

19 May 2014

MALI

Ongoing pursuit of durable solutions

With security challenges still looming, Mali is continuing its slow recovery from the crisis triggered by Islamist armed groups' occupation of the north in 2012. A French-led military offensive in January 2013, the creation in April 2013 of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and peaceful presidential and legislative elections later in the year, brought hope to many of the 353,000 people displaced and still living in dismal conditions. Many started to think of a future beyond their displacement.

By April 2014, just over 137,000 people continued to be internally displaced, roughly half left behind in urban centres in southern Mali.¹ Many have risked the journey north, pushed prematurely by their dire living conditions in the south. Upon their return they face numerous obstacles to securing a durable solution to their displacement. These include destroyed homes, chronic food insecurity, lack of such basic services as health and education and challenges to recovering property and re-establishing sustainable income generating activities. Threats to peace and stability remain, particularly in rural areas where there are guerrilla attacks, banditry, widespread unexploded ordnance and worsening ethnic tensions. This has undermined sustainable returns while causing new and secondary displacement, the scale of which remains unassessed.

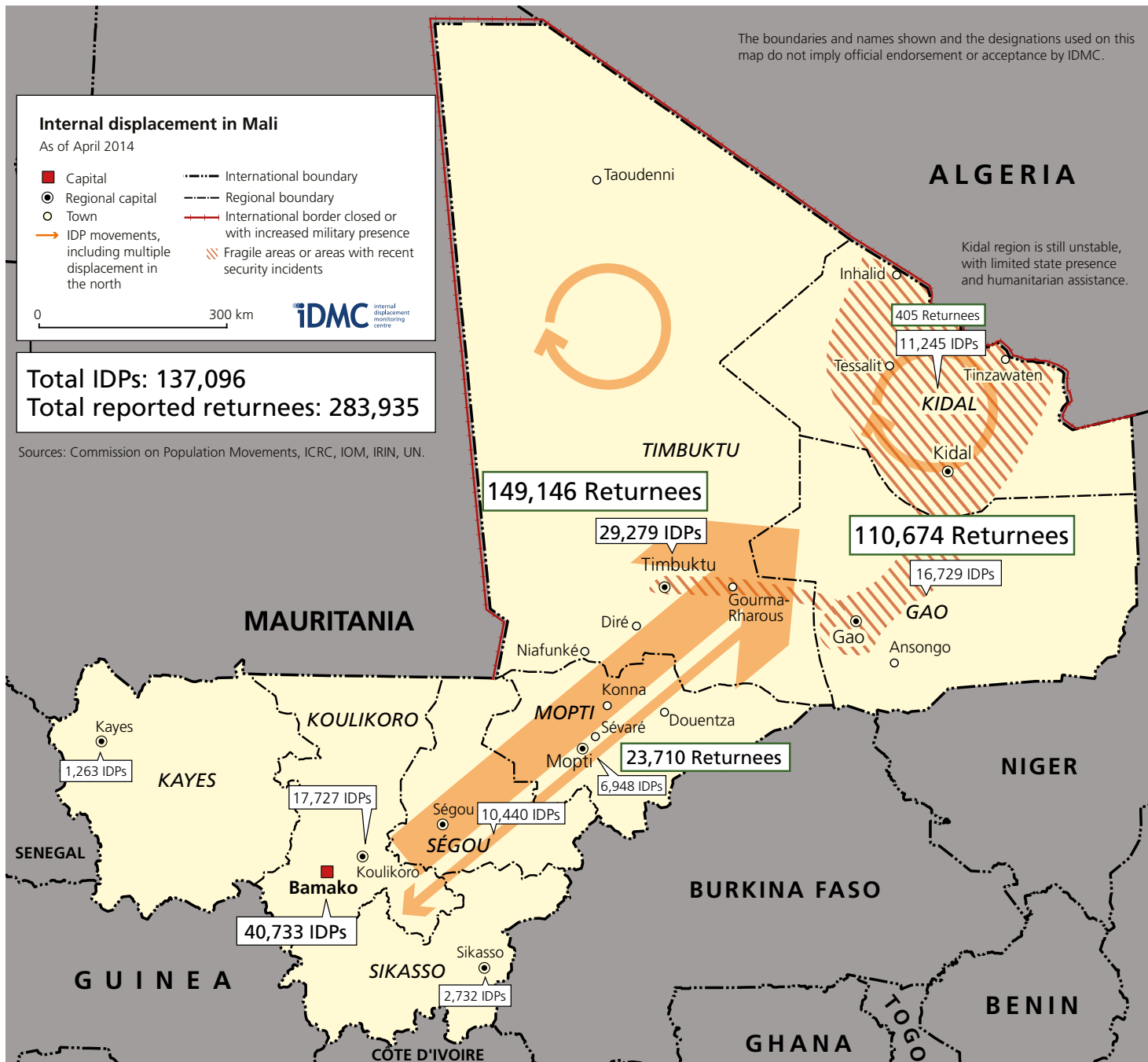
The slow process of transition from development to an emergency response in 2012-2013 left many throughout the country without any assistance. Mali now urgently requires a shift to facilitating durable solutions while continuing to address ongoing humanitarian needs. Donor investment, however, in an overall underfunded response, has focused on infrastructure in the north. This risks distracting attention from the early recovery needs of affected populations and to the neglect of psychosocial care, access to justice and comprehensive reconciliation. IDPs are thus at risk of long-term vulnerability.

Mali ratified the *Kampala Convention* – the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa – in December 2012, but has taken no steps towards implementation and has not specifically designated a state authority to coordinate IDPs' protection and assistance. This creates a further barrier to durable solutions for IDPs.



