

GENDER AND SECURITY IN MALI

TAKING STOCK AND FINDING NEW PERSPECTIVES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE STUDY CONDUCTED BY FATIMATA DICKO-ZOUBOYE AND KADIDIA SANGARÉ-COULIBALY ON BEHALF OF DCAF AND IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PGPSP¹

Mali is affected by different forms of insecurity and violence, many of which are linked to the socio-economic problems confronting the country. In November 2005 Malian authorities addressed this issue by organising a general forum on peace and security (*états généraux sur la paix et la sécurité*). One of the principal recommendations to emerge from this process was the adoption of a new approach centred on the security of the individual (human security) and of a new political goal for the Malian state: the democratisation of the security sector. Considering this new focus on democratisation, the importance of identifying ways to better integrate women into the management of security challenges must be highlighted. Moreover, in order to promote the security of all individuals without gender bias, it is imperative to build the capacity of security institutions so that they may consider gender perspectives, notably through a better understanding of the specific security needs of men and women.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to assess to what extent gender perspectives are integrated in the functioning of the Malian security sector in order to facilitate the identification of relevant policy interventions and to ensure that reliable indicators are available to monitor progress and achievements. Specifically, this study proceeds by mapping national, regional and international stakeholders working on issues relating to security and gender, as well as the interactions between actors within this sector. Another key goal is to address the question of implementing gender mainstreaming in the Malian security sector: taking

stock of limitations as well as identifying good practices and offering recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

The approach used to gather information about the state of play is essentially qualitative, though quantitative figures are also presented where available. The information is derived from existing literature reviews and from a field study undertaken in 2010 by the authors. In September 2010 a validation workshop held in Bamako allowed representatives of all stakeholder groups to discuss a first draft of this study and to validate the facts presented.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study centres on three concepts:

1. **Human security**, which places the individual at the centre of security concerns and refers to a broader understanding of security which encompasses protection not only against physical violence, but also against long-term threats such as famine, sickness and repression;
2. **Security sector reform**, which is a process targeted towards ensuring that security and justice providers assure effective services which respond to the needs of the population; that they act responsibly before the state and the population; and that they operate within a framework of democratic governance, without discrimination and with respect for human rights and the rule of law;

3. **Gender**, which refers to the roles, attitudes, behaviours and values that society attributes to men and women. “Gender” refers to the differences *acquired* by men and women, while “sex” refers to the *biological* differences between men and women.

GENDER AND SECURITY: NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Some existing initiatives recognise gender at the national level, but such initiatives are few in light of Mali’s international commitments. Initiatives that have been adopted include the Strategic Framework for Growth and Poverty Reduction 2007-2011 (*Cadre stratégique pour la croissance et la réduction de la pauvreté 2007-2011*), in which gender is mainstreamed. Furthermore, a national policy on gender introduced by the Ministry of the Promotion of Women, Child and Family Affairs (*ministère de la Promotion de la femme, de l’enfant et de la famille (MPFEF)*) was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 24 November 2010, along with an Action Plan for 2010-2012. Additionally, there is a national programme of action against female circumcision attached to the National Directorate for the Promotion of Women, as well as a governmental inter-ministerial committee working to combat child trafficking. Finally, the Internal Security and Civil Protection Framework, adopted by the Council of Ministers on 20 October 2010, also recognises gender.

MALIAN SECURITY INSTITUTIONS: INTEGRATION AND REPRESENTATION

Although women have been integrated into Malian security and defence institutions, this has been done relatively late and has not been consistent.

Women are underrepresented in the **government** (21% of ministers) and in the **National Assembly** (10% of members of parliament). Gender issues are dispersed in the work of the Labour, Employment, Promotion of Women, Youth, Sport, and Child Protection Committee (5 women out of 8 members). The Defence, Security and Civil Protection Committee has 13 members, only one of whom is a woman. At

the communal level, of the 10,627 elected counsellors, only 8% are women.

The **justice sector** is the only sector that has a policy of equality between men and women. Within this sector however, women comprise only 11% of magistrates, 8% of lawyers, and 22% of notaries. Female registrars are more numerous (57%), but female chief registrars only comprise 16% of the total. Women preside in the Supreme Court and its judiciary section. However, overall, there are fewer women than men in the **judiciary system**. However, certain measures have begun to be put in place to confront this gender imbalance. Regarding legislation on violence against women, there is a law that combats trafficking in human beings, integrated into the Penal Code, yet there is no law against domestic violence. The Ministry of Justice practices a policy of facilitating access to justice for men and women. Moreover, the Ministry collaborates with the Ministry of the Promotion of Women and with women’s organisations in an informal manner (civil society action fills the remaining gaps).

In the **penal sector**, the percentage of female personnel is low (15 to 16%) with the exception of administrative services (52%). In a number of subaltern functions (manual labour, orderlies, guards and drivers) women are similarly underrepresented. The segregation of male and female detainees in different institutions is only effective in Bamako, which holds the country’s only detention centre for women and minors. The centre’s personnel is exclusively female. In other regions, women and men are detained in different wings within the same premises.

The **national police** first recruited women in 1969. Today female recruits make up to 9% of the total number of civil protection agents and 12% of the police force. They also participate in peacekeeping missions (3 women among 58 police officers in May 2009). An official representative of the Ministry of Internal Security and Civil Protection is responsible for gender issues. A special unit of the judiciary police comprises a brigade for moral and juvenile affairs which is currently led by a woman and attached to the National Directorate of the Police.

