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MALI

Stability slowly returning but durable solutions a remote possibility for many IDPs

Mali has engaged in a process of slow recovery from the 2012 Tuareg and Islamist takeover of the north and March coup d'état. Dramatic events in 2012 and early 2013 plunged the country into complex security, political and humanitarian crises, causing the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Today, Malians and the international community have guarded confidence regarding the near future.

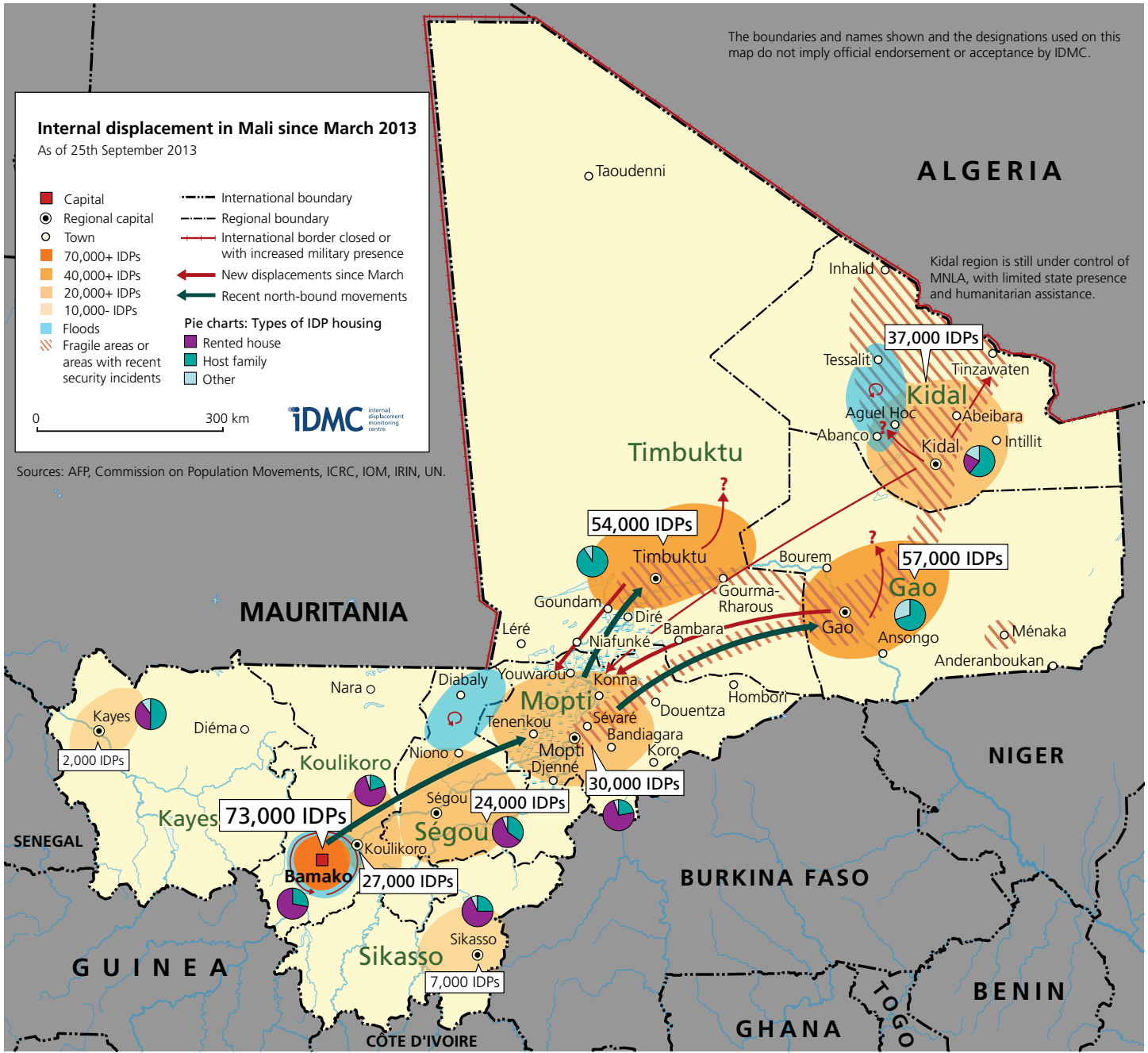


Thousands of Malians who sought refuge in southern cities during the last year of turmoil are starting to go back north. Others are waiting for reassurance that it is truly safe enough to go home. (Photo: E.J. Rushing, March 2013)

Significant security improvements, exemplified by the peaceful presidential elections in July and August 2013, have allowed many of the 311,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) still living in dire conditions to start thinking be-

yond their displacement. Indeed, tens of thousands have begun to return to their homes in northern Mali, but many obstacles remain for them to secure truly durable solutions to their displacement. Sporadic attacks and battles have continued in the north, particularly in Kidal. Fighting forces have left behind many explosive remnants of war, putting populations, especially children, at risk. Ethnic tensions have worsened and caused the further displacement of communities at risk of being associated with one group or the other. The Tuareg Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad (MNLA), which remains in control of Kidal, pulled out and then rejoined a June 2013 agreement with the government, allowing for the return of some state representation in the region. The overall situation remains tense and negotiations over the status of northern Mali as a whole are yet to start.

