

1 October 2012

## MALI

# Northern takeover internally displaces at least 118,000 people

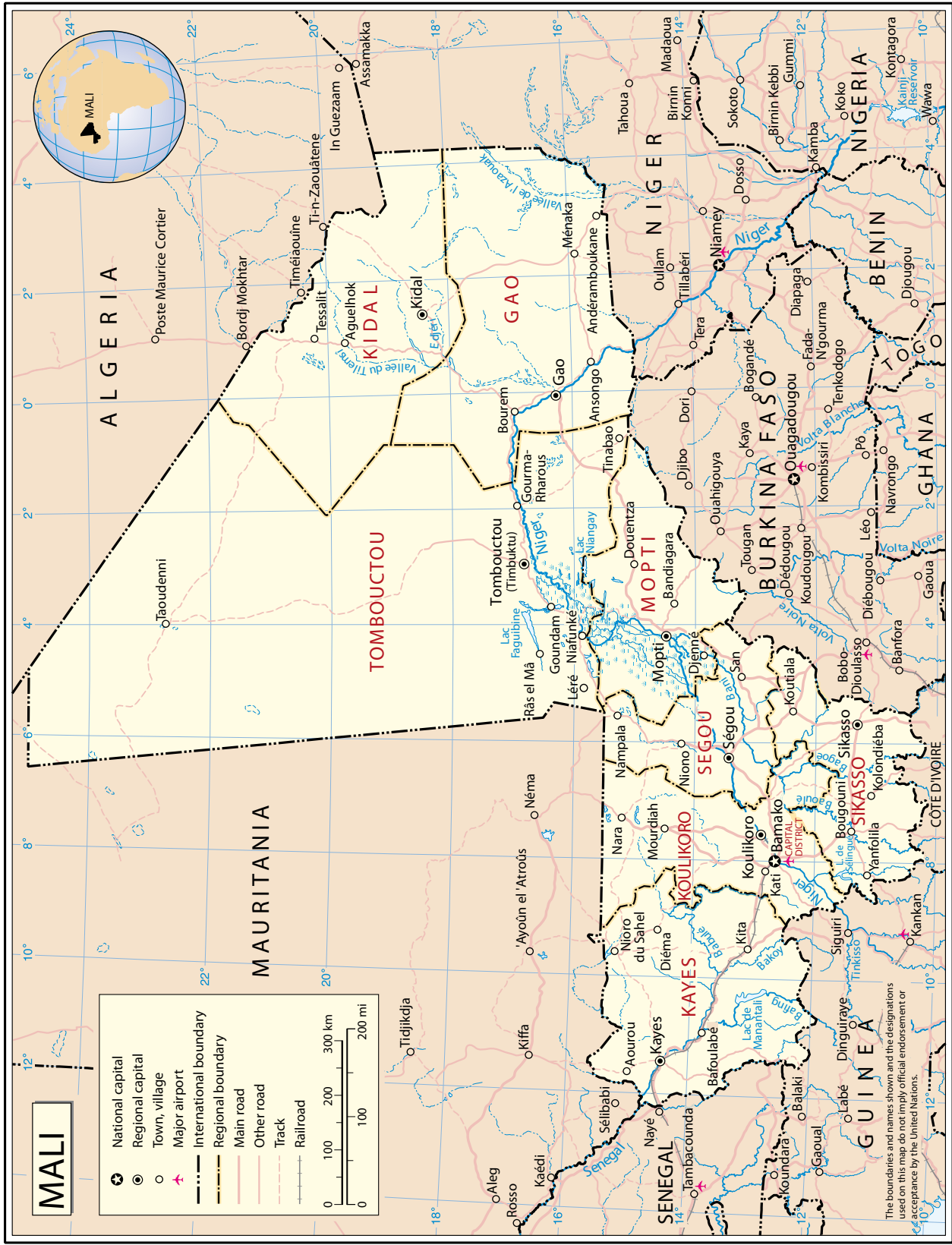
Few could have predicted that Mali, long considered a beacon of democracy in West Africa, would in less than a year see half its territory overrun by Islamic militants and a tenth of its northern population internally displaced. Instability and insecurity resulting from clashes between government forces and Tuareg separatists and proliferation of armed groups in northern Mali in the wake of a coup d'état have combined with a Sahel-wide food crisis to force some 393,000 Malians from their homes since January 2012, some 118,800 of whom are estimated to be internally displaced.



*Malians who fled the unrest in the northeastern city of Gao wait at a bus station in Bamako to return to Gao, September 2012. REUTERS/Adama Diarra*

Some 35,300 people are displaced across Mali's vast three northern regions, living in town with host families or out in the open in makeshift shelters. Most of the 83,400 IDPs who have taken refuge in the south are staying with host families. Both IDPs and host families face severe shortages of food, access to health care and basic necessities. Many IDPs have lost their sources of livelihoods and children's education has been severely jeopardised.