¹ For more information on urban IDPs in Mali's south, see IDMC's February 2014 briefing note *Left Behind: IDPs forgotten in Mali's southern cities*, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/africa/mali/2014/left-behind-idps-forgotten-in-malis-southern-cities/>.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IDMC.



ALGERIA

Kidal region is still unstable, with limited state presence and humanitarian assistance.

MAURITANIA

NIGER

BURKINA FASO

GUINEA

BENIN

GHANA

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

TOGO

Map by: IDMC

More maps are available at www.internal-displacement.org/maps

Background and causes of displacement

Internal displacement has occurred intermittently in Mali due to severe drought and political conflicts, notably due to previous Tuareg rebellions. Prior to Malian independence in 1960, Tuaregs had already started seeking greater autonomy, recognition of their language and culture and economic development ([Minority Rights Group](#), 2007). They staged a series of insurgencies against the Malian government in 1962-1963, between 1990 and 1996 and between 2007 and 2009.

The most recent and by far most significant waves of displacement were sparked in 2012 by the Tuareg *Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad* (MNLA), an Islamist takeover of the north and the 2013 Islamist advance towards Bamako.

The 2012 Tuareg rebellion and subsequent coup d'état

On 17 January 2012, the MNLA, bolstered by an influx of fighters returning from Libya, launched an offensive against the Malian army to secure independence of the north ([The Daily Telegraph](#), 19 January 2012). By mid-March, some 93,400 civilians had been displaced within Mali's borders and some 99,000 people had sought refuge in neighbouring states, primarily Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger, fleeing clashes between government forces and Tuareg combatants as well as retaliation by the Malian army ([OCHA](#), 15 March 2012).

On 22 March, Captain Amadou Sanogo and other members of the Malian military, deploring the government's handling of the northern rebellion and inability to counter the MNLA ([BBC](#), 22 March 2012), formed a *Comité National pour le redressement de la Démocratie et la Restauration de l'Etat* (CNDRE) and launched a coup d'état that ousted President Amadou Toumani Touré. Under pressure from the international community, the CNDRE ceded power to an interim civilian government.

Islamist militants take over the north

Taking advantage of the post-coup d'état power vacuum in Bamako, the MNLA secured control of the cities of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu between 30 March and 1 April, forcing the Malian army to retreat ([Reuters](#), 1 April 2012). The MNLA was backed by a heavily-armed Islamist group Ansar Dine, a militia with reported links to the Algerian-based al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Members of the Nigerian Islamist group Boko Haram were seen in Gao alongside MNLA fighters ([Vanguard](#), 9 April 2012). On 6 April, the MNLA proclaimed the independence of 'Azawad', a northern area comprising some 60 per cent of the Malian territory. This declaration had no impact on the ground.

Conflicting goals between the MNLA, which sought a state of Azawad, and Ansar Dine, which aspired to Islamise Mali, led to abandonment of a planned merger and the rapid sidelining of the MNLA. Ansar Dine then took control of several northern towns during April. Imposition of hardline Islamic law led to preventative displacement, with 107,000 persons displaced ([OCHA](#), April 2012).

Human rights violations under this Islamist rule threatened Malians' basic human rights and physical security, triggering further displacement throughout the occupation. Violations included rapes, gang rapes, public floggings, amputations, forced marriages, arbitrary detentions and executions, all of which were used as punishment for any violations of a strict interpretation of Islamic law ([HRW](#), February 2014; [Al Jazeera](#), 15 January 2013). Girls were banned from attending school, while boys were forced to follow *sharia* education ([IRIN](#), 12 June 2012). Armed groups extorted civilians at checkpoints and pillaged private houses, hospitals, schools, aid agencies and government buildings ([HRW](#), February 2014, [AI](#), 2013). Many parents decided to flee to ensure their children's education and out of fear for the safety of their daughters ([France Info](#), 9 August 2012).

Clashes in Gao in June between MNLA and combatants from the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), an offshoot of AQIM, also caused new displacement. By July, the MNLA had been entirely evicted from northern Mali, dropping their claim for independence and leaving the Islamists in full control of the region ([LeMonde.fr](#), 12 July 2012). Within a few months the number of displaced had risen to 174,000 ([OCHA](#), August 2012).

Southward advance triggers military intervention
A unity government was established in August 2012, tasked with taking back the north. However, MUJAO further extended their control by taking Douentza in September and later Konna while threatening other towns bordering government-held territory ([AFP](#), 1 September 2012). This southwards advance put thousands of IDPs at risk of secondary displacement to sanctuaries even further south ([Reuters](#), 10 January 2013; [IRIN](#), 11 January 2013).

The Malian government subsequently called upon the UN and France for help. France launched an ongoing military mission (Opération Serval) and UN Security Council resolution (UNSC) 2085 in December 2012 enabled the rapid deployment of an African-led International Support mission to Mali (AFISMA), tasked with working alongside the Malian army to retake the north ([UNSC](#), 10 January 2012; [BBC](#), 11 January 2013). The heavy fighting that began in mid-January in several towns of central and northern Mali caused the displacement of populations towards more secure areas in the south or further dispersal of people into the desert, particularly near the Algerian border which was closed by the Algerian authorities ([Le Monde/AFP](#), 13 January 2013; [RFI](#), 14 January 2013; [L'Express](#), 18 January 2013; [UN Radio](#), 29 January 2013). Before the combat started, there were an estimated 198,500 IDPs ([OCHA](#), 14 January 2013), rising to 227,206 a month later ([OCHA](#), 6 February 2013).