Many of the thousands of IDPs left in southern cities – the vast majority of whom wish to return north but are waiting for reassurance that their home towns are truly stable – have been impoverished by months of hardship, unsatisfied basic needs and lack of livelihoods. Whether they decide to return, integrate locally or move elsewhere they all need assistance to resume normal lives and restart economic activities. Health and psychological scars must be addressed for many have been victims or witnesses of violence. Unaccompanied and separated children, children associated with armed groups and victims of sexual- and gender-based violence are particularly vulnerable.



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

Background and 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 most recent – and certainly most significant – waves of displacement in Mali were sparked by the 2012 Tuareg and Islamist takeover of the north and the 2013 Islamist advance towards Bamako. This advance prompted France to deploy troops alongside the Malian army to regain control of northern regions affected by a year of Islamist occupation and atrocities. Dubbed Opération Serval, the troops forced Islamist groups to retreat into mountainous regions in the far north. However, they continued to launch sporadic attacks in Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal. International troops were deployed under the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) which was then replaced by a UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

The 2012 Tuareg rebellion and subsequent coup d'état

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 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). Fighting affected all of northern Mali and within three weeks at least 30,000 people had been displaced ([ICRC](#), 8 February 2012). Civilians fled 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 93,400 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).

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). Launching a coup d'état in Bamako, they ousted President Amadou Toumani Touré. 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, led by Dioncounda Traoré.

Islamist militants take over the north

Taking advantage of the post coup d'état power vacuum in Bamako, Tuareg rebels 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-Qa'ida in the Lands of 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 Malian territory. 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 sought a state of Azawad while Ansar Dine

aspired to Islamise 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).

A unity government headed by President Dioncounda Traoré and Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra was created in August with the priority of taking back the 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 put thousands of IDPs at risk of secondary displacement to new places of sanctuary even further south.

Islamist advance south, military intervention and residual insecurity

In early January 2013, Islamist groups moved south in an attempt to take control of towns situated below the de-facto north-south divide which had been stable since April 2012 ([BBC](#), 7 January 2013). Their capture of Konna, as well as fear of the imminent fall of other towns, caused the internal displacement of people who sought refuge further south ([Reuters](#), 10 January 2013; [IRIN](#), 11 January 2013).

The Islamist advance and fighting with the Malian army prompted the Malian government to call upon the UN and France for help. France agreed to send troops to Mali and UN Security Council resolution 2085 in December 2012 enabled rapid deployment of an African-led International

Support mission to Mali (AFISMA) to re-conquer the north ([UNSC](#), 10 January 2012; [BBC](#), 11 January 2013). Heavy fighting, including air raids, began in mid-January in several towns of central and northern Mali. This caused the displacement of populations towards secure areas in the south or further north into the desert, particularly near the Algerian border which was immediately 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).

All armed groups reportedly retreated to Mali's northern Ifoghas mountains within weeks but much unexploded ordinance (UXO) remained, inhibiting safe returns ([IRIN](#), 19 March 2013). In February, Islamist rebels engaged in guerilla-style warfare, launching suicide bombings in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu. Between March and July 2013, at least 77 people were killed or wounded by UXO in central and northern Mali ([OCHA](#), 5 August 2013).

UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2100 (2013), established a UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for an initial period of 12 months, comprising 12,600 military and police personnel ([UNSC](#), 25 April 2013). On 1 July 2013, MINUSMA took responsibility from AFISMA which had been in the country since January ([IRIN](#), 1 July 2013). MINUSMA's stabilisation mandate includes responsibility for developing and implementing programmes to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate former combatants. It will also contribute to creating a safe environment for voluntary return of IDPs ([UNSC](#), 25 April 2013). The UN Mine Action Service set up an office in Mali and has been training and advising Malian authorities on how to address the UXO threat ([UN News Service](#), 22 May 2013).

Inter-ethnic tensions

The human rights situation deteriorated throughout 2012 with reported abuses by the military and rising ethnic tensions. Various ethnic groups feared victimisation as some political and mili-

tary leaders manipulated ethnicity ([HRW](#), 20 December 2012). The securing of northern towns in January was followed by looting of homes and shops owned by Arabs or Tuaregs by both civilians and Malian soldiers who accused them of having supported the rebels ([VOA](#), 29 January 2013; [RFI](#), 11 February 2013). This led many to flee amidst accusations of military reprisal killings against those considered 'infiltrators' ([IRIN](#), 31 January 2013). IDPs from northern Mali who remained stranded in Tinzawaten near the Algerian border reportedly fled for fear of reprisal attacks linked to their ethnicity ([Solidarités, Médecins du Monde](#), February 2013).

