

Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Embassy in Bamako

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Transition Framework for Denmark’s engagements in Mali

2024-2027

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ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CISU	Civil Society in Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DP	Development Partner
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
EUCAP	European Union Capacity Building Mission in
EUTM	European Union (Military) Training Mission in Mali
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus
IFI	International Financial Institution
LSMS	Living-standard Measurement Survey
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Support Mission in Mali
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (EU)
ND-GAIN	Notre Dame Global Adaption Initiative
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SPA	Strategic Partnership Agreements
TEI	Team Europe Initiatives
UEMOA	West African Economic and Monetary Union (Union Economique et Monetaire Ouest Africaine)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

1. Introduction

Mali is located on the threshold to Europe and at the heart of the Sahel. It is one of the world's poorest and most fragile countries, ranking 184 out of 187 on the UN's Human Development Index. Denmark has been fully engaged in Mali since 2006 through long-term development assistance, stabilisation- and humanitarian efforts as well as military contributions.

The decision to anchor Denmark's bilateral engagement in a transition framework as opposed to a strategic framework and a country programme reflects an ambition to remain engaged, all the while conditions for normal engagement through and with national authorities are not present. The military coups, along with armed conflict, and an expanding presence of terror-affiliated groups significantly hamper the space for implementation of Denmark's engagement. Any engagement in Mali is currently associated with extensive risks that cannot be fully mitigated. The fragile security situation is expected to deteriorate further as the UN Mission MINUSMA comes to a close by the end of 2023. Corruption, patronage, shrinking civic space and overall macroeconomic instability could influence the operational autonomy of implementing partners, adding further insecurity to Denmark's engagement. Nevertheless, Denmark wishes to remain a partner to the Malian people through locally-led change, which given the current circumstances entails a certain strategic patience as well as acceptance that results and impact on a systemic basis will be more modest than usual.

To accommodate for the special circumstances, the transition framework will adopt a risk sensitive and flexible approach. It will cover a shorter period than the traditional five-year period for strategic country frameworks and country programmes, contain fewer projects and will not include support to the central government. The framework is designed with three scenarios in mind. The transition framework is based on the Danish Foreign and Security Policy Strategy from 2023 and the Strategy for Denmark's Development Cooperation from 2021, "*The World We Share*" and has a strong strategic focus on climate change, fragility, conflict, and irregular migration.

The transition framework incorporates lessons learned from previous Danish engagements in Mali, including regional interventions on climate change and stability, humanitarian action and bilateral engagements, in particular the country programme 2017-2022 (extended to ultimo April 2024) with the following objectives: (1) Peaceful coexistence, stability and security, (2) democratic and inclusive governance, and (3) inclusive and sustainable growth.

Despite the difficult circumstances, Denmark's engagement is rooted in an ambition to foster sustainability, socio-economic development and resilience as well as to limit irregular migration to Europe through the creation of job opportunities and promoting stability in Mali. This vision will be pursued through the following the three strategic objectives; (1) contribute to stability, inclusive peacebuilding and a strengthened civil society, (2) promote socioeconomic and inclusive development, and (3) strengthen locally-led and conflict sensitive climate adaptation, food security and resilience. In addition to the envisioned bilateral projects, a wide range of other instruments will be leveraged, most notably humanitarian assistance given the current context.

By maintaining the engagement, we are responding to the downward spiralling trends the Malian people at the moment face in most parts of life. By staying engaged alongside other like-minded donor partners, we are demonstrating commitment to the people of Mali. The three strategic objectives above are all contributing to the overall narrative of responding to the needs of Malians together with like-minded partners.

2. Context and challenges

2.1 *The security situation and conflict dynamics*

Mali experienced a period of relative peace following the signature of the Algiers Peace Accord between the government of Mali and the coalitions of northern Rebellions in 2015. However, political reform and decentralisation was initiated but not prioritised and corruption was rampant. The coups in 2020 and 2021 paved the way for the current military regime and have resulted in a paradigm shift concerning geo-strategic alliances and overall conflict dynamics in Mali. From having relied primarily on Western partners following political unrest in 2012, the current military regime has oriented itself towards strategic cooperation with Russia and the Wagner group while creating increasingly difficult conditions for international organisations and Western and regional partners. As a result, the counter-terrorist operations Barkhane and Task Force Takuba were discontinued in 2022, including Danish contributions. The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) that was established in 2013 was in June 2023 requested by the Malian military regime to terminate all engagement by the end of the year, the retreat of MINUSMA also challenges the Algiers Peace Accord. The European Union training and advice missions for the military and police forces EUTM and EUCAP, established in 2013 and 2015 respectively, continue their engagements albeit under increasingly difficult circumstances. In May 2022, Mali withdrew from the G5-Sahel Group, an intergovernmental cooperation framework to stabilise the security situation in the Sahel.

The Malian military regime promotes a post-colonial narrative as illustrated by the transitional government's three guiding principles; (1) respect for Mali's sovereignty, (2) respect for the partnership agreements and strategic choices Mali has made, and (3) consideration of the vital interests of the Malian people in all decisions. The regime's first priority is the security situation and it prioritizes partners with a similar outlook. Other than Russia, new partners for Mali include Brazil, China, Iran, Türkiye and the UAE. Lately Mali and Burkina Faso sided with the coup-makers in Niger against the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS, in its attempt to safeguard democratic rule in West Africa by calling for return to constitutional rule in Niger.