Women entered the **armed forces** at the end of the 1980s (if one excludes the military health sector) and the **gendarmerie** at the beginning of the 2000s. While there is no recruitment policy for female personnel, in practice around 10% of women are enlisted in each round of recruitments. Women are very weakly represented in the military hierarchy and within the higher echelons of the security services. Women count for a higher percentage of the total number of **customs** officers at 22%.

Generally, women in Malian security sector institutions have access to separate infrastructure and different uniforms. Policies regarding parental leave and breastfeeding are addressed in the General Statutes of Civil Service. While Codes of Conduct exist for different organisations, these codes do not take into account gender issues (except for the internal administration of detention centres, which foresees sanctions against gender-based violence). The personnel recruitment process does not include a vetting process to ensure new recruits do not have a history of violence or serious crime. Procedures do however include a personal morality enquiry and an examination of the criminal record. Training does not touch upon gender issues. Notably, the General Inspection of Services Agency, which covers the police, the gendarmerie and the National Guard, does not include a single woman. Female jurists and policewomen are assembled into associations. Female soldiers are not allowed to.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Having contributed to the management of the conflict in Northern Mali, civil society organisations have been identified as important actors in the domain of peace and security. However, efforts to involve women in the process of conflict management remain modest. Nevertheless, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security invites states to increase the representation of women in all levels of decision-making in conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Some organisations, such as the Malian Association for Human Rights (AMDH) and the Association of Malian Women Jurists (AJM), carry out various support activities in prisons and organise legal clinics

for the general population. Their opportunities for action and influence are, however, limited.

ORGANISATIONS AND REGIONAL NETWORKS

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union are working on the integration of a gender perspective into their security policies. Articles 81 to 84 of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework carries the theme “women, peace and security”. Additionally, ECOWAS introduced reliable gender indicators in its early warning system (ECOWARN). ECOWAS has also created a “peace and security” network for women in the ECOWAS region through the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre.

PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT INVOLVED IN SECURITY GOVERNANCE

The UN supports the Joint Support Programme of the United Nations for the Promotion of Human Rights and Gender, initiated by the Mali government. One of the four constituent actions of this programme targets the adoption of a new Family Law (*Code des personnes et de la famille*), the plea for a new implementation of the national action plan against violence against women, and a larger representation of women in decision-making. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) also supports capacity-building projects in the domain of peacekeeping and security. One project in 2003 facilitated the training of some forty officers, a dozen of which were women.

KEY CHALLENGES

The lack of national or sectoral policies targeted at gender mainstreaming in the Malian security sector is an important gap to underline. The integration of women has also encountered obstacles. For instance, in the MSIPC, as in the Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs (MDAC) there is currently no planning nor is there a precise quota for the recruitment of women. Importantly, members of female personnel are considered firstly according to their “gender-neutral” professional quality as security professionals (soldier, police officer, etc.) before being considered as women. Thus conditions for

recruitment and training, as well as the criteria for promotion, training and internships are the same for men as they are for women. However, the shortfall in taking gender into account disadvantages women who may face difficulties in reconciling their professional duties with their family obligations.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering gender as a dimension of human security is an essential precondition for attaining development objectives. **The advantages** of a better recognition of women and of gender are apparent on two levels:

- 1) An improved operational effectiveness of armed and security forces and justice institutions, as they acquire the ability to better respond to the specific security and justice needs of men and women;
- 2) A larger representation and democratisation of the sector through a better awareness of the diversity of needs and interests.

The recognition of the needs of women and men in the security sector requires a change in mentality and behaviour. Such a change requires reform in the security sector that places gender in a central position.

To this effect, a number of **suggestions** appear as key:

- generate and demonstrate strong political engagement from political and military elites, notably by equipping parliamentarians and by creating a gender committee in the National Assembly;
- produce a national policy and sectoral strategies on gender, notably a national action plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325;
- allocate human and material resources to the implementation of gender-centred policies;
- integrate the challenges and experiences of men and women from planning to implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all spheres, in a way that enables men and women to benefit from the same opportunities;
- proceed to harmonise international legal instruments with national legislation;
- formalise and harmonise modes of recruiting women within the armed forces and security personnel;
- strengthen prevention and response mechanisms to combat violence against women and document it;
- increase the involvement of civil society in the debate on gender mainstreaming within security sector and strengthen women's conflict management capacity.

¹ Translation by Alexandra Lamb; editing by Audrey Reeves, Aiko Holvikivi and Karin Grimm. © DCAF and PGPSP 2011. For the full study (in French only), and for more information, see www.dcaf.ch.

DCAF

DCAF is an international foundation established in 2000 on the initiative of the Swiss Confederation, as the 'Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces'. DCAF contributes to enhancing security sector governance (SSG) through security sector reform (SSR). The Centre's work to support effective, efficient security sectors which are accountable to the state and its citizens is underpinned by the acknowledgment that security, development and the rule of law are essential preconditions for sustainable peace. DCAF is guided by the principles of neutrality, impartiality, gender sensitivity and local ownership as the basis for supporting legitimate, sustainable reform processes.

PGPSP

The programme *Gouvernance partagée de la sécurité et de la paix (PGPSP)* (Shared Governance of Security and Peace) is an initiative of the Government of the Republic of Mali implemented by the Ministry of Internal Security and Civil Protection. It is the main implementation channel of the Malian Internal Security and Civil Protection Policy. The programme was developed following the initiative of high-level Malian authorities and is based on a resolution adopted as an outcome of the National Conference for Security and Peace in November 2005. Its three key objectives are: (i) to support the development and adoption of the new national policy on security developed at the 2005 National Conference, (ii) to support the implementation of this policy at the national and local levels, (iii) to contribute to sustainable peace and security in northern Mali.