All armed groups reportedly retreated to northern Mali's northern Ifoghas mountains but insecurity remained. Islamist rebels engaged in guerilla-style warfare and launched suicide bombings in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu. Unexploded ordinance (UXO) remained, inhibiting safe returns ([IRIN](#), 19 March 2013). By the end of March the number of IDPs was still rising, and reached 282,000 (OCHA, 25 April 2013).

In April, UNSC Resolution 2100 established a UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for an initial period of 12 months, subsequently extended to June 2014 ([UNSC](#), 25 April 2013). In July 2013, it assumed responsibility from AFISMA ([IRIN](#), 1 July 2013). MINUSMA's mandate includes responsibility for developing and implementing programmes to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate former combatants, while contributing to creating a safe environment for voluntary return of IDPs ([UNSC](#), 25 April 2013).

The MNLA and the government signed a cease-fire through the Ouagadougou agreement in June 2013 ahead of presidential and legislative elections ([BBC](#), 18 June 2013). This encouraged tentative returns while rebel groups continued to launch sporadic attacks that caused new and secondary displacements. These developments caused IDPs numbers to reach a peak of 353,000 ([OCHA](#), June 2013).

Inter-ethnic tensions

Some long-standing tensions between ethnic groups have been worsening since the onset of the crisis and have been compounded as both sides seek to make political capital from human rights violations perpetrated by their adversaries. Fear of victimisation and reprisal killings by certain ethnic groups ([HRW](#), 20 December 2012; [Solidarités, Médecins du Monde](#), February 2013; [RFI](#), 2 June 2013) and the looting of homes and shops owned by Arabs or Tuaregs accused of having supported the rebels ([VOA](#), 29 January 2013;

[RFI](#), 11 February 2013), led many more to find refuge elsewhere even following the liberation. While the situation has improved, these tensions continue to result in displacement (IDMC interview with MINUSMA, March 2014).

Food insecurity

The 2012 crisis in Mali took place against a backdrop of a severe food crisis caused by drought, failure of several crops and sharp rises in food prices across the Sahel which affected up to 18 million people ([Oxfam](#), December 2012). The crisis severely disrupted traditional transhumance corridors, markets, and food distribution systems with 1.76 million people in Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal and Mopti regions judged to be in a food crisis in June 2012 ([OCHA](#), 19 June 2012).

The situation further deteriorated in the north, particularly in Gao region, following military operations in early 2013. Rising prices and shortages led inhabitants to reduce their daily food intakes ([Oxfam](#), 20 March 2013), notably for those dispersed in the north, with up to two-thirds of IDPs in these regions not eating three times a day and denied access to food markets ([IOM](#), April 2014; [Mdm](#), 1 February 2013). This led many to seek better conditions in the south, with 32 per cent of IDPs interviewed in Bamako stating that the food crisis had been the second most important cause of displacement after armed conflict ([IOM](#), December 2013).

Natural disaster-induced displacement

While some areas have remained dry and suffered from poor rainy seasons ([WFP](#), 22 August 2013), others have been heavily damaged by rains and floods, affecting the regions of Bamako, Kayes, Kidal and Ségou in 2012 and again in mid-2013 ([L'Indépendant](#), 28 August 2012; [Save the Children](#), 3 October 2012).

Thousands of homes, public buildings and schools were damaged or destroyed by floods, raising additional concerns over risks of water-

borne diseases ([OCHA](#), 28 June 2013; [ECHO](#), 23 August 2013), displacing up to 20 000 ([OCHA](#), September 2013).

Displacement patterns and figures

From a peak of 353,000 IDPs in June 2013, some 137,000 Malians were estimated to be internally displaced in April 2014 ([IOM](#), April 2014). Women constituted over 20 per cent of the IDP population while children made up nearly half (CMP, 12 March 2013), a demographic requiring specific considerations in terms of protection and assistance.

The majority of displacements took place during the first months of the crisis in 2012, with some new displacements occurring following the January 2013 launch of the French-AU military intervention ([IOM](#), July 2013). Ongoing fighting and banditry in the north continues to cause sporadic displacement (IDMC with Members of Salam Community and NordDev, March 2014; IDMC email with IOM). Some people report having been displaced up to ten times in the past 18 months. Many remain unaccounted for by mechanisms designed to track the scale of displacement and return, becoming in effect 'phantom populations' (Email exchange with IOM, March 2014; IDMC interview with Salam Community members, March 2014).

Improvements in IDP monitoring

Insecurity and access problems in northern areas initially inhibited effective IDP data collection. Data collection in the south proved less difficult, as agencies belonging to the Protection Cluster have carried out registrations since early 2012.

The increase in the IDP population after April 2013 can partly be explained by an improved ability to conduct more thorough assessments and data collection throughout the country but also to IDPs' being more forthcoming ([CMP](#), 30 April 2013). Many IDPs at first did not have time or sufficient information to participate, while others

decided not to, relying on family support (IDMC interview with ACTED, March 2014; IDMC IDP interview in Bamako). But worsening conditions in the south are pushing many to register with agencies for the first time in order to receive support (Interview with ACTED, March 2014). It remains uncertain how many these late arrivals have been accounted for by the Commission on Population Movements (CMP).

Return movements increasing

There were limited returns in 2012 but from mid-2013 the partial return of basic state services and security, provided a window of hope for hundreds of thousands of IDPs (AFP, 24 January 2013, IDMC interview with MINUSMA, March 2014).