The closure of MINUSMA and the overall withdrawal of stabilization missions from Mali are, according to observers, expected to leave a security vacuum, especially in the northern part of the country, where the parties of the Algiers peace agreement have started to challenge an already fragile situation. A deterioration in the security situation could improve the ability of terrorist groups to recruit and expand operations. The presence of terrorist groups can be traced back to the 2012 rebellion in northern Mali, which paved the way for the al-Qaida-linked JNIM (Group for the Defence of Islam and Muslims), the Islamic State in the Sahel Province (ISSP) and more recently the Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), now posing a serious threat to the security situation in the country and wider region. The conflict dynamics and lack of government control are further complicated by the prevalence of organised transnational crime, human trafficking and arms- and drug smuggling as well as terrorist groups' exploitation of ancient conflicts between agricultural (Dogon/Bambara) and herding communities (Peulh) over access to dwindling natural resources, especially water and arable/grazing land.

The security situation in Mali is closely linked to the situation in the wider Sahel, notably Burkina Faso and Niger. Like Mali, both are characterised by great fragility with security and political instability as well as massive socio-economic challenges. The terrorist groups in the Sahel operate

across the region, where porous borders and lack of government control impede the ability to carry out counter terrorist engagements. The tristate area of Liptako-Gourma between Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso is one of the epicentres for the growth of terrorist groups. Furthermore, concerns are rising that spill-over effects from these regions to states in coastal West Africa will cause further destabilisation. In recent years, especially the Al-Qaida affiliated terrorist group Jama'at Nusrat Al Islam Wal Muslimin (JNIM) has tried to expand towards the coastal states in the Gulf of Guinea, including in Benin, Togo, the Ivory Coast and Ghana. JNIM enjoys significant support in parts of the Sahel. The upcoming third phase of Denmark's Peace and Stabilization Program for the Sahel will address this spread by expanding the geographical focus to the challenged border regions between Mali and Burkina Faso and the West African coastal states.

2.2 The Malian state and the political transition

The political situation in Mali has undergone interchanging periods of stability and instability, albeit with a consistent concentration of power around the capital, Bamako. The population of approx. 22 million consists of a variety of ethnic groups¹, with a historical divide between the densely populated south and the sparsely populated north. Since independence in 1960, Mali has undergone several armed uprisings as well as periods of democratic progress, as in 2006, when Denmark opened its embassy. Marginalization of the North and distrust arising from historical relations (dating back to the colonial division of Fulani, Arab and Tuareg groups in the North and later the “Bamako centered” policies of Malian governments) has led to four Tuareg and Arab uprisings since Mali’s independence in 1960. Mali’s decentralization process was launched in the 1990s, but never achieved the momentum needed to create stability. The main reasons were government reluctance to transfer power and resources to local authorities and the inadequacy of the financial and human resources available to local governments.

During the first decade of the new millennium, Mali was considered a relative success in terms of democracy and political freedom in West Africa. However, the assessment failed to account for unresolved conflicts and rent-seeking behaviour from elites that created distrust towards the public administration. In 2012, the political situation deteriorated significantly, but saw an elected government in 2013. Years of peace followed the signature of the Algiers Peace agreement in 2015, but governance was marred with corruption. After months of violent political unrest, a military coup took place in August 2020, followed by an additional coup in May 2021. The coups resulted in the installation of the current transitional government with whom a return to constitutional rule was negotiated in a process led by ECOWAS. The process included sanctions imposed by ECOWAS in 2022 due to delays in carrying out national elections as agreed. Sanctions were partially lifted with the announcement of a new transition timeline, however Mali is still suspended from ECOWAS and the African Union and Malian individuals are still under sanction from ECOWAS.

The transition framework includes a referendum on a new constitution (March 2023), local elections (June 2023), parliamentary elections (October-November 2023), and finally presidential elections (February 2024). The implementation of the plan has been delayed with the referendum on the new constitution having been held at the end of June 2023. In September 2023, the transitional government

¹ Bambara 33%, Peulh 13%, Sarakole 10%, Senufo 10%, Malinke 9%, Dogon 9%, Songhai 6%, Bobo 2%, Touareg/Bella 2%, other 6%)

announced further postponements citing technical reasons. Afterwards the transitional government has indicated that elections will take place in June 2024.

According to observers, there is a significant risk that the electoral processes will suffer further delays with consequences for the democratic legitimacy of the process. Adding to the latter is the fact that the originally independent electoral body (AIGE) is de facto controlled by the transitional government and that the new electoral law continues to allow military figures (hence, the leaders of the coup) to stand for election after a period of “cooling off” away from the military, against the transition charter and agreement with ECOWAS.

2.3 Economic and social development

Mali’s socioeconomic crisis has deepened since 2020 fuelled by the combined negative effects of the security crisis, the prevalent political instability, the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic sanctions imposed by ECOWAS in the first half of 2022 as well as fluctuations in the global economy related to the war in Ukraine.