In June, abuses by the MNLA and widespread fear were reported by dark-skinned inhabitants of Kidal, allegations which were denied by the Tuareg group ([RFI](#), 2 June 2012). Tensions in Kidal rose the same month with the arrival of Malian soldiers in a region which had been under control of the MNLA since January 2013 ([AFP](#), 8 June 2013).

Food insecurity and natural disaster-induced displacement

The 2012 crisis in Mali took place against a backdrop of severe drought, floods and food crisis. More than 16 million inhabitants of the Sahel were 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). Chronic drought and insecurity in 2012 disrupted traditional transhumance corridors and food distribution systems. Interviews with IDPs in Bamako showed that the food crisis has been the second most important cause of displacement after armed conflict ([IOM](#), July 2012).

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. The numbers of those left homeless are hard to verify. In 2012, several parts of the country were affected, particularly the regions of Kayes

and Ségou, with heavy damage to homes and public buildings such as schools ([L'Indépendant](#), 28 August 2012; [Save the Children](#), 3 October 2012).

In mid-2013, floods hit villages in Kayes, Ségou, Bamako and the conflict-affected Kidal region. In Kidal, already ravaged by the turmoil of the previous year, it was estimated that over 1,100 homes had been damaged or destroyed as of mid-August, raising additional concerns over risks of water-borne diseases ([OCHA](#), 28 June 2013; [ECHO](#), 23 August 2013). Over 11,000 people were estimated to have been affected by the floods in Kidal and Ségou ([OCHA](#), 26 August 2013). In Bamako, floods caused the death of at least 34 people and destroyed hundreds of homes ([OCHA](#), 30 August 2013). Many were made of mud-bricks and had been built on drainage sites ([AFP](#), 30 August 2013).

Displacement patterns and figures

As of 25 September 2013, some 311,300 people were estimated to be internally displaced throughout Mali ([CMP](#), 25 September 2013). Of the 353,000 IDPs estimated in June 2013, almost 8,000 people displaced in Mopti had returned home a month later. In addition, 175,200 people had taken refuge in neighbouring countries as of 16 July ([OCHA](#), 19 July 2013). In June 2013, IDP data available for the regions of Bamako, Ségou, Koulikoro, Sikasso and Kayes showed there were over 85,000 children and 40,500 women ([CMP](#), 20 June 2013), a demographic requiring specific considerations in terms of safety and assistance. The majority of displacements took place during the first months of the crisis in 2012. New displacements occurred following the January 2013 military intervention but not on a massive scale ([IOM](#), July 2013).

Estimates of the numbers of IDPs are reported by the Commission on Population Movements (CMP), set up within the Protection Cluster in June

2012 to centralise and coordinate population movement information. Led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), it 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 (part of the Ministère de la Sécurité intérieure et de la Protection civile) and the Ministère de l'Action Humanitaire, de la Solidarité et des Personnes Agées (OCHA, 20 June 2012; email correspondence with IOM, September 2012).

Improvements in IDP monitoring

Widespread lack of access and insecurity in 2012 prevented the CMP and its partners from conducting meaningful assessments in the north during the first year of the conflict. In February 2013, access remained limited and the meager available internal displacement data dated back to October 2012 (CMP, 21 February 2013).

Evaluations of the number and location of IDPs in the south have proven less difficult. Agencies belonging to the Protection Cluster carried out interviews and registrations in the spring of 2012 (OCHA, 27 June 2012). During the first stages of IDP registration some IDPs did not have time or inclination to participate, limiting the thoroughness of initial assessments and highlighting the need for more systematic monitoring (ACTED/Welthungerhilfe, 4 June 2012).

In late June 2012, IOM initiated a country-wide IDP tracking exercise, starting in all six communes of Bamako. A few months later, 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 to harmonise the collection of up-to-date and accurate data on internal displacement across Mali (email correspondence with IOM, September 2012). In January 2013, IOM started

monitoring movements at main transit stations between southern and northern Mali so as to gather more accurate estimates of displacement and returns (IOM, 31 January 2013).

The rise in IDP estimates in March and April 2013 compared to the previous month was partly explained by the CMP's ability to conduct more thorough assessments in regions such as Mopti and IDPs' greater inclination to be registered (CMP, 30 April 2013).

