



Child Protection Risks and Needs in Mali

Secondary Data Review

Compiled by the Child Protection Area of Responsibility in Mali and the
Global CP AoR



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This document has been produced based on a secondary data matrix compiled by the Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) using the Minimum Standards as an analysis framework. All data points are citations from the secondary data matrix which have been compared and interpreted, but not triangulated and verified.

The 2012 crisis in Mali triggered an immense humanitarian emergency. Even after progress in the implementation of the 2005 Peace Agreement in Algeria, the multidimensional nature of the crisis is worsening. The conditions of affected populations and the humanitarian situation are further exacerbated by the country's exposures to recurrent natural disasters, including drought. In the Central and Northern regions where banditry, inter-communal conflicts, and the presence of armed groups already exists, the resurgence of communal violence in northern areas has prompted an increase of internal displacements, which intensified risks for children. As of February 2018, 49,771 people were internally displaced in Mopti, Gao, Menaka and Timbuktu (areas with the most people in need of assistance). 27 per cent of Malian people live in areas affected by conflict.

This review of secondary sources refers to information collected from 2016 to 2018. The data collected covers mostly the Northern and Central regions where there are the highest levels of violence and most people at risk, with considerable data from Timbuktu, Kidal, Gao, Mopti and Segou.¹ These areas are not only heavily affected by conflict but also particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

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CHILD PROTECTION RISKS AND NEEDS IN MALI

Over 2.4 million children are currently in need of humanitarian assistance in Mali.



DANGERS AND INJURIES

Accidents related to explosives were the cause of **71 civilian victims in 2017 and 60 as of early 2018**, of which at least 15 boys and one girl.



JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN

At least **94 children have been deprived of liberty** through detention or capture based on alleged association to armed groups or accused of offenses related to terrorism.



PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AND OTHER HARMFUL PRACTICES

49% of girls marry before the age of 18 and conflict is likely to raise these figures. **More than 89% of girls marrying as children are victims of FGM.**



CHILDREN RECRUITMENT BY ARMED GROUPS

At least **361 cases of children recruitment** from January to June 2017 were registered, including 14 girls.



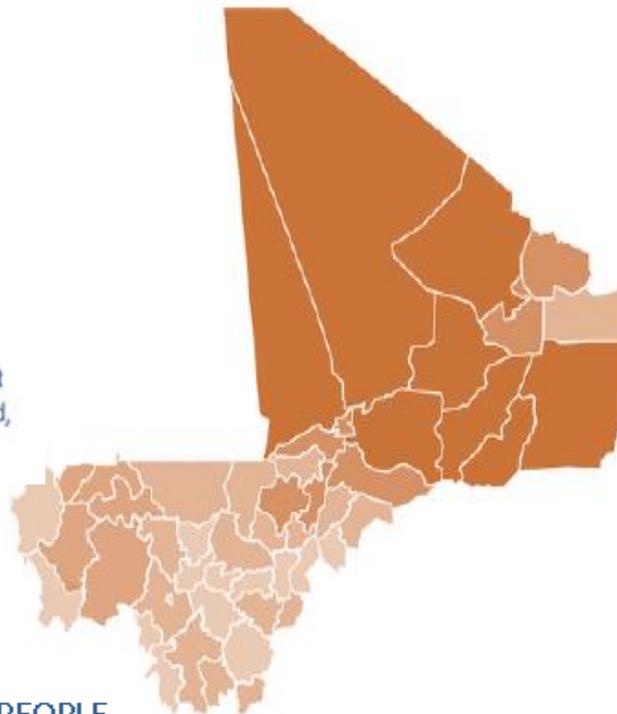
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

49,771 people remain internally displaced in Mopti, Gao, Menaka and Timbuktu. From registered internally displaced persons (IDPs), 57% are women and 53% children.



SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Children remain the most affected by GBV and represent 68% of the total number of survivors, with majority of reported cases concerning girls. There were at least 1,833 GBV cases in 2017



Overall Protection

At least 4.1 million people are in need of protection in Mali, where half of these are women and girls (fifty two per cent) and 526,340 (55 per cent) are children.² This number encompasses returnees, people affected by displacement, and host communities, particularly from circles within Timbuktu, Kidal, Gao, Segou, Menaka and Mopti, where half of the affected population are located, in addition to displaced persons in Kayes, Koulikoro, Bamako and Sikasso regions.³ At least 608 cases of human rights violations and abuses have been reported in the affected regions during year 2016 and first semester of 2017. For the first half of 2017, 202 cases of violations and abuses were documented, resulting in more than 569 victims, including cases of enforced disappearance, torture or ill-treatment. The vast majority of victims have been men, with 125 child cases that have been registered. Such abuses also encompass sexual violence, recruitment and use of children, unlawful detention, among others.⁴ However, it should be noted that specific human rights violations that affect mostly women, such as GBV are underreported, due to reasons like fear of reprisal, extrajudicial arrangement, stigma and others, hence figures under represent these types of concerns.

Women, girls, boys, older persons, and persons with disabilities remain in the most vulnerable situations. The lack of access to resources, such as drinking water or food, is creating tension and conflict between communities, thereby threatening overall security and protection.⁵ As a result of heightened insecurity, movement around towns and traveling by road is restricted, making it difficult for humanitarian protection actors to ensure accessible, quality services. In fact, the UN Security Level in these areas is the highest (5).⁶

All in all, the crisis has caused children to suffer from displacement, violence, sexual abuse, the loss of, or separation from family members, involvement in armed forces or groups, among other traumatic events and stressors like the denial of education by certain actors, all of which are sources of despair, loss of hope, anxiety, and overall psychological distress.

Danger and Injuries

Children are exposed to serious physical injuries due to the critical security situation in Northern and Central Mali, caused by intercommunal tensions around access to natural resources⁷, resurgence of crime and armed conflict. Most incidents are linked to killings or injuries from Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) or Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). Accidents related to IED's were the cause of 71 civilian victims (21 killed) in 2017 and 60 at the beginning of 2018. OCHA also reports that at least 15 boys and one girl were ERW victims in the year 2018.⁸

Other reports documented a higher death toll affecting civilians, with 76 people being killed in attacks by armed groups using IED's.⁹ Most of these attacks have taken place in Mopti and Segou. For example, in January 2018 during a bus attack, 26 people, including women and children, were killed.¹⁰ Civilian IED victims in the Mopti region represent 87 percent of all civilian victims registered in Mali since the beginning of the year (2018).¹¹ During 2017's first semester, 13 children casualties were verified (8 children killed, 5 maimed). Throughout the whole year, at least 34 children were victims of crossfire, IED or ERW, out of which 19 were killed.¹²

The presence and circulation of small and light weapons is another cause of concern, increasing risks for children's physical and psychological safety and exacerbating violence against civilians. The most affected regions are Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu.¹³ The majority of child casualties are caused by crossfire. For instance, confrontations between the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) and the Platform in 2016 led to at least 46 child casualties registered in the commune of Kidal. These casualties have resulted as well from incidents involving the Malian Defense and Security Forces, Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés (GATIA) and Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA).¹⁴

The attacks on educational institutions and violence against educational personal and actors pose a risk to the security of children, who are not only denied their right to education (i.e. at least 150,000 children couldn't attend school in 2017)¹⁵ but also face increased physical dangers. During 2017, five schools were taken by the CMA, three by the Platform and six by unidentified perpetrators in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal.¹⁶ Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that during that same year "numerous teachers were directly threatened and schools vandalized or destroyed by radical armed groups".¹⁷

Physical Violence and Other Harmful Practices

In the Mopti region, in addition to tensions related to the management of natural resources, inter-communal conflicts have erupted following settling of accounts based on suspicions that Peulhs belong to radical groups that regularly commit abuses in this region. There are also inter-communal tensions between the Daoussahak (Touareg) and Peulhs, the Dozo (Bambara) and Peulhs as well as the Ifoghas and Imghad in the regions of Gao, Mopti and Kidal. These conflicts are historical and fueled by access to and control over scarce natural resources.¹⁸ Increased community friction is intensifying the risk of physical violence. For example, OCHA reports that fights between women or children from host communities and IDPs are frequent, particularly in Northern and Central regions.¹⁹ Additionally, some men are hiding in the bush during the day due to fears of being targeted by armed groups leaving women and children exposed to further safety and protection risks.²⁰