The national poverty rate is 42 per cent, with the majority living in the rural parts of southern Mali. The population growth rate is at 3.1 per cent annually, with 47.2 per cent of the population being below 15 years of age and 45 per cent living in urban areas. Socioeconomic development suffers from bad governance, lack of investments and difficult market access. Throughout the country, the population lacks access to basic services such as health, education, water and sanitation as well as access to arbitration and justice. Life expectancy is at 59 years and of Malians above 15 years old, 22.1 per cent of women and 44.4 per cent of men are literate. Mali has considerable gender gaps where women’s empowerment is a particularly contested area. Women and girls are generally discriminated against in all areas of life, including education, employment, access to health and political representation. Maternal mortality rates remain high and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage remain widespread. Other gender identities are not recognised and are seen as immoral and offensive. However, homosexual activity is not forbidden.

Mali’s economy is primarily informal and subsistence-based for more than 80 per cent of the population. Only 3-4 per cent of Malians enjoy formal employment, most of these in the public sector. Public revenues only amount to 13-14 per cent of GDP, which is among the lowest in the world. Mining has long been an important aspect of the Malian economy and public revenues. Gold accounts for 72 per cent of Malian exports, and is an important part of the public revenues. In addition to the subsistence economy, illicit activities, primarily illegal mining and trafficking of persons, drugs, counterfeit medicine and arms, make up a significant share of the informal economy.

2.4 Climate change

Mali covers a large geographical area of substantial climate variance between deserts in the north, irrigated lands in the centre and fertile rain fed agricultural lands in the south. The primary sectors in Mali are vulnerable to fluctuating weather conditions that are experiencing the effects of climate change, with Mali ranking among the 10 most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. Mali is forecast to become hotter (projected temperature increase of between 1.2 to 3.6 degrees by 2060) with more erratic rainfall. This affects seasonal regularity and increases the risk of drought and floods, which in turn jeopardises natural resource-based livelihoods.

Recurrent droughts have altered the characteristics and composition of Mali’s vegetation. Herders that are typically found in the arid and semiarid areas in the north, where rainfall is less than 400 mm

per year, are especially vulnerable to the impact of climate shocks. Droughts can also lead to conflict or reinforce existing ones whenever herding communities move into cropping areas and rangeland used by others. Mobility is an effective strategy to cope with a changing climate, but especially during droughts, it can induce conflicts with farmers in sedentary agricultural production systems. The intensity of climate related hazards are likely to increase resulting in increased marginalisation of the herding communities, which the extremist groups are taking advantage of when seeking to expand.

Unpredictable rainfall patterns and prolonged droughts directly affect food security, income generation, and overall economic development, as agriculture engages a significant portion of the population. In this context, climate-induced stress on resources often results in increased workloads and decreased opportunities for income generation for women. High population growth of just over 3 per cent puts additional pressure on agricultural land and other natural resources.

Climate change also impacts Mali's security. The negative effects of climate change add to existing conflict dynamics whereby the increased marginalisation of the herding communities is exploited by terrorist groups. Farmers are also increasingly suffering from insecurity and attacks from armed groups in many parts of the country. Nevertheless, an important characteristic of the Malian economy is a high level of activity even in conflict-affected areas, which testifies to the existence of resilience to create value and economic growth, even in the face of adverse political and security contexts.

2.5 Civic space

There are civil society actors in Mali who are active and capable of working on rights issues and influencing the political level and the transition. There are also still strong democratic forces in Mali. However, the opposition, as well as the civil society actors and media are all subject to increasing pressure in the form of harassment, threats and arrests. Some journalists, civil society actors and leading opposition politicians have left the country. Social media plays an important role in politics in Mali and is being actively used to create and maintain popular support for the regime. In December 2022, the transitional government increased their engagement with and control over international NGOs. This included requests for information and requirements for international NGOs, including an official government issued "no-objection notice" for all activities prior to commencement and monthly reports on activities and finances. Initially this new procedure entailed some uncertainty as to the implementation of the proposed transition framework, but has so far not resulted in substantial restrictions in operations, beyond additional administrative requirements for international NGOs in Mali. The donor community and the UN have stressed the importance of the role of NGOs in the implementation of aid.

Despite the challenges, local actors continue to operate, but often in an adapted form with a higher degree of self-censorship and by avoiding certain topics or changing the way they work.

2.6 The humanitarian situation, forced displacement and irregular migration

Mali is a key crossway for both regular and irregular migration in West Africa. Many migrate for both short-term and long-term purposes, mostly for economic reasons in search for employment opportunities. Migrants from across West Africa travel through transitory routes across the region for seasonal work. Meanwhile, an estimated 40 per cent migrate for distant destinations such as the Maghreb and Europe. Despite increasing difficulties in travelling, their numbers do not decrease. The remittances of Malian foreign workers contribute significantly to the Malian economy, providing 5.8 per cent of GDP.

In January 2023, an estimated 12.9 million Malians were affected by the crisis, of whom 8.8 million – over a third of the population - are in need of humanitarian assistance, an increase of 17 per cent compared to 2022. More than 420,000 Malians are registered as internally displaced, yet actual numbers are estimated to be much higher. The challenge of protection and sheltering of the many displaced Malian also places a heavy burden on host communities. In addition, 200,000 Malians are taking refuge in neighbouring countries, while around 60.000 refugees from neighbouring countries are estimated to be in Mali.