However, most people are planning to delay departure until the security situation improves or to fit with school and agricultural calendars (IOM, April 2014, ACTED, October 2013, IDMC interview with IDPs and Returnees in Bamako and Timbuktu, March 2014). IDPs who did not wish to return to the north were often those who had been direct victims of violence and abuses during the crisis (IOM, June 2013) while reports of reprisals were also keeping others from returning (UNHCR, January 2014; IDMC interview with IDPs in Bamako, March 2014). Many remain stuck in displacement as they do not have the financial means to make the trip home (IOM, June 2013, IDMC Interview with IDP Women Associations in Bamako, March 2014).

By April 2014, after surviving in displacement for two years, the number of IDPs wishing to return dropped from 93 per cent (IOM, 13 February 2013) to 75 per cent, with 21 per cent of those still displaced wishing to integrate locally (IOM, April 2014).

Many, nonetheless, are making their way north due to increasing hardship in the south where the cost of living is high and income opportunities are lacking (OCHA, 3 May 2013; IDMC interview, March 2014). By April 2014, just over 137,000

people remained in displacement, a reduction of about 213,000 (IOM, April 2014). Those returning are mainly in the south, with IDPs dispersed in the north only tentatively returning to their place of origin.

Those returning also include many heads of households who have returned temporarily to the north. Accompanied by some family members they are going north to assess the situation in their areas of origin, repair houses that they had abandoned and which had fallen into disrepair or to attend funerals. Up to a quarter of families in the south are said to have returned north at least once during their displacement (IOM, April 2014). It remains unclear how the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) and the CMP reports account for these pendular back and forth movements and therefore it cannot be assumed that the reduction in IDP numbers is indicative of those having actually secured a sustainable return.

The high number of returns may also be explained by the fact that most IDPs who fled south came from northern urban centres where there has been partial restoration of basic services and security, enabling IDPs to return more easily to these places of origin (IOM, April 2014). IDPs in the north tend to be dispersed rural populations fleeing ongoing insecurity, which explains their more tentative approach to return. Data does not confirm that all of the 284,000 returnees identified in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu are exclusively from these urban centres. This is evidenced by some returning populations settling in urban areas claiming to come from rural areas (UNSC, March 2014; IDMC email exchange with IOM, March 2014) and the creation of makeshift encampments on the outskirts of certain villages by returnees. These returnees await security guarantees and for their villages to become inhabitable (IDMC interview with MINUSMA, March 2014).

Obstacles to durable solutions

Some protection risks for IDPs have abated² but the specific needs and human rights concerns of IDPs have not necessarily ended with cessation of conflict. IDPs throughout Mali's north and south – whether they are returning to their homes, settling elsewhere in the country or trying to integrate locally – continue to face problems and require support until they achieve a durable solution to their displacement.

Threats to physical security

Many of those who fled ethnic violence or reprisals remain in displacement out of lingering fears of violence (UNHCR, January 2014; IDMC interview with IDPs in Bamako, March 2014). Banditry, armed groups reorganising and sporadic attacks by both militants and the military also continue to push people to flee insecure northern zones. Tensions have risen consistently in all three northern regions since the onset of the crisis, exacerbating older divisions (Oxfam, October 2013). These have been compounded by the trauma of the occupation and related human rights abuses (UNICEF/ Handicap International, 2013).

Social tensions are keeping IDPs from returning and putting at risk of secondary displacement those who have gone back to the north. IDPs and returnees have created settlements close to their villages out of fear of being attacked. In some villages mayors have been prevented from returning, accused of being linked to rebel forces (IDMC interview with NorDEV, March 2014; IDMC interview with MINUSMA, March 2014; IDMC interview with American Bar Association, February 2014).

² For more information on protection risks and assistance needs of IDPs during the crisis, see IDMC overview *Mali: Stability slowly returning but durable solutions a remote possibility for many IDPs*, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/sub-saharan-africa/mali/2013/stability-slowly-returning-but-durable-solutions-a-remote-possibility-for-many-idps/>.

Gender-based violence

Despite data collection constraints, partly due to lack of access and fears of stigmatisation, there were repeated reports of Gender Based Violence (GBV) perpetrated by both the Malian army and armed groups (UNGA, 7 January 2013). The sexual- and gender-based violence sub-cluster identified over 6,000 cases from January 2012 to December 2013, including rapes, forced marriages and many more of physical and psychological violence (OCHA, January 2014). Threats of violence persist with women and young girls living in displacement in the south resorting to negative coping mechanisms such as survival sex and forced or early marriages to make ends meet.

Recruitment of children by armed groups

Recruitment of child soldiers by all armed groups started soon after they seized control of the north, either to help enforce their interpretation of *sharia* law or directly in combat. At least 175 boys were recruited by July 2012, a figure judged as an under-estimate by Malian organisations operating in the north (Education Cluster, August 2012).

Those who demobilised and managed to rejoin their families were found traumatised, malnourished and in poor physical condition. There are ongoing concerns over those who were arrested and handed over to the Malian authorities, with reports that children have been kept in adult prisons. Eight children remain in detention on terrorism related charges in Bamako (UNICEF, December 2014; UNSC, March 2014).

Psychological trauma insufficiently addressed

The trauma caused by human rights violations left people with symptoms of extreme stress or psychological trauma that have not yet been addressed comprehensively (IDMC interview local NGOs in Timbuktu, March 2014). Survivors of GBV abandoned by their partners or families are now living on the margins of their communities (OCHA, 7 January 2013). Few have received medical care or support (IRIN, 8 May 2013). Legal

support is also insufficient. Only seven cases of GBV were followed up in 2013 ([OCHA](#), January 2014). Children have been particularly affected and many are now terrified of loud noises which remind them of the conflict ([OCHA](#), 19 July 2013; IDMC interview with IDPs, December 2013).