Violent conflict, displacement and recurrent natural disasters create a complex environment, eroding family and social structures, which work as protective safety nets for children in times of peace. When livelihoods are lacking, displaced women and girls responsible for feeding and caring for children are sometimes forced into marriage or prostitution and others work for host communities.²¹ Child marriage is practiced in some areas as it is believed this can “protect” girls. In fact, 49 per cent of girls marry before the age of 18. Per UNICEF reports, 89 per cent of girls have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), marking transition from childhood to adulthood.²² Although it cannot be confirmed that these numbers are directly linked to the conflict, past reports show higher levels of violence increased harmful practices, such as child marriage or FGM.²³

Reports from 2015 mention that to cover basic needs, parents resorted to exploiting their children as a means to survive. Teachers, Koranic teachers, and guardians to whom children are entrusted were also linked to acts of barbaric physical violence.²⁴ There is no current available data to affirm whether this happens today. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for women and girls to eat less in an effort to ensure more food for other members of their family. Their education and health are sometimes also considered unnecessary expenses and, thus, eliminated first from the family budget.²⁵ Armed groups are the most cited perpetrators in the North, accused of using religion to harm and deprive the population of access to goods and services.²⁶ Plan International has also documented high levels of violence and abuse to which children are exposed to due to the harsh punitive measures imposed by Sharia Law in Timbuktu.²⁷

Sexual Violence

Limited humanitarian access, inadequate and inaccessible care services, growing insecurity, fear of reprisals, and socio-cultural pressure lead to survivors of sexual violence often remaining silent.²⁸ Acts of sexual violence and exploitation are widely under-documented. Several factors could explain this. First, survivors and witnesses have limited access to survivor-centered, multi-sector services, including health or medical services, psychosocial support, adequate security and protection, and justice. Extrajudicial arrangements are a common practice, which can also inhibit reporting.²⁹ Additionally, monitoring of these violations are severely limited because of reduced access.³⁰

Available data indicates that sexual violence against girls and boys, although less monitored and documented, is pervasive in Mali. In a society where women's and children's rights are still not fulfilled, especially in rural areas of the country, and where sexual violence against women is taboo, many cases remain unknown due to reasonable fears of reprisal or stigmatization.³¹

It is well known and accepted that sexual violence is exacerbated by displacement and armed conflict, including when children are recruited and used by armed groups.³² Although mostly girls are at risk of sexual violence and gender-based violence (GBV) such as rape or child marriage to soldiers³³, boys have also been targets of sexual violence. In 2015, reports indicate that boys were being sexually abused by some associated with Islamic schools. Rape and other forms of sexual violence have been practices attributable to all Ansar Eddine, the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) and Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO) among others.³⁴ Analysis of gender-based violence (GBV) data reveals an increase in the number of reported cases (1,462 in 2015, 2,164 in 2016 and 1,833 in 2017). From end of January to June 2018, of the cases reported by the GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS) system, 52 per cent were sexual violence, 13 per cent physical assaults, 6 per cent forced marriages, 10 per cent denial of resources and 11 per cent psychological violence. 96 per cent of documented survivors are women and girls. Children remain highly affected by GBV, representing 68 per cent of the total number of reporting survivors, with the majority of reported cases concerning girls.³⁵ Further, the government reported 20 suspected cases of GBV against returned IDPs based on a profiling study conducted throughout Mali on IDPs and returnees.³⁶ Most of the identified cases of conflict-related sexual violence were against women and girls travelling on public transport along the route linking Mali with Niger, and mostly in the regions of Gao, Timbuktu, Menaka, Mopti and on the border with Niger.³⁷

Psychosocial Distress and Mental Disorders

Mass displacement has affected both displaced children and those in host communities in numerous ways³⁸ as they bear the pressure of sharing limited natural resources and essential services, particularly in locations affected by conflict, floods, food insecurity (increased by erratic rains, the early seasonal decline of Niger Delta waters, and the silting of arable lands), and malnutrition.³⁹

Routines and normal living patterns have been disrupted in many areas of the country, and endemic violence has prevented normal social activities, such as schooling. Approximately 300,000 children live in communities where schools are non-functional⁴⁰, thus negatively impacting the protective environments for children, their resilience, and ability to cope with psychosocial distress.