The nascent government of national unity, which took power in August 2012 after prolonged instability, has taken some steps to respond to health, nutrition and education needs but serious concerns remain for the vast majority of the displaced who still lack access to basic services. State functions have virtually ceased in conflict-affected regions and civil servants have fled, further limiting capacity to meet the needs of the vulnerable. The displaced have urgent needs which are not being met due to widespread insecurity, lack of sufficient humanitarian access and grossly insufficient funding.



Department of Peacekeeping Operations  
Cartographic Section

**Source: UN Cartographic Section (with some cities added by IDMC)**  
**More maps are available at [www.internal-displacement.org/countries/mali/maps](http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/mali/maps)**

## Background

Considered a beacon of democracy in West Africa less than a year ago, Mali has plunged into a series of entrenched political, security and humanitarian crises in the space of a few months. Since January 2012 and the onset of a new Tuareg rebellion, the fourth since 1960, Mali has seen roughly half its territory (three of eight regions, populated by some 1.6 million people) overrun by Tuareg separatists and Islamist militants and its elected government overthrown by a military coup.

The Tuareg are a Berber people with a traditionally pastoral lifestyle who live across the Saharan interior of West Africa. Although they have held key posts in national administrations, their leaders (in Mali and elsewhere) have often complained of being marginalised by national governments. In recent years the weak presence of the Malian army in the vast northern desert has permitted extensive armed banditry and drug trafficking, including by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). AQIM has succeeded in establishing several bases in Mali as well as in the broader Sahel ([The Jamestown Foundation](#), 28 October 2010).

The demise of the Qadhafi regime in Libya in 2011 sparked the return of heavily armed Tuareg fighters, who trickled back into Mali in early 2012 intent on establishing an autonomous region. They quickly overran several towns, displacing thousands of people. They soon received backing from Islamist groups said to have close links with AQIM. In late March, mutinous Malian soldiers, dissatisfied with the government's handling of the rebellion, forced Malian president Amadou Toumani Touré to step down. Amid the ensuing security vacuum, Salafist groups outflanked the Tuareg, secured control of the three northern regions, imposed a hard-line interpretation of *sharia* and provoked international outrage by desecrating historic mosques and tombs of importance to Sufis. In mid-April, the military junta handed control to an interim civilian government, which,

in turn, formed a new government of national unity in August.

Mali's political and security situation is set against a backdrop of a large-scale food crisis affecting millions across the Sahel. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that 4.6 million Malians (out of some 15 million people) are affected by the crisis, with some 175,000 children at risk of severe acute malnutrition ([OCHA](#), 29 August 2012). Hunger is exacerbated by ongoing insecurity which has led to sharp price increases and suspension of regular commercial food deliveries to Islamist-controlled northern areas.

## Causes of displacement

Internal displacement has occurred intermittently in Mali during periods of severe drought and political conflicts, notably previous Tuareg rebellions. Prior to Malian independence in 1960, the Tuareg 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 2012 Tuareg rebellion and subsequent coup d'Etat*

On 17 January 2012, Tuareg rebels of the *Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad* (MNLA), a separatist group formed in October 2011 and bolstered by the 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). Fighting affected all of northern Mali, including the towns of Ménaka, Tessalit, Aguelhok, Tinzaouaten, Léré and Niafunké. Within three weeks at least 30,000 people were displaced ([ICRC](#), 8 February 2012). Civilians primarily fled the clashes between government forces and Tuareg combatants as well

as the violence and retaliation by army troops ([UNHCR](#), 23 February 2012). By mid-March, some 93,433 people 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 ([OCHA](#), 15 March 2012). Most cited violence by armed groups, the fear of *sharia* law and shortages of available and affordable food as reasons for flight.

On 22 March, disgruntled members of the Malian military formed a *Comité National pour le redressement de la Démocratie et la Restauration de l'Etat* (CNDRE). They launched a coup d'état in Bamako and ousted President Amadou Toumani Touré, who had been scheduled to step down after presidential elections on 29 April. The CNDRE, led by Captain Amadou Sanogo, justified their putsch by deploring the government's handling of the northern rebellion and inability to counter the MNLA ([BBC](#), 22 March 2012). Under pressure from the international community, particularly the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the CNDRE ceded power to an interim civilian government.

#### *Islamist militants take over the north*

Taking advantage of the power vacuum left by the coup d'état in Bamako, Tuareg rebels secured control of the cities of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu over three days 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 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 Malian territory ([MNLA](#)). The declaration was immediately condemned by the African Union and the European Union.