The long-term consequences of such trauma are already becoming evident. Family ties and social participation are deteriorating ([UNICEF/Handicap International](#), March 2014). If left unaddressed, this may undermine the reintegration of traumatised IDPs into their fragile communities, worsen the already tense social fabric and further undermine the process of seeking durable solutions (IDMC interview with MINUSMA, March 2014).

Food insecurity

As of early 2014, below-average harvests and production shortfalls remained a problem throughout Mali, notably in the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro and Ségou as well as in northern agro-pastoral areas ([FEWS Net](#), January 2014, [FEWS Net](#), April 2014). Some 1.5 million Malians are projected to need food assistance in 2014, including many IDPs in the south ([WFP](#), 2014). IDPs in Bamako report only being able to prepare one meal a day, with up to half of IDP households declared to have needs in the form of food (NRC ICLA data, April 2014, on file with IDMC; [IOM](#), April 2014).

The daily struggle to meet nutritional needs is pushing many back north. However, on return the deterioration of pasture, derelict water points, risk of loss of livestock, the legacy of poor harvests and ongoing insecurity restricting aid access leave many with unmet nutritional needs, further jeopardising hopes for durable returns to places of origin ([Oxfam](#), January 2014).

Traditional pastoralist IDPs in northern areas still suffer from the disruption caused by the crisis, undermining the food supply chains further while trade also continues to be hampered by banditry, ongoing insecurity of transport, disruption of

traditional food chains from the south and rises in cereal prices. Commercial spaces also still remain empty in many urban northern centres.

Limited access to health care

Although humanitarian access has improved since mid-2013, allowing activities to scale up, the return of health personnel and facilities has remained slow. Malian state health personnel who fled the conflict have yet to fully redeploy in the north, notably in rural areas ([ICRC](#), November 2013; IDMC interview with AMDH, March 2014). Mobile clinics, suspended in January 2013, have yet to be restarted pending the stabilisation of certain areas ([ECHO](#), 16 April 2013; [IOM](#), 25 March 2014). Urban centres still await the arrival of specialised medical staff such as gynaecologists to address basic medical needs or psychiatrists able to address the impacts of GBV or child trauma (IDMC Interview with AMDH; Handicap International, March 2014).

Limited access to livelihoods

As a result of the crisis, many IDPs sold their belongings and over 65 per cent got into debt paying for transport, accommodation, food, health care and household items ([OCHA](#), 16 July 2013). In Bamako, over 60 per cent of IDPs and host families were unable to meet their basic needs. Employment has been cited as one of the most important needs consistently throughout the crisis ([ACTED/Welthungerhilfe](#), June 2012; IDMC interview with IDP associations in Bamako).

Many internally displaced pastoralists have lost their cattle to armed groups while others are unable to feed those remaining, having resorted to survival selling of remaining animals despite low market prices ([IOM](#), June 2013; [FEWS Net](#), March 2014). Sporadic attacks in all three northern regions and clashes between local residents and displaced people living on urban fringes have disturbed grazing patterns already changed by the lean season ([IRIN](#), 13 August 2013; [FEWS Net](#), March 2014). Many remain fearful of making their

way to urban centres to access markets (IDMC Interview with MINUSMA, March 2014).

While the lack of livelihood opportunities in displacement areas has pushed IDPs to return north, the economic situation in these regions remains poor, hampering resumption of normal socio-economic activities for returnees (IPS, 31 January 2014; IOM, 25 March 2014). IDPs mostly return with few, if any, assets while their businesses, livestock and other forms of income no longer exist, leaving them to start from scratch and face economic hardship (IRIN, 28 March 2014; IDMC Interview with returnees in Timbuktu, March 2014). Banks that had closed in the north began to reopen in August 2013, but many are not fully functional. The return to normal economic life remains so far limited to urban areas (FEWS Net, July 2013, IDMC Interview with Plan International, March 2014).

Housing, land and property issues

Housing, land and property (HLP) is a major issue for IDPs residing in towns both in the south and on return to the north. The majority in southern urban areas are now renting accommodation and up to 35 per cent fear expulsion as they are unable to afford to pay their rent (NRC, October 2013), while 17 to 25 per cent regularly move to find cheaper lodging or look for extra space to accommodate large families (IDMC Interview with returnees to Timbuktu, March 2014). The situation is different in the northern regions where 58 per cent of IDP households live in host families (IOM, April 2014). Limited access to justice in northern areas to which IDPs have returned is an obstacle to sustainable return. Houses, most of them made out of 'banco' and left unattended had been severely damaged or destroyed by fighting and the subsequent rainy season. This was the case for twenty per cent of respondents to a November survey in Gao and thirty-three per cent in Timbuktu (Shelter Cluster, November 2013). Returning IDPs are finding it hard to assert their rights to land, herds and houses, which were oc-

cupied or pillaged in their absence (NRC/ICLA HLP report, March 2014).

Between 13 and 23 per cent of people in urban areas in the north rent (Shelter Cluster, November 2013). Some tenants have been surprised by landlords' requests to pay for damages during their absence. Others have been forced to look for another place to live, after finding their home occupied by new tenants (IDMC interview with returnees in Timbuktu, March 2014). Opportunities for redress, through restitution or compensation, are limited by the common lack of title deeds in rural areas, destroyed or missing ID cards, the fact that most land disputes are addressed by customary law and that the statutory judicial system is largely inaccessible to those more familiar with the customary system (IDMC HLP workshop in Bamako, February 2014).