IDPs' locations of origin and areas of settlement

According to the latest information available, IDPs originate primarily from the regions of Timbuktu (51 per cent) and Gao (38 per cent) and to a lesser extent from Kidal and Mopti (IOM, July 2013). By July 2013, 79,000 IDPs had settled in Bamako, 54,000 in Mopti and over 46,000 in Ségou (CMP, 30 April 2013). Many of those displaced within the north are northerners. In Kidal, 66 per cent of IDPs were from Kidal region and this was also the case for 51 per cent and 23 per cent of IDPs in Timbuktu and Gao (IOM, July 2013).

Unlike in the first half of 2012, when 90 per cent of IDPs in the south were staying with host families in urban areas, only between 18 and 27 per cent were staying with host families as of mid- 2013, while 68 to 77 per cent had found their own shelter. According to the Shelter Cluster, another five per cent were staying in collective or makeshift shelters such as schools, warehouses or uncompleted buildings (Shelter Cluster, April 2013; IOM, July 2013; OCHA, 16 July 2013). Several months into the crisis, some families were hosting many IDPs. In Mopti, some reported having accommodated as many as 60 IDPs under a single roof (IMC, in OCHA, 7 February 2013).

These estimates vary according to region: in Kayes, 50 per cent of IDPs were still staying with host families and 22 per cent in collective centres. In the north, many more IDPs were staying with host families: there were 91 per cent doing so in

Timbuktu and 70 and 61 per cent in Gao and Kidal respectively ([IOM](#), July 2013).

Return movements increasing

The January 2013 military intervention to retake control of northern Mali represented a window of hope for hundreds of thousands of IDPs ([AFP](#), 24 January 2013). A return intention survey in February showed that 93 per cent of families displaced to Bamako intended to return home ([IOM](#), 13 February 2013). Only a minority wished to return immediately, planning to delay departure until the security situation improved or to fit with school and agricultural calendars. As of April, 95 per cent of IDPs still desired to return and most were waiting for security conditions to improve. IDPs who did not wish to return to the north were often direct victims of violence and abuses ([IOM](#), June 2013).

There were few return movements in 2012 ([IDMC](#), October 2012 overview) but the CMP has observed south-north population movements since January and February 2013. The first IDPs on their way back home were mostly men, accompanied by a few family members, believed to be assessing the situation in their areas of origin ([CMP](#), 21 February 2013). Others returned to repair their deserted and unmaintained homes ahead of the rainy season. Damage or destruction of homes was cited as an issue for 30 per cent of those IDPs wishing to return in February. While some IDPs planned to return to participate in national elections in July, others considered that the situation would be safe only after the elections. Many other IDPs, however, remain stuck in displacement as they do not have the financial means to make the trip back home ([The Guardian](#), 15 May 2013; [IOM](#), June 2013).

In May 2013, for the first time since January, the number of people travelling from south to north was slightly higher than the number of IDPs travelling in the other direction (around 31,000 people flowing in either direction). The gradual decline in the number of IDPs since July 2013

confirms that northwards return movements are increasing ([CMP](#), 25 September 2013). While most returning IDPs cited improved security in the north as their main incentive in going back, other returnees made the decision to go north as they could no longer afford the costs incurred by being displaced in the expensive urban centres of the south ([OCHA](#), 3 May 2013). Returns to Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao significantly increased after mid-2013 but this has not happened in Kidal ([OCHA](#), 19 July 2013).

Protection risks

Threats to physical security under Islamist rule

Many crimes were reported in 2012. These included abductions, rapes, public floggings, arbitrary detentions and executions and extortions at checkpoints. Armed groups pillaged private houses, hospitals, schools, aid agencies and government buildings ([HRW](#), 30 April 2012; [AI](#), May 2012). Imposition of a strict interpretation of Islamic law by Ansar Dine and MUJAO in Timbuktu, Kidal, Gao and Douentza created a general atmosphere of fear. Severe corporal punishment was regularly inflicted on those violating Islamist dictates. Women had to cover themselves and smoking and alcohol were prohibited. In late July 2012, an unmarried couple was stoned to death in Aguelhok ([BBC](#), 30 July 2012). A man had a hand amputated after being accused of stealing cattle ([Reuters](#), 9 August 2012). More people suffered similarly in ensuing weeks ([Al Jazeera](#), 15 January 2013).

Military intervention and inter-communal violence

Before the launch of the military intervention in January 2013, IDPs in northern Mali reported being afraid of violence and tainted by association with armed groups ([Sahara Médias](#), 8 September 2012). Fear of reprisals remained strong and intensified following military operations. Violence was reported against light-skinned inhabitants of the north on the grounds on their alleged links with

armed groups. Many fled Timbuktu and Gao after their homes or shops were looted and other fled preventively; several men were beaten up while on the run ([IRIN](#), 31 January 2013).

Sexual and gender-based violence

Despite data collection constraints, several humanitarian organisations reported rape, humiliation and other forms of gender-based violence as being one of the main protection concerns for IDPs. During the crisis there were repeated 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 with their families for fear of a similar fate for their daughters ([France Info](#), 9 August 2012).