One of the main challenges is rising food insecurity due to a combination of conflict, climate shocks and demographic growth. As of September 2023, an estimated 25 per cent of the population was moderately or acutely food insecure, including 2,500 people at risk of famine (IPC phase 5). Food insecurity will remain a major cause for displacement in the coming years.

In recent years, inter-communal conflicts and the activities of terrorist groups have created challenging operational conditions and limited access for humanitarian actors. In 2023, the situation has become more complex, with humanitarian actors having to negotiate and navigate between government forces and the Wagner Group as well as with non-state armed groups. Mali is among the top three countries in the world where the most aid workers have lost their lives, been injured or kidnapped in the last five years. In general, several actors report a lack of respect for humanitarian principles by both some of the terrorist groups and the government forces and its Russian allies. Local humanitarian actors have an important role to play in ensuring greater access to populations in hard-to-reach areas or areas under the control of armed groups. MINUSMA's exit and the increased instability is expected to further impede access for humanitarian actors and complicate the delivery of humanitarian aid in North.

2.7 Development Cooperation

Around 7.7 percent of the Malian national budget stems from development aid (see annexed table). Most donor countries have suspended direct support to the central government in the wake of the coups. Many have also suspended the initiation of new development programmes. In November 2022, France decided to suspend all development assistance to Mali except humanitarian aid. Suspensions should be considered in the context of an increasingly difficult authorizing environment that affects all areas of cooperation between the Malian military regime and notably Western partners. In spite of the difficult circumstances, there is a consensus amongst the vast majority of donors to continue support for civil society, private sector and election preparations as well as provide humanitarian aid. There is also general consensus to continue the dialogue with the transitional government and thereby provide an alternative to other actors.

The current national framework for development interventions in Mali is the « Cadre Stratégique pour la Relance Économique et le Développement Durable » 2019-2023 (CREDD). Mali is itself and in collaboration with development partners, such as the UN, looking at formulating a new national development plan for 2024-2027. Danish assistance is being planned independently, but is being informed by Malian priorities. Donor coordination takes place through monthly meetings in the GEC (Groupe Excecutive Coordination) which includes bilateral donors, UN agencies and International Financial Institutions (IFIs). The GEC is led by a troika of three of those (currently DK, the UNRC and the US) and the Troika has been raising difficult questions with the transitional government including the new procedures for international NGOs. Working groups (“groupes de dialogues”), have been established for different priority sectors of the CREDD. The GEC also provides a

discussion forum for UN/IFIs which work directly with the transitional government and donor countries who seek to work directly with the affected populations. The dialogue in this forum has been important for the mutual understanding and exchange of experience of development and humanitarian operations leading to better appreciation of their respective modalities.

3. Scenarios

Three scenarios for the development of the situation in Mali are presented below from least critical to worst case. Due to the incremental worsening of the situation, especially the deteriorating security situation over the past three years, a positive scenario for the development in the coming three years is not plausible. Even if elections were to be held by mid-2024, the security situation, especially in the north, combined with the instability in the neighbouring countries, would put significant pressure on the country. Continuous monitoring of the political, security and socioeconomic developments will provide indications for which direction Mali is heading to allow for adaptive management of Denmark's engagement in the country. The embassy will develop a management paper with a risk matrix for engagements in Mali (see also section 6 on monitoring). In accordance with the scenarios, the likelihood of risks materialising, and their impact will increase moving from the least critical to worst case.

The changing geopolitical landscape in the world following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 will also affect the trajectory of the scenario for Mali and the Sahel region. Based on extensive consultations and observations the first scenario seems unlikely, with the second scenario deemed most likely.

Scenario 1. Least critical

In the least critical scenario, the situation stabilises somewhat. Parliamentary and presidential elections are carried out in 2023/2024, and even through one or multiple of the individuals involved in the coup are elected, the transition period has formally come to an end and with it, the bulk of political unrest. The election jolts further advances and implementation of reforms. Security-wise the situation deteriorates in the north after MINUSMA's exit, but otherwise status quo is preserved. Cooperation with Russia continues.

Scenario 2. Critical

In the critical scenario the situation continues to worsen; politically and security-wise. Elections are held but the democratic transition is without credibility. Mali moves in an authoritarian direction with the political power continuously concentrated around individuals involved in the coups from 2020/2021. Cooperation with Russia is strengthened and further prioritized. The presence of western countries and organisations is diminished and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are increasingly challenged. The destabilised situation exacerbates humanitarian needs and displacement.

Scenario 3. Worst case

In the worst case scenario, the situation escalates to a critical level. The democratic transition does not take place and an authoritarian regime is consolidated. The security situation worsens, with increased likelihood of terrorist attacks in the capital. Cooperation with Russia is strengthened and further prioritized. Secession of parts of development activities will be necessary. Forced displacement increases as does irregular migration. Dialogue at the technical level will not be possible and implementing partners will operate under serious threat.