It is estimated that 526,343 children need access to protection services, with at least half requiring focused psycho-social support due to consistent exposure to abuse, exploitation, risks of being injured by explosive devices and weapons in conflict zones,⁴¹ and/or recruitment and use by armed actors. To date, 47,289 children in affected areas have been targeted for support; however, this support must continue and be expanded as a gap of 38,097 remains. Additionally, many children have witnessed and/or experienced high levels of violence as a result of being surrounded by conflict, and harsh punitive measures imposed by strict laws can have highly detrimental psychological consequences.⁴²

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) records that the majority of displaced families have experienced trauma, anxiety, and are under constant psychosocial stress due to perils, including attacks by armed groups, encountered while fleeing to a safer location. Some IDPs split into groups to increase their protection and now remain dispersed across a number of different locations. Many affected adults and children are exhibiting continued extreme fear or traumatic reactions in their new areas of displacement, as evidenced by members of one group crying and shouting "Run! Run! They are going to kill us! Hide!" when an assessment team arrived.

Children associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

Recruitment by armed forces has been one of the biggest dangers for children ever since the conflict started in the year 2013. The Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Mali documents nearly 750 allegations of recruitment and use of children by armed groups between January 2014 and June 2017, out of which 284 were verified. Girls were also among those recruited (at least 16); although, there is suspicion that there have been additional cases of girls recruited more than those reported.⁴³ Other reports suggest at least 361 cases of children recruited from January to June 2017, including 14 girls.⁴⁴ There are no concrete indications of the geographical locations in which these incidents have occurred. The 2018 Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) report verifies the recruitment of 157 boys and 2 girls. These cases include 114 from previous years.⁴⁵

Human resources limited capacity of child protection actors, lack of state presence, increasing insecurity, access restrictions and the multiplicity and constant movement of groups operating on the ground,⁴⁶ obstruct monitoring of child recruitment by armed groups. While it is challenging to obtain accurate data regarding which groups are recruiting and using children, the Secretary-General's CAAC annual report from 2018 attributes the recruitments to the following groups: CMA (47) (including to the MNLA (21) and the HCUA (18)); the Platform (73) (including to the GATIA (29) and the self-defence groups Ganda Izo and Ganda Koy (20 each)); Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad (MSA) (12); Ansar Eddine (9); Al Mourabitoun (3); MUJAO (1 each); and to unidentified armed groups (13).⁴⁷ Even though available data related to the numbers of children in each group's ranks is limited, it indicates worrying trends on violations against children taking place. The peak of reported cases of child recruitment was in 2016, which could be related to the consequence of "armed groups' interest in inflating the numbers of their combatants because of the prospect of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration dividends. It is also believed that misinformation about the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process led to an increase in children joining armed groups in the hopes of benefitting from the adult disarmament, demobilization and reintegration package".⁴⁸ The lack of access to schooling for some girls and boys also subjects them to exploitation and abuse, such as the overload of domestic work, recruitment by armed or radical groups, migration, sexual exploitation, or early and forced marriage.⁴⁹

HRW documented that, occasionally, some families are obliged to hand over their children to armed groups in Central Mali. The same report explains how an Islamist group of up to 50 armed fighters

occupied a village and threatened community members if found collaborating with government, UN or French forces and stated that children were among the group members that threatened the villagers.⁵⁰ Fears of recruitment or being accused of supporting armed groups has caused many families to flee their homes.⁵¹

Studies show a direct relation between unemployment and lack of opportunities with youth involvement in armed groups. An additional trigger is the need for protection and connection that children or young men and women have as a result of a broad institutional vacuum and diminishing social (familial and peer) and societal supports.⁵² An IRIN article published a statement from a member of an armed group, expressing that young individuals between the ages of 18-35 “make up the largest proportion of the groups, of their fighting forces. Without youths, it’s hard to be an active, dangerous group”.⁵³ Children are targeted to be recruited and assigned to several activities, even as suicide bombers.⁵⁴ HRW registered the use of children as combatants, who are encouraged or obliged to actively engage in hostilities.⁵⁵ The case of child soldiers has been extensively reported in Mali since the beginning of the conflict in the year 2013. By the year 2017, reports from the northern and central areas of the country show that armed groups continue to use children as soldiers, including some groups aligned with the government.⁵⁶ Girls are mostly used as cooks or to fetch firewood⁵⁷ although boys are sometimes also used for that purpose. Women and girls associated with armed groups are exposed to several forms of GBV and face the consequence or risk of being stigmatized and excluded from their communities if and when they return.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, there remains a lack of multi-sector, integrated mechanisms in place for effective child and youth reintegration, which poses a significant risk for them to be recruited by other armed groups again.⁵⁹