This had no impact on the ground. During April Ansar Dine rapidly sidelined the MNLA, taking

control of several northern towns and imposing hard-line Islamic law. Their conflicting goals (the MNLA seeks a state of Azawad while Ansar Dine aspires to Islamise the current state of Mali) led to abandonment of a planned merger. Further displacement resulted when armed clashes took place in Gao on June 27 between MNLA combatants and those of the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), an offshoot of AQIM with aspirations to Islamise all of West Africa. The MNLA lost control of Gao, its transitional capital, and removed its fighters from the outskirts of Timbuktu, Ménaka and Kidal ([Jeune Afrique](#), 4 July 2012). By 12 July, the MNLA had been entirely evicted from northern Mali and they later dropped their claim for independence, leaving the Islamists in full control of the region ([LeMonde.fr](#), 12 July 2012).

In parallel, a new unity government headed by President Dioncounda Traoré and Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra was created in August with the priority of taking over north. However, by early September, the MUJAO had further extended their domination by gaining control of Douentza, a town bordering government-held territory in southern Mali's Mopti region ([AFP](#), 1 September 2012). This southwards advance has put thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) at risk of secondary displacement to new places of sanctuary even further south.

#### *Food insecurity*

The crisis in Mali is taking place against a backdrop of severe drought, floods and food crisis. More than 16 million inhabitants of the Sahel are at risk of malnutrition ([FAO](#), 8 August 2012). In June 2012, 1.76 million people in Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal and Mopti regions were judged to be in a food crisis ([OCHA](#), 19 June 2012). 2012 has been characterised by chronic drought and insecurity which has disrupted traditional transhumance corridors and food distribution systems. The market price of cattle has halved while cereal prices by late April were 50 percent higher than



in the previous month ([FEWS NET](#), 10 May 2012). Interviews of IDPs in Bamako carried out by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) showed that the food crisis has been the second most important cause of displacement after armed conflict ([IOM](#), July 2012).

Recent favourable crop production and livestock grazing conditions in some areas, as well as difficult conditions in areas where IDPs seek refuge, prompted some displaced people to return home as the rainy season progressed, although access to credit, seed and fertilizer remains limited ([FEWS NET](#), 23 August 2012). Household incomes in northern Mali remain depressed by conflict; rural households, for whom market access is particularly difficult, are in dire need ([FEWS NET](#), 23 August 2012). Heavy rains which began in mid-August destroyed hundreds of homes and hectares of crops, displacing thousands of people in Sikasso, Mali's southernmost region ([L'Essor](#), 22 August 2012) and in Ségou ([L'Essor](#), 14 August 2012).

## Displacement patterns and figures

As of 18 September, 118,795 people were internally displaced across Mali, an estimated 35,300 of them in the north ([OCHA](#), 26 September 2012). In addition, 274,636 people have fled to neighbouring countries, mainly Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. Estimates of the numbers of IDPs are reported by the Commission on Population Movements, which was set up on 14 June within the Protection Cluster to centralise and coordinate information on population movements. The Commission is led by IOM and includes the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Handicap International, l'Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Développement (ACTED), the Directorate-General for Protection, which is part of the Ministry of Interior Security and Civil Protection, and the *Ministère de l'Action*

*Humanitaire, de la Solidarité et des Personnes Agées* ([OCHA](#), 20 June 2012; email correspondence with IOM, September 2012).

It is thought that over three quarters of those displaced are women and children. All socio-economic groups of the population of the north are affected by displacement, including nomadic pastoralists, health workers and civil servants. Flight of teaching personnel has been extensive: a survey carried out prior to the 22 March coup indicated that more than 85 percent of teachers had already been displaced ([OCHA](#), 15 June 2012).

### *Severe constraints on IDP monitoring*

Widespread insecurity, the refusal of most Islamist groups to allow access to international humanitarian organisations and the vastness of the region have prevented comprehensive needs assessments and IDP profiling exercises during the first seven months of the conflict, with resultant gaps in knowledge and assessment of IDPs' needs. Evaluations of the number and location of IDPs in the south have proven less difficult and agencies belonging to the Protection Cluster carried out interviews and registrations in the spring ([OCHA](#), 27 June 2010). It should be noted that during the first stages of IDP profiling in the south some IDPs did not have time or inclination to register, limiting the thoroughness of initial assessments and highlighting the need for more systematic large-scale monitoring ([ACTED/Welthungerhilfe](#), 4 June 2012).

In late June, IOM initiated a country-wide IDP tracking exercise, starting in all six communes of Bamako. More recently, similar operations were undertaken in the three northern regions of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu and the buffer zone in Mopti. A tracking and monitoring system was set up by IOM as lead of the Commission on Population Movements to harmonise the collection of up-to-date and accurate data on internal displacement across Mali (email correspondence with IOM, September 2012). The Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) has also undertaken to assist the Protection

Cluster in its profiling activities throughout Mali ([Protection Cluster](#), 23 August 2012).