4. Achievements, strengths and Danish political priorities

Since the 1990s Denmark has been a humanitarian and development partner to Mali, and from 2006 with an embassy in Bamako coordinating the engagements. Denmark's engagement in and with Mali has built on an integrated approach that includes military and stabilization contributions, development aid and humanitarian assistance. The Danish engagement has been implemented throughout the entire country, with a historical focus on the region of Sikasso. Key areas of support have included water and sanitation, private sector development, peaceful coexistence and reconciliation as well as democracy, good governance and decentralisation. Denmark has previously contributed substantially to military missions in the Sahel. However, due to the political development this is no longer feasible. Therefore, the Danish engagements along the Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) nexus has moved towards local engagement with a focus on stabilisation and peace at community level rather than engagement at national level with security forces. Though Denmark is currently not working directly with the central government, the official Mali - i.e. the foreign minister - has openly expressed satisfaction with the Danish engagement and priorities addressing for example youth and unemployment through private sector engagement.

4.1 Achievements and Strengths of Danish engagement in Mali

Denmark's engagement in Mali is part of the larger regional perspective of the Sahel, with a focus on the interaction between foreign policy, development policy, security policy and humanitarian assistance. In the Sahel Denmark has long-term development programmes in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, a regional climate security programme, a regional peace and stabilisation programme, regional stabilisation activities, humanitarian activities as well as having had military contributions.

Denmark has achieved solid results in areas such as private sector development, youth entrepreneurship, access to clean drinking water, strengthening of the role of women, youth and civil society, and supporting decentralisation and local and regional development plans. Through its ability to stay engaged in Mali after 2012, Denmark has acquired a reputation as a flexible and reliable partner who provides relevant and reliable support to the Malian people during times of political turmoil and security crisis.

Denmark has acquired experience with continuous adaptation of engagements to suit the country context, including an increased focus on the HDP nexus and integration of relevant instruments, such as the regional Peace and Stabilisation Programme for the Sahel. At the global level, Denmark is well placed in the field of humanitarian diplomacy, particularly concerning International Humanitarian Law, humanitarian access, HDP nexus approaches and localisation.

On democratic governance and the promotion and protection of human rights, Denmark has successfully established a fund mechanism, FAMOC (Fonds d'appui aux Moteurs de Changement), enabling civil society actors to promote a more peaceful and resilient society with respect for human rights. A key objective of the broader programme has been to promote stabilisation and peaceful coexistence. For example through promotion of local peace agreements, which include support for establishment of effective conflict resolution mechanism at community level. Another important achievement is the accreditation of the Malian Human Rights Commission at A level to the Global Alliance of Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) and thereby strengthening the submissions of Mali to the unilateral periodic review (UPR) at the Office of the Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR).

With international NGOs Denmark has promoted the development and implementation of peace agreements at the local level. This initiative has demonstrated results at the level of stabilisation as well on the perception of resilience at the community level. Specifically, more self-reliant communities also have greater resistance towards recruitment attempts of terror organisations.

Denmark is at the forefront of supporting civil society and is well placed to continue that role. Through strategic partnerships with Danish civil society organisations, Denmark benefits from consultations with the organisations on a variety of topics and engagements in fields of mutual priority, thus promoting synergies and alignment. Mali was also one of the first countries where Denmark established a Youth Sounding Board. This allows Denmark to consult with young Malians on the political situation and overall strategic questions as well as on more detailed programmatic and thematic questions. The youth agenda has over the past years become a priority in Mali, with a recent national Youth Policy and a Minister for Youth.

Denmark historically has had a strong focus on economic and private sector development in Mali. Denmark is well-known as an important contributor in this sector, for example serving as the donor coordinator to Mali's activities within the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), promoting developing countries integration into free trade, for over a decade. The Danish engagement in Mali has been flexible, adjusting its implementation mechanism between programmes to match lessons learned. An evaluation of Danish support to private sector framework conditions, with Mali as one of the case countries, concludes that in fragile contexts, supporting the private sector as a driver is the best entry point for contributing to a more enabling business environment. Indeed, the direct support to enterprises is a key avenue of success; through FACEJ (Fonds d'Appui aux Creations des Entreprises par des Jeunes) Denmark has since 2019 supported the start-up and growth of over 1800 youth-led enterprises, 39 percent of which by women. Denmark also formulated an innovative approach to vocational training in 2021, based on the embassy's in-depth knowledge of the sector, in support of this particular focus from the then Minister of Development Cooperation.

Another area where Denmark has long-term experience is in the water sector, which was also a component of the first country programme. Danish activities now focus on effective and equitable access to critical drinking water infrastructure in the towns of Sikasso and Kayes. Providing access to clean drinking water has also been an important activity in some stabilisation engagements. The drinking water activities are complementary to activities addressing access to a wider use of water resources outside towns, where access to water and the management of water resources are important for sustainable livelihoods.

The Danish integrated approach has involved various support to stabilisation efforts; Denmark has contributed to fighting terrorism through Operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba. Denmark has contributed significantly to stabilisation in Mali through military contributions to MINUSMA and as a major partner in MINUSMA's fund for stabilisation interventions in local communities – the MINUSMA Trust Fund, which has provided a direct “peace dividend” to local communities. The Danish Peace and Stabilisation Programme for the Sahel, has worked for stabilisation at various levels including addressing instability at the regional level in the border areas. Through the UNDP Stabilisation office Denmark supported efforts in the Liptako-Gourma border area. Furthermore, Denmark has supported the EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali (EUCAP), and a number of stabilization and peace building activities with a focus on resolving the local conflicts and countering trafficking and irregular migration.