Child Labor

In 2013, Mali had at least 2.4 million children engaged in work considered hazardous.⁶⁰ 40 per cent of children between the ages of 5 and 14 were engaged in activities that could harm their development. These numbers, though, do not include the exploitation of unaccompanied children, who were separated from their families and forced to perform informal work in their temporary living situation. Other reports from 2013 show incidents of slavery in the Northern region, including in the Tamasheq communities of northern Mali where children were sold for agricultural and/or domestic work.⁶¹ There is no updated data on these incidents.

In the year 2016, the government of Mali ratified the ILO's 2014 Protocol to the Forced Labor Convention and drafted a law that raised the minimum age for admission to employment to 15 years. Mali also obtained its first conviction for child trafficking under the 2012 Trafficking in Persons Law. Despite these advances, Malian children continue to be engaged in hazardous agriculture work and other worst forms of child labor.⁶² This indicates that despite Mali's efforts, the laws are insufficient and gaps remain, leaving children unprotected mostly in Northern and Central regions.

The Save the Children End of Childhood Report from 2017 points out that the highest child labor national rates in the world are found in Sub-Saharan Africa, with 56 per cent of children involved in Child Labor in Mali (per the End of Childhood Index).⁶³ Yet, there are no further details on what types of economic activities these children are involved in, nor a disaggregation of data linked to circumstances, region, age, or sex. A 2015 report shows that child labor in agricultural, domestic and informal work concerned nearly 70 per cent (3 million children) of children, 60 per cent of whom were under 12 years of age and 60 per cent in rural areas. Most children involved in child labor activities were found in the south of the country: Sikasso (76 per cent), Segou (68 per cent), and Kayes (60 per cent).⁶⁴ Furthermore, a 2016 report from the department of Labor from the United States provided an overview of the Worst Forms of Child Labor in which Malian children are mostly involved, which were: "forced labor in mining, domestic work, commerce, and farming, including in the production of rice, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking; commercial sexual exploitation, often as a result of human trafficking; forced recruitment by armed groups for use in armed conflict; hereditary servitude; forced labor in the production of salt; forced begging by Koranic teachers".

Overall, however, there is a lack of statistics that offer precise details of involvement of children in child labor activities over the last 2 years, with most of the information available being before 2013 when the conflict sparked. However, it is likely that decreased access to school and declining school attendance (due to displacement, increased attacks of schools, and general insecurity) is contributing to children being involved in the worst forms of child labor. It should also be noted that the increasing movement of communities due to high violence levels automatically exposes children to further risks of being associated to some forms of child labor or trafficking. The latter has been a historical common problem, especially from Burkina Faso and Mali, where children have been sold as labor on cocoa farms in Ivory Coast and Ghana.⁶⁵ However, there is no new available data that could show what the situation is today regarding such practices.

Unaccompanied and Separated Children

As of February 2018, some 49,771 people remain internally displaced in Mopti, Gao, Menaka and Timbuktu, representing an increase since December 2017. A later report highlights that Menaka and Anderamboukane circles (in Gao region) have been widely affected by attacks against civilian populations, being these circles both areas of origin and of reception of displaced persons, where 1037 displaced households were identified. These displaced persons arrived in the area since late April and early May 2018 from other villages in the same communes following various attacks and clashes that took place in their areas or in areas close to their respective villages.⁶⁶

Overall, from registered internally displaced persons (IDPs), 57 per cent are women and 53 per cent children. Moreover, children under the age of 18 account for more than half of IDPs, returnees.⁶⁷ Although there is nothing those numbers explicitly say about unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), they might indicate that UASC number has increased, as historically correlated factors.