#### *IDPs' locations of origin and areas of settlement*

According to the latest information available on their locations of origin and whereabouts, IDPs originate primarily from Timbuktu and Gao and to a lesser extent from Kidal and Mopti. Despite severe constraints on determining their precise location of displacement it is known that close to 40,000 IDPs have settled in Mopti and over 12,000 people in Bamako. The other main regions hosting IDPs are Ségou, hosting over 16,000 IDPs, and Sikasso, while several hundred IDPs have taken refuge in Western Mali's Kayes region (email correspondence with IOM, September 2012).

According to UNHCR, 90 percent of IDPs in the south are staying with host families in urban areas, eight percent have been able to secure their own shelter and two percent have settled on public property ([UNHCR](#), 20 July 2012). In Bamako, as of 20 July, 69 percent were living with host families while ten percent were staying in host sites. The remaining 21 percent were still to be assessed. 52 percent of IDPs in Bamako were women ([IOM](#), 20 July 2012). Because they share the little they have, host families are struggling to cope with IDPs' presence and needs and are becoming increasingly vulnerable themselves ([OCHA](#), 11 September 2012).

#### *Few return movements*

Although their scale is unknown, movements of return have been observed in and around Kidal where some IDPs were said to return temporarily to assess the situation in their areas of origin ([OCHA](#), 15 June 2012). According to NGOs some men are returning to the north to take advantage of the rainy season and resume their farming activities whenever possible. However, this trend is mostly associated with seasonal migration and does not imply that there are conditions for safe and durable return. While some IDPs are said to have returned and coped with the presence of

armed groups, even more are believed to have gone back north with the intention of gathering remaining family members and bringing them south (email correspondence with Norwegian Church Aid, September 2012).

## **Protection and assistance needs of IDPs**

#### *Threats to physical security*

Humanitarian access remains challenging but available information indicates that the physical security of IDPs remains at grave risk as a result of human rights abuses perpetrated by the armed forces and armed groups present in the north.

Among the crimes reported are abductions, rapes, public floggings, arbitrary detentions and executions and extortions at checkpoints. Armed groups have pillaged private houses, hospitals, schools, aid agencies and government buildings ([HRW](#), 30 April 2012; [AI](#), May 2012). Renewed fighting between Islamist groups and the MNLA in late June in Gao left 35 people dead. Gao residents are at risk from landmines reportedly laid by the MUJAO, which have resulted in several casualties, with children among the victims ([OCHA](#), 11 July 2012).

In parallel, the imposition of a strict interpretation of Islamic law by Ansar Dine and the MUJAO in Timbuktu, Kidal, Gao and Douentza has created a general atmosphere of fear among the population. Amnesty International has reported threats made by armed groups directed at non-Tuaregs or Christians: radio broadcasts ordered them to leave and Christian places of worship were looted. An internally displaced person belonging to the Bambara, one of Mali's largest ethnic groups, recalled that when the MNLA arrived, they said that the Bambara had to leave Azawad ([Amnesty International](#), May 2012). When children were forced to leave government schools and to devote themselves to Koranic studies some parents fled or sent children to the south to continue their

education ([IRIN](#), 22 June 2012). Severe corporal punishments are regularly inflicted on those violating Islamist dictates. Women have to cover themselves and smoking and drinking alcohol are prohibited. In July, around 90 people were detained and beaten after a demonstration by Goudam residents, who asserted that their only options were to abide by the rules or flee (VOA News, [13](#) and [16](#) July 2012). In late July, an unmarried couple was stoned to death in Aguelhok ([BBC](#), 30 July 2012), followed by reports of a man having a hand amputated after being accused of stealing cattle ([Reuters](#), 9 August 2012). In early September in Gao five men accused by the Islamists of attacking a Gao-Niamey bus each had a hand and a foot amputated ([AFP](#), 11 September 2012). Later in the month another suspected thief in Timbuktu suffered a similar fate ([RFI](#), 17 September 2012).

More recently, IDPs in northern Mali reported that they were afraid of being used as human shields if a military intervention were to come about; they also fear assimilation with armed groups and reprisals by other armed groups (email correspondence with MDM, September 2012).

#### *Sexual and gender-based violence*

Despite data collection constraints, several humanitarian organisations operating in Mali report rape and other forms of gender-based violence as being one of the main protection concerns for IDPs. Since the regional crisis began there have been recurrent reports of women and girls being abducted by armed groups, taken away for several days and returned to their families after having been raped, gang-raped or beaten ([HRW](#), 30 April 2012). Some parents decided to flee northern Mali for fear of a similar fate for their daughters ([France Info](#), 9 August 2012). Under the imposed hard-line interpretation of *sharia* law, women's freedom of movement is restricted, they are forced to wear the *hijab* and some have allegedly been coerced into marriage with Islamic militants (email correspondence with Norwegian Church Aid, September 2012).