4.2 Danish political priorities for the engagement in Mali

The military coups in Mali have challenged the setting for Denmark's engagement. As a result, this transition framework for Danish engagement in Mali consolidates the movement away from direct government support to government collaboration.

A number of relevant Danish bilateral and multilateral instruments will be applied in the support to the development of Mali. The focus will be on the people of Mali. Danish engagements in Mali are in line with Denmark's foreign and security policy priorities, Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation "The World We Share" and its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on climate. Mali is an especially important country concerning Danish development priority to create hope and help more people where it is most difficult in fragile countries. Leveraging the Danish private sector and trade relations is currently not relevant, and the scope for Danida Business instruments is considered very limited.

Denmark's commitment to cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, human rights, youth and humanitarian principles, will continue to be critical issues to address in order to resolve underlying conflict and fragility drivers and to generate lasting development, peace, and stability. In a fragile and volatile region, it is important to establish an agile platform for cooperation, where it is possible to adapt to changing circumstances over the timeframe of the transition framework. This is also done by applying the adaptive management measures in the approach to do development differently (DDD) in a fragile context. As in line with Denmark's priorities, all future engagements will be screened on climate objectives and a climate-sensitive approach will be applied as appropriate. In this endeavour, Denmark will ensure that learnings from past achievements and challenges inform the selection of instruments and choice of specific activities.

Overview of Denmark's most important instruments in Mali

- Active diplomacy and political dialogue, including through the EU
- Bilateral development projects
- Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) for Mali
- EU Institutions and programmes, including under the Common Security and Defence Policy, i.e. EUCAP Sahel Mali, and the European Peace Facility (EPF)
- Regional programmes; Peace and Stabilisation Programme (PSP) for the Sahel, Climate Change, Conflict, Displacement, and Irregular Migration Programme (CCDMP) in the Sahel, Africa Programme for Peace (APP).
- Strategic Partnerships Agreements (SPA) with Danish CSOs for 2022-2025; CARE, Danish Refugee Council, Danish Red Cross, DanChurchAid, International Media Support, MS ActionAid Denmark, Oxfam IBIS, Save the Children, PlanBørnefonden
- Strategic Partnership Agreements with international organisations for 2022-2025; ICRC, UNFPA, UNHCR
- Human Rights and Democracy Partnerships (DIHR), i.e. Dignity
- Humanitarian aid (multilateral organisations and Danish CSOs)
- Danida Fellowship Center (DFC)
- Multilateral partnerships at both country and global level; IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Green Climate Fund

5. Strategic objectives for Denmark's engagements in Mali

The overall vision is foster sustainability, socio-economic development and resilience as well as to limit irregular migration to Europe through the creation of job opportunities and promoting stability in Mali. To this end, the following three strategic objectives will be pursued.

5.1 Strategic objective 1: Contribute to stability, inclusive peacebuilding and a strengthened civil society



Considering the unstable and conflict-affected context, Denmark will continue to support conflict prevention and sustainable peace as a process towards the creation of a society that takes the needs of all population groups into account. The political context means that the cooperation will take place through civil society or international organisations given that working directly with the security sector in Mali is currently not an option. Focus will be on strengthening the involvement of women and youth in different societal settings, including in conflict prevention and in line with the Danish priority on Women Peace and Security (WPS). This focus will be cross-cutting for all activities but also be addressed directly through support to civil society and its sphere of action. A strong civil society is key to a democratic transition in Mali, as they are key actors in ensuring accountability of public institutions and inclusive decision-making in political and democratic processes. Democracy is increasingly unfolding on the internet. Accordingly, promoting the right to free speech and access to information need to take digitalisation into account. Supporting civil society to become better at mastering digital technologies is crucial to countering disinformation spread through social media.

Regionally an important programme under this objective is the **Peace and Stabilisation Programme for the Sahel (PSP)**. With the current phase two having been extended until ultimo 2024, a third phase is currently under formulation. The strategy of the PSP programme has been adjusted to the current context and new activities are either addressing local peace and stabilisation activities in cross border areas, mainly between farmers and herders, or addressing the increased risk of the spread of terrorism from the Sahel to the coastal states through improved training of security forces to fight terrorism in those countries. Integrated stabilisation engagements are also addressed through the **Danish Deployment Facility for Peace and Democracy (DFPD)**, which deploys civilian experts to the civilian capacity-building mission EUCAP Sahel Mali.

A fifth phase of the **Africa Programme for Peace**, which complements the above activities at intergovernmental level is underway. The APP aims to strengthen the ability of the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS, among others, to engage in preventative diplomacy, mediation and democratisation engagements, as well as better management of border conflicts. Denmark also provides flexible and risk tolerant support to Mali, among others, through the **UN Peacebuilding Fund**. UNDP stabilisation initiatives have targeted the border regions between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso and have developed local peace agreements as well as provided direct support to stabilisation activities prioritised by the community. Denmark's membership of the Peacebuilding Commission 2023-2024 also contributes to global action on the peacebuilding agenda.

The embassy sponsors Malian participants in various courses organised by the **Danida Fellowship Centre**, including on SDG advocacy for youth, climate reporting and human rights based-approach. Danish thematic partnerships regarding human rights and democracy, i.e. with the Danish Institute for Human Rights complement these efforts.