In 2012, when the conflict sparked, the Child Protection Cluster estimated the number of UASC at approximately 1,536. The information available today points at a large number of UASC in Mali. Being a country of significant migratory transit in West and Central Africa, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has identified 931 unaccompanied minors (UAM) in the Mali Flow Monitoring Points⁶⁸, representing the largest number within the overall region. Those numbers do not refer only to Malian children but to children that make part of the regional migrants' flow, mostly from Guinea, Mali, Gambia, Senegal and Ivory Coast nationals, as per the IOM Flow Monitoring Report of 2017 (January to March 2017), in which UAM constituted close to 7 per cent of the total individuals identified.⁶⁹ The Mali Child Protection Sub-Cluster has identified and registered at least 322 UASC in the first semester of 2018.

Surveys from 2013 explain that at that moment, some children were not living with their biological parents but with close relatives. In the Sahel, the separation of children from their biological parents is a common practice, generally known as "confiage". In Mali, the conflict has and keeps undermining strong traditional family and community mechanisms for the care of vulnerable community members.⁷⁰ The current intensification of intercommunal conflict, violence and other confrontations in Northern and Central regions might indicate potential contributions to multiplication of separations organized for

security reasons. Moreover, this same factor could contribute to accidental separation and abandonment of children, due in part to population movements or following fighting.

The above factors pose a challenge for gathering accurate data, and in case more details in terms of UASC are gathered, it might be difficult to determine whether it was the crisis that caused this or whether most children were in this situation before the same. An additional concern is that of street children (beggar, talibé or wandering children, displaced, without family ties), as numbers have been historically high, especially in cities of Ségou, Mopti and Bamako but there is a lack of information of the situation of street children today. During past years, it was a common practice for parents, forced by the crisis, to entrust their children, to a koranic master or marabout, resulting in many cases of exploitation, where children were sent to beg in the streets, exposed to many kinds of deviances.⁷¹

Justice for Children

The deprivation of liberty of children by security forces has been a major concern. Being hard to accurately determine the number of people that has been detained up to date after conflict sparked in 2013, there are reports of 72 minors⁷² arrested and detained between 2014 and June 2017 by the Government for alleged charges of association with armed groups. Other reported actors involved with detentions are signatory armed groups, dissenting or non-signatory armed groups as well as Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other similar groups. In fact, NRC's report mention that fear for detention is a reason for families fleeing conflict zones like Menaka.⁷³ In that area, numerous men and children suspected or accused of crimes against the state, supporting armed groups or accused of offenses related to terrorism have been detained.⁷⁴ HRW also reported most of those detentions do not follow due procedures and have implicated members of security forces who were reported as having been involved in acts of extortion, bribing and theft, also from detainees.⁷⁵

Alarmingly, many of those children accused of supporting armed groups have been detained in state run centers. In contravention of the 2013 Protocol on the Release and Handover of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups, between the United Nations and the Government of Mali, which stipulated that those children had to be placed in a care center managed by UNICEF.⁷⁶ The Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Mali, documents that by the time the report was being written (2017), 72 boys between the ages of 13 and 17 were being released after detained for periods

that varied from just a few days to weeks or even nearly five years. The same was the case of two children that were detained for 35 and 60 months respectively. Moreover, some also manifested to have been ill-treated while in custody. This report revealed that at least three children between 16 and 17 years old were still under government's custody.⁷⁷ The focal governmental point within the Ministry of Justice, institution in charge of implementing such protocol, has kept such position vacant since the year 2016, what has hindered cooperation attempts from the United Nations with Malian government. The government did not have standard procedures to identify and refer victims to care and continued to detain some former child soldiers in adult prison facilities for alleged association with militias. Furthermore, many judicial personnel were still unaware of the 2012 anti-trafficking law, and police lacked funding and resources to investigate trafficking case.⁷⁸

Additionally, the 2018 Secretary-General's CAAC annual report published that during the year 2017, 23 boys who were detained by the Government for alleged association with armed groups were released, including 3 boys who were convicted as adults and released after having served their sentences. Furthermore, it evidences other isolated incidents of boys who were deprived of their liberty both by GATIA (9) and the CMA (1).⁷⁹ Reports mention that Mali was giving positive steps towards a stronger juvenile justice system, however, the crisis and occupation of some country areas, mostly northern regions, have compromised fair access to justice for children. Despite Malian government ratification of various international instruments that seek to protect the rights of children, the juvenile justice system still aims to both protect and punish children.⁸⁰

