seller who goes to livestock fairs, 54 years old, married with 2 wives and 6 children</td>
<td>Part of his herd, 20 cattle, was taken by the rebel forces, was attacked twice during journeys to Gao and Niamey</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Ménaka</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Herder 40 years old, married with 1 wife and 3 children</td>
<td>Fled the area of troubles and confrontations between nomadic herdsmen and Fulani to take refuge in the Gourma region, says that some of his. Animals were taken by the MNLA</td>
<td>En partie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Ménaka</td>
<td>Songhai, Fulani, Bambara and other southern ethnic groups</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8 single young men and 2 single young women between 18 and 25 years old, still at school or unemployed</td>
<td>Remained in Ménaka, hidden by families, despite the bans imposed by the rebel forces</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Ménaka</td>
<td>Songhai / herder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man, 48 years old, married with 2 wives and 5 children, herder and cattle seller</td>
<td>Lived between the bush and town, where his family is. Had some of his animals taken by thieves during the night</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Ménaka</td>
<td>Black Kal-Tamashek / Bella herder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man, 42 years old, goat herder, married with 4 children.</td>
<td>Lived entirely in the bush to avoid problems, had part of his herd taken by armed bandits</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Ménaka</td>
<td>Kal-Tamashek herder / livestock seller</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man 40 years old, cattle and camel herder, married with 3 children.</td>
<td>Avoided town so as not to have problems with the rebel and military forces</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Ménaka</td>
<td>Kal-Tamashek herder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man 35 years old, goat herder, married with 4 children.</td>
<td>Lived mainly in the bush and did not have any problems during the crisis</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Bozo / Sorko</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man 55 years old, with 3 wives and 8 children, fisherman and pinassier (transportation by fishing boat)</td>
<td>Spent the crisis period mainly on the river, only returning to his family by night to give them what he could</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Bozo / Sorko</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man 45 years old, married with 2 wives and 6 children, fisherman, pirogue driver for tourists and herder of small ruminants</td>
<td>“With the crisis, everything is dead and I went back to the river to try to live off fishing... but there is no trade”</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Bozo / Sorko</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Married women, 32 years old with 2 children, fishmonger</td>
<td>“Abandoned by my husband during the crisis period, it was humanitarian aid and kind people that helped me”</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Bozo / Sorko</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man, 40 years old, married with 4 children, fisherman and pirogue transporter</td>
<td>“I sent the family to Mopti and lived alone here to watch over my house and property, and endure the rebel forces”</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Bozo / Sorko</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Widow, 35 years old with 4 children, fishmonger</td>
<td>With the crisis, there was no trade and the fresh fish business made big losses</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Study on Sparsely Populated Areas - Case Study: Mali

#### Gao, Ansongo, Bourem, and Menaka Fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Spider plot performed? (Yes/No/Partly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Bourem</td>
<td>Songhai, Fulani, Bambara and other southern ethnic groups</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8 young men and 4 young women single or married, between 25 and 32 years old, students, teachers and unemployed</td>
<td>Stayed hidden in Bourem, going back and forth between the Haoussa zone and Gourma region to avoid problems with armed groups</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Bourem</td>
<td>Bozo / Sorko</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Woman, 26 years old, married with 3 children, fishmonger, vegetable seller and housewife</td>
<td>With the crisis, her husband left for Mopti and Bamako, survives by selling fish and vegetables to keep her children alive</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Bourem</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man, 50 years old, married with 3 wives and 9 children, farmer and herder</td>
<td>“When there were threats from rebel forces or the military, I went to the other side of the river in the Gourma region, and sometimes stayed there for a long time.”</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Bourem</td>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Woman, 26 years old, married with 3 children, housewife</td>
<td>After the departure of her husband, who was a civil servant during the crisis, she and her children stayed with close relatives.</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Bourem</td>
<td>Fulani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man, 47 years old, herder and livestock seller, married with 2 wives and 6 children</td>
<td>“With the crisis and the grazing situation, I live in the Gourma region. I come back from time to time to see the family and give them what I can.”</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Bourem</td>
<td>Bozo / Sorko</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man, 29 years old, married with 1 wife and 2 children, fisherman and herder of small ruminants</td>
<td>“With the situation, I lived between the river and my animals on the other side of the river. I also sold Burgu grass, which I gathered in the Burgu pastures.”</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Number of Persons Interviewed - Gao, Ansongo, Menaka and Bourem: 94 persons including 34 women**

#### Mauritania Fieldwork

**Nouakchott, M’Bera Camp**

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Spider plot performed? (Yes/No/Partly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Nouakchott</td>
<td>Ouled Omran Arab from Timbuktu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man, doctor</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Nouakchott</td>
<td>Ouled Sliman Arabs from Timbuktu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Man, manager in an international institution, geographical researcher</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Nouakchott</td>
<td>Tuarregs (Sherif Kel Inelehi)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Woman; unemployed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Nouakchott</td>
<td>Tuareg, Kel Ansar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>International NGO manager (health)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Nouakchott</td>
<td>Nwaji Arab from Timbuktu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Imam</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Nouakchott</td>
<td>Tuareg, Kel Ansar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gendarmerie Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>M’Bera Camp</td>
<td>Tuareks and Arabs, Kel Ansar, Kunta and Gerabich (Goudam, Léré, Niafunké)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10 men and 2 women; retired primary school teacher, 4 fraction chiefs, unemployed, herdsmen/women, farmers.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Community/fraction</td>
<td>Number of persons</td>
<td>Characteristics (gender, age, social category, profession)</td>
<td>Other characteristics</td>
<td>Spider plot performed? (Yes/No/Partly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Bassikanou (closest town to the Camp)</td>
<td>Tuareg, Kel Tinakorat from Léré</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>International organisation manager</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Bassikanou (closest town to the Camp)</td>
<td>Kel Essouk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man, shopkeeper</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>M'Bera Camp</td>
<td>Tuaregs, Kel Ansar, Sherif Koigma, Kel Doukouré, Kel Hourou, Kel Wazorer from Gargando, Niafunké, Timbuktu, Léré</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Women, notables, herders, artisans, military wife, unemployed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Bassikanou (closest town to the Camp)</td>
<td>Ouled Omran Arab from Nepkel el 'aïlk (Goundam)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ex-mayor of Salam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>M'Bera Camp</td>
<td>Sheriffs from Koigouma</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29 Men, 1 woman: fraction chiefs, herdsmen, farmers, soldiers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>M'Bera Camp</td>
<td>Bellas (Léré)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Men, farmers, traditional well-diggers</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>M'Bera Camp</td>
<td>Ouled Omran Arab from Goudam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Woman, unemployed, wife of a fraction chief</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Bassikanou (closest town to the Camp)</td>
<td>Ouled Sliman Arab</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man, young intellectual, President of the Timbuktu Association of Young Arabs</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>M'Bera Camp</td>
<td>Kel Haouza</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man, Veterinarian</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Nouakchott</td>
<td>Women of the Ouled ‘ish-Ouled Omran ehl Arawan Sheriffs community</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Women, notables</td>
<td>Shopkeepers, head nurses, and an IT specialist</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>M'Bera Camp</td>
<td>Kel Ansar Tuareg from Timbuktu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man, soldier</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL: 124 persons including 32 women
The Head Office:
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