5.2 Strategic objective 2: Promote socioeconomic and inclusive development



To address the needs for social and economic development, Denmark will promote socioeconomic and inclusive development, especially for women and youth, through income-generating opportunities, employment and strategically targeted service delivery. Fighting poverty is crucial for a long-term prevention of humanitarian crises, irregular migration and forced displacement as well as for a more peaceful and stable development. The combination of Danish engagements, both on this objective but also on the others, will target the multiple dimensions of poverty, including resources, opportunities, choices and personal security.

Working across the HDP nexus and focusing on long-term and sustainable solutions to human forced displacement is important for addressing urgent humanitarian needs and creating long-term development. As insecurity and the effects of climate change impact the wider Sahel region, Denmark responds to the cross-border effects of these drivers of displacement via the regional **Climate Change, Conflict, Displacement, and Irregular Migration Programme (CCDMP)**. CCDMP seeks to strengthen conflict sensitivity in climate adaptation, expand social protection (social safety nets), and expand climate-smart agriculture to vulnerable demographic groups. Thus cutting across the second and third strategic objective and introducing the first dedicated climate security project into the Danish development portfolio.

Activities undertaken by Danish humanitarian partnerships in Mali, both multilateral such as the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) and through **Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPA)** with Danish NGOs, contribute to all of the strategic objectives. Their interventions are complementary to the bilateral engagements, focusing both on responses to the humanitarian crisis in Mali, as well as longer-term development initiatives. While the former relates mainly to the second strategic objective, i.e. insuring access to essential services such as food, shelter, education, psychosocial support and protection services, the latter also relates to the first and third strategic objectives through for example strengthening local media and negotiation of access to shared natural resources at community level. In the Strategic Partnership Agreements for 2022-2025, support for local civil-society actors is integrated into a wide-ranging portfolio of engagements, including humanitarian interventions and conflict prevention, in accordance with the HDP nexus approach.

At the multilateral level, examples of Danish engagements include with **UNICEF**, focusing on access for children and adolescents to social and health services, education, water and sanitation as well as with the **WFP**, working on emergency response capacity with a focus on improving nutritional status of affected communities.

5.3 Strategic objective 3: Strengthen locally-led and conflict sensitive climate adaptation, food security and resilience



To address the challenges arising from high dependence on natural resources combined with climate vulnerability, Denmark will work to strengthen locally-led climate adaptation, food security and resilience. The aim being that the population together with local organisations and authorities build greater resilience towards the effect of climate change and climate-related conflict dynamics. The conflicts over natural resource access is one of the major causes of conflict and killings. In a context where provision of basic services at best can be seen as weak, the stability and resilience of local communities towards the increased uncertainty is crucial in securing stability and sustainable development. Additionally, improved resilience and self-reliance in communities provides the best defence against extremist actions and recruitment.

Inspired by partners in the Sahel Alliance, Denmark choose to support the PATRIP Foundation in 2020 through the project on **Climate Change Adaptation and Stability in Fragile Border Areas (CCASFBA)**. The project uses an integrated community approach to stabilisation by strengthening the resilience of Mali's fragile border areas towards Burkina Faso and Niger through access to climate smart economic and social infrastructure, in particular in the agriculture/pastoralism, water, and energy sectors, combined with social dialogue and capacity building for joint community management on natural resource and community infrastructure management. Thus, this project cuts across all three strategic objectives.

Denmark supports a wide range of both global funds and Africa-specific funds that promote climate adaptation and mitigation relevant for Mali. An example is the **Green Climate Fund** currently implementing a solar rural electrification project (mitigation) as well as developing hydro-meteorological weather warning services (adaptation) in Mali. The African Development Bank (AfDB) has, among others, a strong engagement in the water sector in Mali, complementary to previous and ongoing Danish efforts. Further opportunities for indirect engagement and influence on Danish policy priorities, such as climate, can be pursued in the formulation of the next AfDB Country Strategy Paper (present version covers 2021-2025).

6. Monitoring the engagements

The Embassy in Bamako will monitor and evaluate the progress and results of Denmark's overall engagement in Mali in close cooperation with key policy departments of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Due to the highly volatile situation, an adaptive and flexible approach will be adopted. The relevance of initiatives, programmes and projects will be assessed during implementation, with the option to change modalities and instruments if the situation develops negatively, or even ends up in a worst case scenario.

Adaptability and flexibility implies close monitoring of the security situation. Depending on the scenarios described above, the Embassy may be constrained in carrying out direct monitoring and evaluation. The present security situation in the country does not allow for Embassy staff to travel outside Bamako. Occasionally, joint missions with partners having access to required security

measures, e.g. armoured vehicles, could take place. To help overcome these challenges the Embassy is exploring the feasibility and options for applying remote monitoring mechanisms. Embassy staff has been trained in this approach within a broader group of like-minded partners (the Sahel Alliance) and the embassy is currently investigating additional ways of applying appropriate monitoring tools for various levels of monitoring; for example, undertaking project visits with WhatsApp on mobile phones, which is used all over Mali.

To support and complement the Embassy's monitoring work, it is possible to engage a third party monitoring and evaluation consultant. Based on positive learnings from implementing the Mali Country Program 2017-2022, the consultant can validate data provided by implementing partners, verify assumptions and risks and assist in communicating achieved results and outcomes. A mid-term review of implementation is foreseen in early 2026.