Prevailing customary justice systems often discriminate against women, particularly regarding HLP rights since they are not allowed to inherit or own land. Women are also typically marginalised in decision-making bodies and many are illiterate and unaware of their rights (NRC/ICLA HLP report, March 2014). This represents a serious challenge for internally displaced women's self-reliance and access to justice, particularly as half of the displaced households are headed by women who have been widowed or left to fend for themselves during their displacement (RI, November 2013).

As of early 2014, there was no provision of legal aid or ad-hoc dispute resolution mechanisms with representatives of customary leaders, local officials and representatives of different population groups including women and IDPs.

The precarious housing situation in the south, due to high costs and overcrowding is pushing people to return north only to face the financial burden of repairs and legal barriers to restoring accommodation or commercial buildings. This is notably the case in insecure, deserted rural areas, under-

mining the basis of any sustainable recovery for returning populations.

Education disrupted

The education of some 800,000 children in northern Mali has been jeopardised since the onset of the crisis and following the 2013 military intervention (Education Cluster, January 2014) with 80 per cent of teaching staff being displaced and over 37 per cent of schools either damaged or looted ([Education Cluster](#), 11 July 2012). In the south, up to half the children displaced to southern and central Mali were not receiving schooling in mid-July ([IOM](#), July 2013). Many lack identification documents and their parents have difficulties affording the fees of private institutions and high transport costs. Fear of being discriminated against as Azawad children or language barriers also obstacles to accessing education (IDMC interview with local NGOs in Bamako, March 2014; [OCHA](#), 5 April 2013). Most host schools in the south supporting internally displaced students are struggling with the sheer number of pupils and are in need of support (Education Cluster, January 2014).

In the north, schools began to reopen a few weeks after Islamists were ousted ([IRIN](#), 4 February 2013) but in difficult conditions. The 2013-2014 academic school year saw the return to school of over 167,000 students. Many schools are unable to cope with the number of students and lack learning material and teachers (Education Cluster, January 2014; [IOM](#), April 2014).

By January 2014, an estimated 639,572 students in conflict-affected regions and attending host schools for internally displaced students and flood-affected communities remained in need of support. Some 350 schools were in need of temporary learning spaces in order to ensure an adequate learning environment.

Education has been seen as a strong pull factor both to flee and remain in the south, and thus a

condition to returning to conflict affected areas. Many IDPs refuse to return to areas where their children have no guarantee of being educated and are thus, they fear, vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups and delinquency (IDMC interview with IDP Women Associations in Bamako, March 2014).

Family members separated by violence and displacement

Separation of family members started from the onset of the crisis. Many were unable to take dependent family members with them, including older relatives ([HRW](#), 30 April 2012; [AI](#), May 2012). Other families separated to reduce the burden on any given host family or to reduce the cost of housing ([GPDF](#), January 2014; [NRC](#), March 2013). This resulted in half of the displaced families in the south reporting that they were separated from other family members ([UNHCR](#), 4 July 2012).

Over 750 verified separated and unaccompanied children were identified as of December 2013, mostly in Bamako and Mopti ([UNICEF](#), December 2014). While there is a tradition – *confiage* – of sending children from rural areas to live and work in urban households of extended family members, these separations have left children to cope on their own. Family separation has compounded the emotional distress of displacement. Up to half of IDP households are now female-headed (RI, November 2013). Some have no adult members able to generate an income, adding to their vulnerability and prospects for recovery. The numbers of dispersed families are at risk of increasing as heads of households return to places of origin to assess the situation, leaving their families behind once again (IDMC Interview with IDPs in Bamako and Timbuktu, March 2014).

Lack of identification documents and participation in public affairs

Many IDPs, including up to 55 per cent of those in Mopti and in Gao ([DRC](#), May 2013), have no personal and other documentation necessary

to access public basic services or to participate in public affairs. They thus face many onerous formalities to obtain new ID cards, including extortion ([L'Indicateur du Renouveau](#), 20 February 2013; [OCHA](#), 26 August 2013).

Lack of documentation further complicates the search for durable solutions. At police and military checkpoints they may be forced to pay bribes. Those without ID have problems reclaiming property and possessions upon return ([DRC](#), May 2013) and also in integrating into host communities.

National response

Legal and response frameworks

Mali signed the *African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa* (the Kampala Convention) in 2009 and ratified it in December 2012. As of March 2014, no steps had been taken towards implementation.

As of March 2014, a new *Politique Nationale de l'Action Humanitaire au Mali* was being drafted but had yet to be finalised with a comprehensive integration of IDP-specific provisions (IDMC interview with the Ministère du Travail, des Affaires Sociales et Humanitaire, February 2014). The strategy will be implemented through an Inter-ministerial Commission chaired by the Minister in charge of Humanitarian Affairs and a National Agency for the Management of Humanitarian Action. In place since early 2014, the Commission has representatives of relevant ministries and sectors and will be the organisational framework for the sustainable development of humanitarian action. The National Agency for the Management of Humanitarian Action will be responsible for implementing the strategy and coordinating responses to emergencies (*Politique Nationale de l'Action Humanitaire* (Draft), February 2014; IDMC interview with Ministère du Travail, des Affaires Sociales et Humanitaire, February 2014).

It remains unclear how the strategy and the Commission relate to the various development strategies being consolidated or to the strategy under development by the Working Group for Durable Solutions. Previously known as the Working Group on Returns, it is now led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Malian government (IDMC interview with Protection Cluster members, March 2014; [L'indépendant](#), 12 March 2014). It is currently developing a durable solutions strategy paired with a plan of action, and to support the Malian government in implementing the Kampala Convention. Several ministries are still debating on who is to assume responsibilities for IDPs and no official focal point regarding IDP matters has been officially designated, as required by the Kampala Convention. It is therefore similarly unclear who is to lead on IDP issues.