UNICEF has reported 634 cases of sexual and gender-based violence in southern Mali, of which 407 involved children. The real dimension of the problem is largely underestimated as these figures reflect the situation in two districts only. Fewer than 90 victims have received psychological assistance and only 36 have received medical support ([UNICEF](#), 28 August 2012).

#### *Family members separated by violence*

UNICEF has identified 1,263 children separated from their parents across Mali ([UNICEF](#), 27 July 2012). Children in the north left without parental or other adult supervision are reported to be particularly vulnerable to forcible recruitment and sexual exploitation ([Protection Cluster](#), 29 June 2012). Since the start of the rebellion there have been several reports of armed groups forcibly recruiting northern teenagers. According to UNICEF, at least 175 boys had been recruited by early July 2012, a figure judged as an under-estimation by Malian organisations operating in the north ([Education Cluster](#), August 2012). Some IDPs reported that in the rush to flee they were unable to take dependent family members, including older relatives ([HRW](#), 30 April 2012; [AI](#), May 2012). In the south, half of the displaced families report that they are separated from other family members ([UNHCR](#), 4 July 2012).

#### *Food insecurity*

The political unrest in northern Mali began against a backdrop of severe food insecurity and drought. The most affected are poor and very poor internally displaced people living in nomadic pastoralist zones who are accustomed to purchasing 45 to 65 percent of their food needs from annual markets. Markets have been severely disrupted by conflict, theft, insecurity of transport, disruption of traditional food chains from the south and hikes in cereal prices. In late May, UNICEF estimated that 175,000 children under five were at risk of severe acute malnutrition ([UNICEF](#), 25 May 2012). In places where the situation is particularly dire IDPs were reported to

have started gathering leaves to feed themselves ([ICRC](#), 25 May 2012). Host families also have great difficulties in securing their own basic needs and their coping strategies are said to be exhausted ([ICRC](#), 16 August 2012).

Banks are reportedly closed in Mopti and Ségou regions, leaving IDPs without access to cash and credit, further impacting their ability to purchase food ([FEWS NET](#), 10 May 2012). In early June alerts of locust swarms moving south towards Mali raised fears of further aggravation of food insecurity ([FAO](#), 5 June 2012). Locust monitoring is complicated by the prevailing insecurity. Locusts have been observed in the northern area of Adrar des Ifoghas and in Timetrine and Tamesna ([FEWS NET](#), 26 August 2012).

#### *Limited access to livelihoods and basic needs*

Having abandoned their livelihoods to seek safety, IDPs sheltering in the south are struggling to make ends meet ([FEWS Net](#), 10 May 2012). Areas hosting many IDPs, such as the Mopti region, are themselves affected by severe food scarcity and poverty as urban malnutrition is rising ([IRIN](#), 8 August 2012). According to an assessment in two of Bamako's six communes carried out in May by ACTED and Welthungerhilfe, most IDPs reported that prior to flight they had been tradesmen, civil servants, farmers, teachers, or employees in the private sector. These groups who fled the north have lost their livelihoods: farmers and herders will be unable to pursue their activities in urban areas.

Most IDPs are staying with relatives and host families who may remain employed but who now must care for a much larger household. In Bamako's Commune V over 71 percent of IDPs and host families declared that they were unable to meet their basic needs; only 3.7 percent reported such difficulties before the crisis. Similarly, in Kalaban Coro on the outskirts of Bamako 65.8 percent of IDPs and host families reported inability to meet their basic needs, against only 0.62 percent prior to their displacement. In both sites, employ-

ment was cited as one of the most important needs, followed by food and essential household items ([ACTED/Welthungerhilfe](#), June 2012).

Internally displaced pastoralists are also affected by conflict and aggravated food insecurity. Traditional transhumance routes are blocked and it is harder than ever to safely access scarce pasture. Fodder prices are high and prices for livestock too low to make sales profitable. Because of the shortages of food and water, animals are weak: it has been estimated that 30 percent of the livestock in the north has died. Displaced pastoralists have reported that the MNLA and Ansar Dine have stolen their healthiest animals and killed herders who resisted. Pastoralists confined to the Mopti region by fear of returning north are at increasing risk from other pastoralists or cultivators who accuse them of having taken their land ([IRIN](#), 3 August 2012). Despite the precarious situation, the end of the lean season in pastoralist zones is expected to bring more rains and allow for the production of some animal fodder ([FEWS NET](#), 1 August 2012).