All armed groups were accused of perpetrating rapes while Ansar Dine, AQIM and the MUJAO coerced girls into forced marriage with militants ([Watchlist](#), June 2013). In 2012, the sexual- and gender-based violence sub-cluster identified over 2,800 victims of violence, including 211 rapes, 181 forced marriages and many more of physical and psychological violence ([OCHA](#), 16 July 2013). It is believed that only a minority of cases are reported for fear of stigmatisation and perceived loss of dignity ([UNGA](#), 7 January 2013). A witness living in Gao told reporters that everyone knew a victim of sexual violence, but only few received care and support ([IRIN](#), 8 May 2013). Nonetheless, the high percentage of internally displaced women and girls is an indicator that gender-based violence and humiliation was a trigger for displacement during the crisis.

Family members separated by violence

Separation of family members started from the onset of the crisis. 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 reported in mid 2012 that they were separated from other family members ([UNHCR](#), 4

July 2012). As of June 2013, over 1,500 separated and unaccompanied children had been identified ([UNICEF](#), June 2013). Bamako and Mopti were the regions hosting the most ([UNICEF](#), July 2013). Such unaccompanied children are left to their own coping strategies to mitigate neglect, child labour, lack of access to food and education, and are placed at a higher risk of recruitment by armed groups.

Recruitment of children by armed groups

Recruitment of child soldiers by armed groups started soon after they seized control of the north. According to UNICEF, at least 175 boys had been recruited by early July 2012, a figure judged as an under-estimate by Malian organisations operating in the north ([Education Cluster](#), August 2012). In May 2013, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict listed Mali among countries known for child protection violations during armed conflict ([Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict](#), 15 May 2013). All main armed groups – the MNLA, Ansar Dine, MUJAO and AQIM – were accused in early 2013 of recruiting child soldiers, either to help enforce their interpretation of *sharia* law or directly in combat. Despite the relatively rapid retreat of armed groups to Mali's northern mountains or neighbouring countries, the fate of most children associated with armed groups remain uncertain. While it was reported that some children escaped with armed groups, it is believed that others may have gone into hiding for fear of retaliation by government forces or community members ([Watchlist](#), June 2013). Some children who did demobilise managed to join their families and were found traumatised, malnourished and in poor physical condition. Others were arrested and handed over to the Malian authorities; some were kept in an adult prison for several weeks ([UNICEF](#), August 2013).

Lack of identification documents and participation in public affairs

Some IDPs without identification documents faced protection risks and difficulties in accessing basic services ([OCHA](#), 26 August 2013). In certain

regions, they faced onerous formalities to obtain new ID cards, including having to pay in some offices ([L'Indicateur du Renouveau](#), 20 February 2013). Non-possession of ID hinders IDPs' return movements, making them liable to extortion when passing police or military checkpoints ([DRC](#), May 2013).

The interim Malian government announced in January 2013 plans for national elections no later than July ([Mali's Prime Minister Cabinet](#), January 2013). The first round took place on 28 July, six months after the beginning of the military intervention in northern and central Mali and while Kidal region was still under control of the MNLA. There were many logistical constraints; failure to deliver millions of voter ('NINA' cards) in time excluded many IDPs from participation. Many IDPs were still registered to vote in places of origin in the north where their voter cards had been sent. There were no arrangements for them to vote without them in places of displacement. Some did manage, at considerable cost, to retrieve their cards by sending family members home to collect them ([The Guardian](#), 26 July 2013). The rate of NINA card distribution rate remained unclear; conflicting sources spoke of 25 or 70 per cent ([VOA](#), 24 July 2013). In addition, around 20,000 voters were registered while their places of residence remained unknown, which prevented their participation in the elections. Like other Malians, young IDPs who had reached voting age since the previous census in 2009 could not register to vote ([RFI](#), 20 July 2013).

Assistance needs in areas of displacement and return areas

IDPs are in grave need of assistance across Mali. Access to food, shelter and livelihoods is still insufficient in the south. Aid organisations are deploying in the north but re-establishment of state services is slow. In July 2013, 92 per cent of IDPs declared having at least one need. An average of 24 per cent

had received assistance, but there were wide geographical differences in coverage ([IOM](#), July 2013).

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 traditionally pastoralist IDPs who are accustomed to purchasing 45 to 65 per cent 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.

The food 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). IDPs stranded at Tinzawaten in Kidal region near the Algerian border could only afford one meal a day and had no market in which to purchase food ([Mdm](#), 1 February 2013). Nutritional security improved overall in mid-2013 thanks to sufficient levels of precipitation, enhanced market supplies, increased security and humanitarian aid ([FEWS NET](#), July 2013). However, the food security cluster estimated in August 2013 that food insecurity affected 3.5 million people, including 1.4 million in need of immediate food assistance ([OCHA](#), 5 August 2013). Children were particularly suffering in Gao region where acute malnutrition rates reached 13.5 per cent ([UN News Centre](#), 24 July 2013).