The government remains involved with the Commission on Population Movement's operations across Mali but is not centrally engaged with various humanitarian fora, including the Protection Cluster. Meetings are attended by technical advisers with little or no decision-making powers. This has left the government's voice largely side-lined in many processes (IDMC interview with members of the Protection Cluster, March 2014).

Humanitarian assistance and plans for return to the north

Throughout 2012, various ministries and agencies led humanitarian assistance programmes providing free health care in the northern regions and initiating a food security programme for IDPs and host families in southern and central Mali ([L'Indépendant](#), 23 November 2012). By 2013, government finances and national food stocks had substantially diminished due to funding shortfalls, hampering plans for more thorough assessments in newly secured northern regions as well

as the delivery of assistance in the south (IDMC interview with Ministère du Travail, des Affaires Sociales et Humanitaire, March 2014).

Pledges by the *Ministère de l'administration territoriale* to rapidly restore administration have been slowed by the reluctance of many civil servants to return, ongoing insecurity and the damage of public facilities. Two thirds of civil servants have reportedly returned to the north, assisted by a lump sum of 250,000- 500,000 Central African Francs (\$500-1000) per household to cover transport and resettlement costs (IDMC interview with Ministère du travail et des affaires sociales et humanitaires, February 2014). Reports that some ministries have imposed deadlines and threatened staff with dismissal if they do not return have not led to any loss of jobs (IDMC interview with Plan International, March 2014).

In this push northwards, the government organised the transport of 2,500 IDPs in boat and bus convoys to the main northern towns, leaving those living in villages to make their own way to their final destination. The humanitarian community has questioned the assessment methods for choosing these individuals, the overcrowded transport vehicles as well as lack of follow-up monitoring to assess whether durable solutions have been achieved (Rapport d'Activités des deux missions d'enfermement du retour des déplacés des régions de Tombouctou et Gao, 2013, on file with IDMC; IDMC interview with Members of the Protection Cluster). A further 8,000 IDPs have been identified by the government for return, but the financial resources to facilitate this return have not yet been secured (IDMC interview with Ministère du Travail, des Affaires Sociales et Humanitaire, March 2014).

A long way to peace and inclusive dialogue

The inclusive dialogue, as outlined in the ceasefire agreement of June 2013, that should have begun 60 days after the naming of a new government has yet to happen (IRIN, 17 February 2014). The

process has stalled as the government has made talks conditional on complete disarmament of the armed groups and armed groups have suffered internal divisions ([Africa Confidential](#), 15 March 2014), notably the departure in March from the MNLA movement of Ibrahim Ag Mohamed Assaleh to create a splinter group ([RFI](#), 11 March 2014).

The government has been rekindling clientelist links with Tuareg and Arab leaders, as short-term stabilising strategy likely to undermine long-term cohesion and inclusiveness, vital for the reconciliation process and development in the troubled north ([Crisis Group](#), 10 January 2014; [Global Observatory](#), 7 February 2014).

Perpetrators of crimes committed by armed groups during the occupation of the north between April 2012 and June 2013 continue to enjoy impunity as do those military personnel who committed crimes during the recapture of the north. This is despite the Malian authorities' efforts to investigate and prosecute crimes alleged against former military junta members in the south ([HRC Report by the IE on Mali](#), March 2014). Alleged perpetrators of sexual violence remain free. Threats of violence and denunciations persist. There are reports of arbitrary arrests, including of returning IDPs ([FIDH](#), March 2014).

This failure to fight impunity could undermine national reconciliation efforts, intensify the atmosphere of fear in the north and further restrict freedom of movement of those too scared to return home. For those who have returned, it is placing them at risk of secondary displacement.

The Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission, previously established as the Dialogue and Reconciliation Commission, has seen its mandate expanded to include crimes committed during the country's most recent crisis and during previous conflicts in the north. Addressing issues of truth and justice are key to tackling socio-economic and cultural marginalisation of certain

regions and communities ([HRC Report by the IE on Mali](#), March 2014). The Commission has many challenges as its predecessor was seen as ineffective, neither inclusive nor representative, leaving many Malians skeptical of the process ([RFI](#), 13 April 2013; [HRW](#), 10 March 2014). A genuine emphasis on the inclusion of marginalised groups, including IDPs and returning IDPs, in the peace-building process is still needed to ensure that their specific issues will be taken into account in national reconstruction.

These issues of inclusive justice and reconciliation remain key as the sustained and voluntary return and reintegration of displaced populations has the potential to address the root causes of conflict, help prevent further displacement and serve as an important signifier of peace to validate the post-conflict order, a validation the Malian government is desperately seeking ([Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement](#), September 2009).

Role of civil society actors

Malian civil society is among the most active in West Africa. Civil society actors have donated food, medicine and clothing and sent convoys to northern Mali. Key NGOs include the Malian Red Cross, Cri de Coeur, the Collectif des ressortissants du nord (COREN), the Haut conseil islamique malien and members of the Malian diaspora (IDMC, 2012 Overview, IDMC Interview with Cri de Coeur, February 2014). Cri de Coeur was one of the first to respond to the needs of IDPs arriving in Bamako while Tassaght has been implementing a project in support of returning pastoralists and those displaced in northern Mali ([IRIN](#), 13 August 2013).