#### *Blocked access to health care*

The conflict has severely impeded IDPs' access to health care at a time of aggravated risks of cholera, measles, polio and meningitis. At the height of the crisis many health centres were looted and staff displaced. In mid-June, OCHA estimated that 1.3 million people lacked access to health care in the northern regions of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu and that 94 percent of health facilities were dysfunctional or closed, although some started to reopen in the course of June (OCHA, [13](#) and [20](#) June 2012). The World Health Organisation estimated that in late June, Timbuktu lacked 82 percent of qualified health staff, facilities in Kidal were short 81 percent, 75 percent were lacking in Gao and 73 percent were absent in Mopti. Although vaccinations are still taking place in Timbuktu's Diré district ([UNICEF](#), 27 July 2012), vaccination campaigns in the north have been severely interrupted by lack of access and insecurity. Epidemiological surveillance capacity has been



severely weakened ([WHO](#), 2 July 2012). There is no information available as to whether IDPs have been disproportionately affected by the limited access to health care in northern Mali.

Limited access to clean drinking water is further aggravating health hazards and vulnerabilities. In early July, cholera cases were reported in Wabaria, near Gao ([ICRC](#), 5 July 2012). As of 11 September, 170 cases of cholera including 13 deaths had been reported, mainly affecting Gao and Ansango districts ([OCHA](#), 11 September 2012).

In early June, in areas of southern Mali where many IDPs have taken shelter, such as Mopti and Ségou, the health system started overloading ([OCHA](#), 13 June 2012). An IDP survey undertaken in the district of Bamako revealed that health care was not considered one of IDPs' priority needs, as food, essential household items and access to education and employment ranked higher in terms of urgency ([ACTED/Welthungerhilfe](#), 4 June 2012).

#### *Education suspended*

The education of some 300,000 children in northern Mali has been jeopardised since the onset of the conflict ([UNICEF](#), 6 July 2012). According to the Education Cluster, 80 percent of teaching staff have been displaced and most schools have been looted or burnt down. Schooling has been suspended in all three northern regions because of conflict-related insecurity ([Education Cluster](#), 11 July 2012). Among the 300,000 northern children enrolled in school, 240,000 remain in the north but with blocked access to basic education (email correspondence with UN Education Cluster, September 2012). In addition to having to leave school without completing the academic year, children affected by the crisis are at higher risk of violence, exploitation, recruitment by armed groups and family separation ([Save the Children](#), August 2012).

A joint evaluation carried out by the education ministry with the support of UNICEF and Save

the Children identified 6,895 displaced school children in the south of Mali, as well as 1,312 displaced teachers. The survey found that 27 percent of displaced children had not registered for school in their location of displacement: principal reasons cited are costs of learning materials and transport, the general hardship of displaced families and the lack of government-provided information on the free registration of IDP children. Some of those IDP children who have managed to enroll report being discriminated against as children coming from Azawad ([Education Cluster](#), June 2012). Provision of school canteens is very limited, although it is well known that school-provided food is a strong incentive for families and children to enrol and remain in school ([Education Cluster](#), 13 August 2012).

At the beginning of the 2012-13 academic year, at least a hundred schools were flooded in Kayes, Ségou, Mopti and Bamako, further limiting the capacity of displaced children in southern Mali to access remedial courses and start the new school year in their area of displacement ([OCHA](#), 11 September 2012).

## **National and international response**

#### *National response*

Mali signed the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention) on 23 November 2009 but has not ratified it nor adopted a national policy for the protection of IDPs.

The country's new unity government, formed on 20 August 2012, is tasked primarily with taking back control of the conflict-affected northern regions and organising presidential elections. The *Ministère de l'Action Humanitaire, de la Solidarité et des Personnes Agées* (MAHSAP) was established by the interim government on 24 April 2012. It is responsible for launching and coordinating actions

for those affected by the conflict and the food crisis. There is no specifically designated national focal point for IDPs.

In July, the interim government set out a plan for political transition with an emphasis on humanitarian action, solidarity, the fight against poverty and social protection. Programmes are to be implemented in 2012 and 2013 under the supervision of MAHSAP. The government will assess IDP numbers and needs, identify new corridors for humanitarian assistance and formulate a national plan of humanitarian action ([Office of the Prime Minister of Mali](#), 12 July 2012). Since its formation in August, the new unity government has taken over responsibility for providing humanitarian assistance for those affected by conflict ([Reuters](#), 20 August 2012).

The *Ministère de l'administration territoriale, de la décentralisation et de l'aménagement du territoire* (MATDAT) has prioritised restoration of administrative services in the north ([Malijet](#), 27 July 2012; email correspondence with MATDAT, September 2012). Given the gravity of the humanitarian crisis, there is an urgent need to restore electricity, water, health and education services. Islamist groups have admitted during negotiations with peace envoys that they cannot restore services and have reportedly asked for the return of some civil servants ([The New York Times](#), 1 September 2012).