Over a year after the beginning of the crisis banks in the north remained closed. IDPs and returnees thus faced further difficulties purchasing food and resuming normal commercial activities ([IRIN](#), 10 February 2013; [ECHO](#), 16 April 2013). Banks began to reopen in August 2013, an important step towards economic recovery ([FEWS NET](#), August 2013).

Limited access to livelihoods

Having abandoned their livelihoods IDPs sheltering in the south have struggled to make ends

meet ([FEWS Net](#), 10 May 2012). Areas hosting many IDPs, such as the Mopti region, were themselves affected by severe food scarcity and poverty as urban malnutrition was rising ([IRIN](#), 8 August 2012). According to a May 2012 assessment in two of Bamako's six communes most IDPs reported that prior to flight they had been tradesmen, civil servants, farmers, teachers, or private sector employees. Most initially stayed with relatives and host families who may have remained employed but who had to care for much larger households. In Bamako's Commune V over 71 per cent of IDPs and host families declared inability to meet their basic needs; only 3.7 per cent reported such difficulties before the crisis. Similarly, in Kalaban Coro on the outskirts of Bamako 65.8 per cent of IDPs and host families reported inability to meet their basic needs, against only 0.62 per cent prior to their displacement. In both sites, employment was cited as one of the most important needs, followed by food and essential household items ([ACTED/Welthungerhilfe](#), June 2012). Many IDPs sold their belongings as a result of the crisis and over 65 per cent of them got into debt paying for transport, accommodation, food, health care and household items ([OCHA](#), 16 July 2013). In mid-2013, 31 per cent of interviewed displaced households in the south declared not having any income, while 22 per cent declared having only an occasional source of revenue ([IOM](#), July 2013).

Internally displaced pastoralists are still suffering from the 2012 crisis. Having lost cattle to armed groups and unable to feed those remaining, many have resorted to survival selling of remaining animals despite low market prices ([IOM](#), June 2013). Sporadic attacks continue in all three northern regions. Many fear entering towns where clashes have occurred between local residents and displaced people living on urban fringes. Many pastoralists still possessing cattle have returned to the north but struggle to find available grazing land ([IRIN](#), 13 August 2013).

While the lack of livelihood opportunities in displacement areas often motivates IDPs to return home, the economic situation in the three under-developed northern regions remains poor, hampering resumption of normal activities ([IPS](#), 12 April 2013). IDPs mostly return with few, if any, assets and have to start from scratch ([AFP](#), 14 March 2013). A slow and still fragile improvement is occurring with the current stabilisation but this remains so far limited to urban centres ([FEWS Net](#), July 2013).

Shelter needs

Shelter is a major issue both for those still displaced and those who have returned. According to latest estimates, 17 to 35 per cent of IDPs renting their own accommodation fear expulsion as they are unable to pay their rent, while 17 to 25 per cent regularly move to find cheaper accommodation or look for extra space to accommodate large families. In addition, 70 per cent sleep outside or with their children for lack of space ([OCHA](#), 16 July 2013). Some IDPs who were first displaced to destitute circumstances near the Algerian border were forced to move again towards the south ([IFRC](#), 15 March 2013). Thirty per cent of respondents to a February survey indicated that their houses had been damaged or destroyed by fighting or that they were unable to maintain fragile structures ([IOM](#), 13 February 2013).

Heavy rains and floods in several parts of Mali in August 2013 caused additional shelter problems. In Bamako, at least 60 per cent of houses assessed were completely destroyed, 25 per cent completely inhabitable and only 15 per cent were partially damaged but habitable ([IOM](#), 3 September 2013).

Limited access to healthcare

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 2012, OCHA estimated that 1.3 million people lacked access to health

care in Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu regions and that 94 per cent of health facilities were dysfunctional or closed. Some started to reopen in June (OCHA, [13](#) and [20](#) June 2012).

An assessment in Mopti and Ségou showed that, except for one health centre, IDPs had to pay for health care (Care and CRS in [OCHA](#), 7 February 2013). Healthcare costs are an obstacle for IDPs throughout Mali, with particularly dire consequences for pregnant women and young children ([UNICEF](#), February 2013; [ECHO](#), 16 April 2013). Mobile clinics that were still operating in northern Mali before January 2013 had to suspend their activities temporarily in the wake of new insecurity ([ECHO](#), 16 April 2013). Although humanitarian access improved again in mid-2013, allowing humanitarian organisations to scale up their activities, the return of health personnel and facilities has remained slow. As of August 2013, 65 per cent of health facilities in the north were partially or entirely non-functional, versus 17 per cent nationwide ([OCHA](#), 5 August 2013). Access to health care was further constrained for those displaced far away from urban centres and those who fled as a result of ethnic tensions and now feel unable to risk returning to seek medical treatment in towns ([MSF](#), 29 July 2013).