Civil society organisations met IDPs in several areas of the country in the run-up to elections to explain how they might participate, notably in Kidal and Ségou. They are plans to further do so prior to the October 2014 municipal elections ([L'Essor](#), 6 August 2013; IDMC interview with ACD, March 2014). Civil society and the large number of IDP associations which have increasingly sprung

up during and since the crisis have the potential to help consolidate governance and democracy. However, their resources are limited and many are closely dependent on state agencies ([MINUSMA](#), 9 August 2013; IDMC interview with IDP women associations in Bamako, February-March 2014).

International response

By early 2014, 53 of the 100 international organisations operational in Mali were working in the north. Almost all were working in Timbuktu and Gao with 15 able to access Kidal ([OCHA](#), January 2014). Of the 34 operational protection agencies in Mali five had a presence in Kidal, and only two of the 14 agencies running education programmes were active in that region. In the south, regions receiving the most humanitarian assistance were Mopti, Ségou, Bamako and Koulikoro, with a high emphasis on protection and food security ([OCHA](#), January 2014).

From development to humanitarian and back again

The 2012-2013 crises forced Mali's international development partners to shift focus to an emergency humanitarian response. A relatively slow process of transition, coupled with funding constraints, meant that IDPs and host families received insufficient assistance during and after the crisis. This slow transition to recovery and development amid ongoing humanitarian needs risks delaying an adequate response to longer-term early recovery and assistance needs to resettle, rebuild and develop normal lives both for those returning north and those remaining in the south.

The belated transformation of the Working Group on Returns into a Working Group on Durable Solutions was a welcome step towards improving resource mobilisation and advocacy for durable solutions. However, the group's terms of reference were approved in March 2014 without a national focal point assigned for it. This threatens to undermine the credibility of the international com-

munity in its professed desire to align with Mali's priorities and to support stronger national leadership (IDMC interview with Protection Cluster members, March 2014).

The governments' inability to truly influence strategies may lead to their ultimate failure. Closer inclusion of the government could coordinate development and humanitarian strategies and enable a comprehensive nationally owned process to promote durable solutions (IDMC Briefing Note, 20 February 2014).

The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) needs to revisit its current strategies to ensure consideration of ways to support local integration and settlement elsewhere. Unfortunately, the UN Strategic Response Plan (SRP) 2014-2016 for Mali, launched in February 2014, has set itself three strategic objectives for the next two years: integrating risk and vulnerability tracking and analyses into humanitarian and development programming; supporting vulnerable populations' resilience to shocks and delivering co-ordinated and integrated life-saving assistance to those affected by emergencies. The plan, however, does not address all the durable solution options for IDPs, thus jeopardising current recovery efforts and putting those displaced at risk of protracted vulnerability.

Humanitarian and development work underfunded

The SRP requested \$569 million for humanitarian funding for the year 2014, but three months after its launch it remained only 18 per cent funded (OCHA, 8 May 2014). This is worrying, considering the gradual overall decline in funding for Mali. The 2012 Consolidated Appeal (CAP) was 70 per cent funded and that of 2013 only received 55 per cent of required funds.

There were pledges of €3.25 bn. (c. \$4.34 bn.) during a May 2013 international donor conference in Brussels (AFP, 15 May 2013) during which there was much emphasis on transparency and mutual

accountability. While a positive development, observers have noted that some of the funding promised was 'old money' from previous cooperation budget lines (IRIN, 3 March 2014) while much of this pledge has still not been disbursed. There are also concerns about the country's absorptive capacity in the absence of proper guarantees around management and transparency (IPS, 16 May 2013). A further barrier to receiving pledged funds, particularly from the EU, was that it remains conditional on Mali making significant progress on governance, restoring state services, holding elections and combating corruption (IRIN, 3 March 2014).

Funding to assess and meet the protection and assistance needs of IDPs and returnees within coherent, longer term strategies is crucial. There has in the recent past been a worrying shift to funding infrastructure and food security, which, while also important in the response to the needs in Mali, have distracted attention from other sectors vital to durable solutions such as psychosocial care, access to justice, comprehensive reconciliation and livelihoods.

Strategies should include durable solutions for all Malians, including members of host communities and those who chose to remain behind in southern cities for the medium- or long-term. Without a comprehensive approach, prospects for post-conflict stability will be compromised. This threatens to lead to further displacement and to hinder the return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country of those who have already fled their homes. The longer IDPs live far away from their homes in dire conditions and the longer they are denied chances to rebuild their lives, the greater their needs will become. This threatens to undermine efforts towards sustainable peace, reconciliation and rebuilding of the nation.

About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is a world leader in the monitoring and analysis of the causes, effects and responses to internal displacement. IDMC advocates for better responses to the needs of the millions of people worldwide who are displaced within their own countries as a consequence of conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations, and natural or man-made disasters. It is also at the forefront of efforts to promote greater respect for the basic rights of internally displaced people (IDPs). IDMC is part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

What we do:

- Promote appropriate responses to internal displacement through targeted advocacy
- Provide timely, accessible and relevant information on internal displacement worldwide
- Develop research and analysis to help shape policies and practices that have positive outcomes for IDPs
- Provide training and support to country-based policy-makers and practitioners with a responsibility to protect IDPs

Who do we target?

IDMC is best placed to effect positive change for IDPs through advocacy to influence the decisions and practices of duty bearers and all those with a responsibility or capacity to promote or fulfil the rights of IDPs.

How do we operate?

As information on internal displacement is often controversial and politically sensitive, IDMC must continue to operate and be seen to operate as an independent and effective global monitor of this widespread phenomenon.

IDMC has become an indispensable resource for anyone seeking impartial data and analysis on internal displacement, independent of political or operational considerations. www.internal-displacement.org

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