To respond to the immediate needs of those affected by the conflict and food crisis the *Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire* (CSA) set up an emergency action plan and completed in late July food distributions in the regions of Kayes, Ségou, Mopti and Timbuktu ([OCHA](#), 25 July 2012). The government allocated 807.5 million West African CFA (around \$1.5 million) to assist IDPs and refugees. Some 2,500 tons of food and medication were distributed to IDPs in the south and the north ([L'Indépendant](#), 27 July 2012).

In response to the severe damage to health services in the north, the health ministry has approved

free health care and medication in northern Mali and three districts of Mopti ([Ministry of Health](#), 21 May 2012). The health ministry has also developed a 2012-2013 cholera action plan for the regions of Timbuktu, Gao, Mopti, Kayes, Koulikouro, Sikasso and Bamako ([OCHA](#), 14 August 2012). On 5 September, the ministry ordered regional health directors in Kayes, Koulikoro, Ségou, Sikasso, Mopti, Bamako, and health representatives in the three northern regions to present weekly information on malnutrition cases and the epidemiological situation ([Ministry of Health](#), 5 September 2012). Health centres in Kidal region may have re-opened but IDPs' access to health care, medicine and qualified health workers remains dire. Logistical constraints in accessing IDPs in the north hamper the delivery of assistance ([OCHA](#), 13 June 2012).

The transitional government issued its own education plans, prioritising the return of internally displaced pupils and teachers ([Ministry of Education](#), 9 August 2012). The education ministry has started broadcasting radio messages to let IDP families know of the possibility of free enrolment ([Ministry of Education](#), 8 August 2012). Extra sessions for final examinations in October 2012 are planned and remedial courses for the displaced have started but not all are able to attend ([OCHA](#), 20 June 2012).

Mali has one of West Africa's most active civil society sectors. Civil society actors have donated food, medicine and clothing and sent convoys to northern Mali. Key NGOs include *Cri du Coeur*, the *Collectif des Ressortissants du Nord* (COREN), the *Haut conseil islamique malien* and members of the Malian diaspora through the MAHSAP. For instance, in July members of the Malian diaspora's representative group, the *Haut conseil des Maliens de l'extérieur*, donated around West African CFA 12 million (around \$24,000) of food, clothing and cash to IDPs in northern Mali ([Info-Matin](#), 10 July 2012). COREN and the NGO Humanity First have been preparing for the return of some IDPs to their areas of origin, mainly women and children. In

August, a civil service trade union collected funds to support civil servants in the north. The Mali Red Cross used this funding to purchase cattle for beneficiaries ([Mali Red Cross](#), 16 August 2012) and has distributed food aid in several parts of the country.

#### *International response*

Humanitarian access to northern Mali remains extremely difficult due to insecurity, banditry and poor transport infrastructure. This has prevented accurate assessments and profiling of IDPs for the first five months of the conflict. Most international NGOs, international organisations and UN agencies suspended programmes in early April after their offices, vehicles, aid materials and food stocks were looted ([IRIN](#), 3 April 2012). International aid is often refused by the Islamist groups in control of the north and insecurity prevails. However, several organisations remain in the region and aid is sent through Malian civil society partners wherever possible.

As of mid-September, humanitarian organisations are still confronting widespread insecurity, insufficient funding and limited staff capacity. Few organisations are working on protection issues ([OCHA](#), 11 September 2012), with protection monitoring stalled due to security-related challenges and lack of financial resources (email correspondence with UNHCR, September 2012).

In response to the northern security and nutritional crisis OCHA established a country office in Bamako in 2012. In April 2012 the cluster system was activated. Sectors are education, emergency telecommunications, food security, health, logistics, nutrition, protection and water, sanitation and hygiene. Sub-clusters on child protection and sexual and gender-based violence were also set up.

UNICEF and the WFP are working through partners, including the *Haut conseil islamique malien* and Handicap International, to ensure supplies reach internally displaced beneficiaries in Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao regions. Aid includes the deliver-

ies of food, water, sanitation and hygiene services (WASH) and essential household items. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has distributed kits of essential household items and sanitation supplies to IDPs in Tinabao and Andéramboukane ([OCHA](#), 25 July 2012). In late August, Médecins du Monde (Mdm) launched a vaccination and nutrition campaign targeting 12,000 children under five in Kidal, one of Mali's most remote and hard-to-access regions ([Mdm](#), 30 August 2012).

Assistance is also reaching some areas of southern Mali hosting many IDPs. CRS distributed food and non-food items (NFIs) to over 16,000 IDPs and some host families in Mopti ([OCHA](#), 27 June 2012). As of 11 July, 119 southern schools had received teaching materials from UNICEF and Save the Children ([OCHA](#), 11 July 2012).