Psychological trauma insufficiently addressed

Despite the trauma experienced by many IDPs psychological assistance remains limited. Long-term consequences are a problem. Children are particularly affected and some remain traumatised and terrified of loud noises reminding them of the conflict ([OCHA](#), 19 July 2013; [VOA](#), 27 July 2013). In particular need are victims of sexual and gender-based violence abandoned by their partners or families and now living marginalised lives ([OCHA](#), 7 January 2013). As of July 2013, only 36 per cent of women whose cases had been reported had received psychosocial, medical or legal assistance ([OCHA](#), 16 July 2013).

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 per cent of teaching staff were displaced and most schools were looted or burnt down. Schooling was suspended in all three northern regions ([Education Cluster](#), 11 July 2012). Of 90,000 children displaced in southern and central Mali, 49 per cent were not receiving schooling in mid-July ([IOM](#), July 2013). Some who have managed to enroll report being discriminated against as children coming from Azawad ([Education Cluster](#), June 2012). In-school food – an incentive to remain in school – is very limited ([Education Cluster](#), 13 August 2012; [WFP](#), 2 September 2013). Some IDP children, accustomed to being taught in Arabic, speak little French. Their families' poverty and frequent hunger and illness further impact their education ([OCHA](#), 5 April 2013).

Access to education further deteriorated following the 2013 military intervention, both for children in the north and those who were displaced in the south, particularly in Ségou and Mopti. Another 81,000 children's education was affected in the south as a result of the conflict, displacement of teachers, destruction and looting of schools and the presence of UXO. New episodes of violence raised the nationwide number of children whose education had been disrupted to 754,000 ([Education Cluster](#), 12 February 2013).

Schools began to reopen in the north a few weeks after Islamists were ousted ([IRIN](#), 4 February 2013) but in difficult conditions. A March assessment in Mopti region showed a general lack of teachers and administrative staff, teaching materials, operational canteens and hygiene and sanitation facilities. Displaced children were among those with the greatest difficulty in attending school ([Intersos](#), 8 May 2013). By June, 54 per cent of northern schools had reopened but staff and teaching materials were still lacking ([UNICEF](#), June 2013). In functioning schools, ac-

celerated learning programmes are taking place ([OCHA](#), 19 July 2013).

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 October 2013, no steps had been taken towards implementation.

The country's unity government, formed on 20 August 2012, was 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 (MAHSPA), established by the interim government in April 2012, was responsible for launching and coordinating aid for those affected by the conflict and the food crisis. A June 2013 government reshuffle transferred responsibility for humanitarian action to the renamed Ministère de l'Economie et de l'Action Humanitaire ([Le Zénith Balé](#), 25 June 2013). A raft of new ministries were established by the incoming Keïta administration in September 2013 but there is as yet no specifically designated national focal point for IDPs.

In July 2012, the interim government set out a plan for political transition with emphasis on humanitarian action, solidarity, the fight against poverty and social protection. MAHSPA implemented programmes in 2012 and 2013. The government participated in the assessment of IDP numbers and needs, identified corridors for humanitarian assistance and formulated a national plan of humanitarian action ([Office of the Prime Minister of Mali](#), 12 July 2012).

Humanitarian assistance and plans for return to the north

Throughout 2012, various ministries and agencies led humanitarian assistance programmes delivering food and medication and fighting cholera. The government provided free health care in Mopti and the three northern regions, in an effort to mitigate the blocked access to such care over a million people were experiencing at the time (IDMC, 2012 Overview). The Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire is charged with analysing levels of food security and identifying vulnerable regions. In November 2012 it initiated a food security programme for IDPs and host families in southern and central Mali ([L'Indépendant](#), 23 November 2012). In early June 2013, it was planning more thorough assessments in newly secured northern regions but its finances and national food stocks had substantially diminished due to funding shortfalls ([Le Républicain](#), 7 June 2013).

In August 2013, the Ministère de l'économie et de l'action humanitaire assumed responsibility for supplying electricity to the north for three months ([L'Indicateur du Renouveau](#), 5 August 2013). Pledges by the Ministère de l'administration territoriale to rapidly restore administration have been slowed by damage and destruction of public facilities, absence of some civil servants and lack of furniture and other assets. In August 2013, the government pledged 250,000 Central African francs (\$500) to cover transport and resettlement costs of returning civil servants ([IRIN](#), 21 August 2013).