Abduction and Trafficking

Between 2014 and 2017, the Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Mali, documented the liberty deprivation of 14 children by armed groups. Most of those took place in Kidal (7), Ménaka (3), Bamako (2) and in Timbuktu, Mopti and Gao (1 each). The CMA has been responsible for the abduction of seven children and GATIA, one. However, it has not been possible to attribute responsibility in all cases. Many of these children were released after their abduction. In addition to those cases, an abduction and rape of a 12-year-old girl was reported in the Goundam Cercle. The authors were unidentified armed men that attacked the village. The girl was abducted along other girls (unspecified number) and was released after few hours and allocated in a medical care. Amnesty International also reported the abduction of several individuals in the last three years, who are still held hostage by armed groups in Dogo Village, Mopti region. As explained before, conflict generates a decline

in the overall family system as within the traditional solidarity forms that are linked to it. The country has become a transit point for migrants, along lack of opportunities, the presence of UASC, IDP's and human flow from other regional countries, the possibilities for child trafficking cases are higher. Many attacks occur along migration routes and in mining areas, where it has been reported that women have been mistreated by traffickers and forced into prostitution. It should be added, that Mali has historically been a neuralgic point for Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants in West Africa.

Nutrition

3.8 million children (aged 6 to 59 months) are affected by the nutritional crisis in Mali, along 980,000 pregnant and lactating women. The 2017 SMART survey indicates that the regions in the North and Kayes are the most affected with close to 870,000 people in need of care in 2018, compared to 850,000 in 2017. Among them, there are 753,000 children aged 6-59 months and 115,000 women pregnant and breast-feeding. The nutritional status of children has deteriorated and whereas the overall acute malnutrition rate is still 10.7 per cent, in several regions, the emergency threshold of 15 per cent is now exceeded. As per SMART review, Timbuktu recorded a rate of 15.7 per cent (14.3 per cent in 2016), Gao 15.2 per cent (14.8 per cent in 2016), Taoudénit 14.3 per cent and Kayes 14.2 per cent (8.4 per cent in 2016, an increase of nearly 6 per cent). Chronic malnutrition decreased nationally from 26.6 per cent to 23.1 per cent but almost doubled in the Kayes region from 11 per cent in 2016 to 20 per cent in 2017. Reasons are linked, inter alia, to the deterioration of the food situation in certain localities. Thus, cases of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) expected in 2018 have risen nationally from nearly 163,000 at the beginning of the year to 274,000 and cases of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) from 470,000 to 582,000.

The prospects for the upcoming lean season are quite gloomy if compared to last year's, as food insecure population (phases 3 and 4) will increase by more than 300,000 this year, what elevates concerns over nutritional needs. Besides that, the conflict has had severe impacts on food security scenarios. The increasing intercommunal violence, mostly in Northern and Central regions of the country, has caused massive displacements, also deteriorating the food situation in certain localities. Communities have an already harshly eroded resilience capacity due to frequent bearing with natural hazards. Epidemics and chronic poverty exacerbate their vulnerabilities. Hence, food insecurity along issues to access health services and water, hygiene and sanitation malnutrition has become a major public health problem. Deep structural inequalities in gender relations also mirror in the different ways

in which food insecurity affects members of the same household. As previously explained, when food is not available in sufficient quantities, women and girls eat less, or less often, after male members of the family have covered their needs.



Information Gaps

Main information gaps are related to the following concerns:

- Further disaggregation by type of children (IDP, host community, etc.) and geographical level.
- Numbers and location of unaccompanied and separated children (requires setting up a case management database to better identify and document these children so that appropriate response can be put in place).
- Migration from rural to urban areas.
- Gender-based violence and child marriage linked to the emergency.
- Justice for Children, especially information on children in detention related to association with armed groups.
- Child Labor.
- Updated trend data, and CAAC report to better analyze the scope and risks for CAAC.

Endnotes

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- 5 OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin, Feb 2018
- 6 Ocha Humanitarian Bulletin, Feb 2018
- 7 Aperçu des Besoins Humanitaires, Ocha, 2017.
- 8 OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin, Feb 2018
- 9 Mali: Mass grave discovered as security crisis deepens. Amnesty International. 4 of April 2018.
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- 13 Aperçu des Besoins Humanitaires, Ocha, 2017.
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