The emergency financial appeal (CAP) for Mali was launched on 15 June 2012, requesting \$213.8 million between 1 January and 31 December 2012. As of 17 September, the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) reported that \$102.8 million had been funded, 48 percent of the sum required. The food security and nutrition clusters had been funded at 62 percent and 58 percent respectively. Despite reports of serious protection concerns, the Protection Cluster had only received 37 percent of the \$17.7 million required ([FTS](#), 17 September 2012). There are still major needs among the IDP population and host families which current levels of funding cannot adequately meet. Most donors have suspended funding to development projects pending restoration of political stability, thus reportedly cutting state income by at least 20 percent ([IRIN](#), 8 August 2012).

In March, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) provided \$1 million for the coordination and support of humanitarian assistance and \$6 million to assist the WFP, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and UNICEF in responding to drought, food security and malnutrition in Mali ([OCHA](#), 14 March 2012). In

late July, it also allocated close to \$7 million to humanitarian partners for assistance to conflict-affected persons in Mali ([OCHA](#), 24 July 2012). The International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) has appealed for \$2.6 million for food security and nutrition operations ([IFRC](#), 8 June 2012).

#### *Political and military response*

On 7 June, ECOWAS made a formal request to the UN Security Council to authorise the deployment of a stabilisation force of 3,300 personnel to recover northern Mali in the event that negotiations with armed groups failed ([Al Jazeera](#), 8 June 2012). Delaying its response, the Security Council asked in July for clarification on the objectives, means and modalities of the proposed deployment and stressed the importance of close cooperation with transitional Malian authorities ([UN Security Council](#), 5 July 2012). An ECOWAS conference, attended by representatives of the UN, African Union and European Union took place in Bamako between 9 and 13 August to finalise the strategy of the mission ([AFP](#), 8 August 2012).

In mid-September, the deployment of an ECOWAS mission for the reconquest of the north seemed unlikely as the Malian military declared that they would only allow a smaller regional force (600 to 800 troops) to support an exclusively Malian-led intervention ([Daily Maverick](#), 17 August 2012). The Malian government sent a formal request for help to ECOWAS as well as the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, but ruled out deployment of foreign military troops to recover the north ([AFP](#), 9 September 2012). Several days beforehand, some ECOWAS countries had blocked arms shipments destined for Mali for fear that they would fall into the wrong hands, fuelling growing tension between Mali and other West African states in view of their potentially non-convergent objectives ([Magharebia](#), 20 August 2012).

Nonetheless, on 23 September, the Malian government and ECOWAS finally came to an agreement on mission terms after the failure of talks

with Islamist groups. The agreement reportedly entails the deployment of ECOWAS troops along the Malian army and the establishment of ECOWAS headquarters in Bamako ([RFI](#), 23 September 2012). The situation in Mali was examined at the UN Conference on the Sahel which took place on 26 September. Participants called on the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution on Mali to support the country in restoring its territorial integrity ([UN News Centre](#), 26 September 2012). Uncertainty remains as to whether an ECOWAS mission will be approved by the UN Security Council within the next few weeks ([Reuters](#), 27 September 2012).

The United States is reportedly considering several anti-AQIM intervention options ([WSJ](#), 26 July 2012) while France has indicated willingness to support an ECOWAS-led military intervention ([AFP](#), 4 August 2012).

The International Crisis Group and others have strongly questioned a foreign military intervention and warned of the risk of escalating the conflict, precipitating further conflict and plunging all of West Africa into crisis ([ICG](#), 18 July 2012).

In July, the government referred the situation in Mali to the International Criminal Court which has begun preliminary investigations on the events that have occurred since the onset of the crisis in January 2012. Potential charges against armed groups include war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In parallel, six armed resistance groups banded together in July to free northern Mali and formed the Forces of Patriotic Resistance, claiming to count several thousands members among its ranks, a claim not independently verified ([RFI](#), 21 July 2012). At the same time, several groups of Malian youths are regrouping into militias such as in Mopti, where 285 poorly-equipped volunteers, including teenagers, are training with a view to reconquering the north ([AFP](#), 30 August 2012).

## About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) was established by the Norwegian Refugee Council in 1998, upon the request of the United Nations, to set up a global database on internal displacement. A decade later, IDMC remains the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement caused by conflict and violence worldwide.

IDMC aims to support better international and national responses to situations of internal displacement and respect for the rights of internally displaced people (IDPs), who are often among the world's most vulnerable people. It also aims to promote durable solutions for IDPs, through return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country.

IDMC's main activities include:

- Monitoring and reporting on internal displacement caused by conflict, generalised violence and violations of human rights;
- Researching, analysing and advocating for the rights of IDPs;
- Training and strengthening capacities on the protection of IDPs;
- Contributing to the development of standards and guidance on protecting and assisting IDPs.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

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