Restoration of the Malian state in Kidal is impeded by MNLA control. The Tuareg group and the government signed a ceasefire in June ahead of the elections, allowing the return of Malian troops ([BBC](#), 18 June 2013). In late September, Tuareg separatists suspended participation in the peace deal, accusing the government of not respecting the accord reached in June ([BBC](#), 26 September 2013), but rejoined the agreement a week later. Nonetheless, negotiations around the status of Kidal were left to a later stage, with the MNLA planning to propose

autonomy to the new government ([AFP](#), 4 August 2013). The security situation remains volatile after the retreat of armed groups. Their combatants are thought to be hiding in local communities or regrouping in neighbouring countries such as Libya ([Jeune Afrique](#), 22 July 2013).

Intensification of inter-ethnic tensions led the Malian interim government to set up a dialogue and reconciliation commission in April 2013 ([Malian Presidency](#), 10 April 2013). Some politicians and civil society actors argue that its 30 members are unrepresentative ([RFI](#), 13 April 2013; [APA](#), 4 May 2013). In July, members of the commission started countrywide consultation visits, starting in Kidal ([Xinhua](#), 9 July 2013).

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 du Coeur, the Collectif des ressortissants du nord (COREN), the Haut conseil islamique malien and members of the Malian diaspora (IDMC, 2012 Overview). A diaspora-based NGO, Saison, donated food and school kits including to some displaced families recently returned to Gao ([Le Reporter](#), 9 August 2013). In August, another welfare agency, Tassaght, announced plans to help returning pastoralists in northern Mali to restock ([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; this was notably done in Kidal ([L'Essor](#), 6 August 2013). Civil society and the large number of IDP associations which have sprung up during and since the crisis have potential to help consolidate governance and democracy but their means are limited and many are closely dependent on state agencies ([MINUSMA](#), 9 August 2013).

International response

The 2012 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, has meant that IDPs and host families have received insufficient assistance during the last twelve months. Victims of the conflict still have humanitarian needs but also urgently require longer-term assistance to resettle, rebuild and develop normal lives.

Durable solutions depend on a comprehensive response to IDPs' needs; humanitarian and development actors must work together to help build IDPs' resilience during the long road to recovery and a stable peace. Unfortunately, the 2013 United Nations Consolidated Appeal remains insufficiently funded, jeopardising current recovery efforts and putting IDPs at risk of protracted vulnerability.

Access improving but unequal levels of assistance countrywide

Despite the Islamist occupation of the north and the retreat of humanitarian organisations, several organisations – including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Médecins du Monde (MdM), Action Contre le Faim (ACF), Solidarité Internationale and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) – continued to operate in all three regions ([IRIN](#), 18 April 2013). In November 2012, Ansar Dine permitted humanitarian organisations to operate in areas under its control, mainly Timbuktu ([BBC](#), 6 November 2012). Many international NGOs were prevented from accessing conflict-affected areas just after the January 2013 military intervention ([IRIN](#), 18 January 2013). The rapid securing of northern towns by military forces allowed NGOs to plan scaling up of activities in the northern regions ([IRIN](#), 6 February 2013). By mid-June, 55 of the 120 international organisations operational in Mali were working in the north. Almost all were working in Timbuktu

and Gao as only certain rural areas of Kidal were accessible ([OCHA](#), 21 June 2013). There was only one NGO running education programmes in Kidal by late August ([OCHA](#), 30 August 2013). In the south, regions receiving the most humanitarian assistance are Mopti, Ségou, Bamako and Koulikoro; in the north, most NGOs operate in Gao and Timbuktu, but to a lesser extent in Kidal.

Humanitarian and development funding needed

A UN Consolidated Appeal (CAP) for Mali was launched in December 2012, requesting \$370 million. It has four strategic objectives:

- reduction of mortality and morbidity of vulnerable communities
- protection of people and communities affected by the crises, in particular IDPs, victims of gender-based violence and human rights violations, children associated with armed groups and those at risk of explosive remnants of war
- reinforcement of resilience and subsistence capacities of affected people and communities
- opening up humanitarian space and improving humanitarian action and coordination.

Despite dire humanitarian needs, the CAP remained largely under-funded. It was revised in July 2013, requesting \$475 million. As of late September, the CAP was 37.5 per cent funded. The protection cluster was 33.5 per cent funded, while those addressing nutrition, education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and non-food items (NFIs) were even less covered ([FTS](#), 30 September 2013).

There were pledges of €3.25 bn. (c. \$4.34 bn.) during a May 2013 international donor conference in Brussels ([AFP](#), 15 May 2013). While a positive development, much of this pledge has still not been distributed, and there are concerns about the country's absorptive capacity in the absence of proper guarantees around management and transparency ([IPS](#), 16 May 2013). Some communi-

ties have reported not receiving earmarked aid ([IRIN](#), 5 August 2013).

Funding to assess and meet the protection and assistance needs of IDPs and returning IDPs is crucial. Without it, 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 are forced to live far away from their homes and livelihoods, the greater their needs will become. Their safety will remain at high risk and they may continue opting to go home prematurely in precarious and potential dangerous conditions.

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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