The overall risk assessment will be anchored at the Embassy in Bamako with a clear implementation plan. An annual review of engagements, supported by implementing partners, will assess achievements of planned outcomes and generate lessons learned for future engagements as well as provide information and evidence for possible programme adjustments. Monitoring mechanisms are complemented by the embassy having regular dialogue with civil society and NGOs, notably Danish SPA organisations present in Mali.

In addition to the existing bilateral engagements and the regional programmes, new engagements will be formulated under the transition framework. Given the context with a need for flexibility and influence, implementation of second phases of two existing projects are planned through fund management secretariats, chosen through a tender process. A strong focus on financial capacity and local presence in tendering will ensure a robust and flexible implementation mechanism, able to adapt to unforeseen developments and shocks.

7. Danish Bilateral Engagements 2024-2027

This chapter outlines the bilateral development engagements for Mali from 2024 to 2027. The projects incorporate lessons learned from previous engagements and are aligned with Denmark's strategic development priorities. As outlined in previous sections, the strategic objectives are also addressed through a variety of other instruments, i.e. regional programmes, contributions to multilateral organisations, SPA partners etc.

Denmark will continue its collaboration with bilateral development partners, the EU, the World Bank, UN- and other multilateral organisations. Like-minded donors will be invited to contribute to the Danish mechanisms and synergy between the Danish efforts and the wider EU engagement as well as with the Sahel Alliance will be pursued where possible. However, the current uncertainty makes co-funding between donors challenging because it poses additional difficulties arising from our various approaches to working in Mali. Like-minded co-funding partners will be prioritised.

The Danish focus areas are aligned with the second and third priority areas of the EU's Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2020-2024, which are as follows; (1) Improving the functioning of the state; (2) Creation of jobs promoting the green economy; (3) Meeting essential and basic human needs. However, it is important to bear in mind the political and security developments in Mali since the MIP formulation, and that the EU NDICI framework currently is undergoing a mid-term review that may lead to revised priorities. Denmark will remain an active participant in the three current

Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) in Mali covering stabilisation, climate change and environment and youth. At the regional level, the Sahel Alliance has been promoting joint development work at community level.

7.1 Strategic considerations in implementation

A few strategic priorities are important in this special context of a transition framework. The Danish engagements will thus be based on the following principles;

- Implementation by robust actors with strong capacity and local management in order to respond effectively to political/security developments.
- Leveraging well-established and successful mechanisms in order to capitalise on previous experiences and ensure continuity.
- Design of engagements based on a bottom-up approach with a focus on localisation in order to build local capacity.
- Design of engagements to promote gender equality, targeting women and youth where possible.
- Design of engagements to incorporate climate-water-food-energy nexus from a systemic point of view, where relevant.
- Management will be agile and build on the lessons learned, applying flexibility and adaptability to ensure a continued relevance of the engagements.

As mentioned in the introduction, the current context in Mali adaptation of some key standard operating principles as a cooperation partner. Given the choice not to support the transitional government, the principles from the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness as well as localisation aims become difficult to achieve. The changes of implementation modality (reduction in timeframe and fewer projects) also means a more modest expected impact. Nevertheless, Denmark believes that exerting strategic patience through continued engagement to the benefit of the Malian people, providing viable alternatives, is an opportunity that should not be missed. Despite not channelling support through the transitional government, Denmark will strive to be transparent and informative towards the government. Furthermore, despite the space for political dialogue being limited on some dimensions, Denmark will continue to raise issues of importance to Denmark less controversial priority topics (i.e. climate).

7.2 Bilateral Danish engagements in support of the strategic objectives

The three strategic objectives and their main envisioned bilateral interventions are described below. Instead of a country programme with multiple projects under each strategic objective, one bilateral project is envisioned under each objective for the transition framework. Their value addition to existing Danish instruments (see section 5) is their capitalisation of Danish know-how on the ground and direct support to the Malian people through the embassy's close involvement in implementation. Other ongoing engagements managed by the embassy have been described in section 5 and are therefore only briefly mentioned. Annex 3 provides an overview of the expected embassy engagements over the transition framework period.

Strategic Objective 1: Contribute to stability, inclusive peacebuilding and a strengthened civil society

Under this strategic objective, the primary engagement envisioned builds on the learnings from **FAMOC**, the fund mechanism supporting drivers of change across various parts of Malian civil

society. FAMOC enables local agents to drive change through their organisations, advancing active citizenship, objective media, promotion and protection of human rights. By providing a place and voice for young people, women and vulnerable groups, FAMOC thus contributes to a more inclusive, young and dynamic civil society. The flexible approach of FAMOC allows targeting of both emerging CSO's and media, as well as established institutions (i.e. the National Human Rights Commission). These local organisations can, by virtue of their constituencies in and access to communities, deliver important contributions towards mediation and reconciliation, boosting resilience and counteracting radicalisation by promoting respect for each other's freedom to think, believe and express themselves. The four thematic areas expected for the second phase of FAMOC are; I) citizen participation of young people, women and vulnerable groups in decision-making bodies; II) access to reliable and critical information; III) promoting peaceful coexistence and conflict prevention; IV) promotion and protection of human rights.

Under this objective, the embassy also manages the current phase of the Peace and Stabilisation Programme for the Sahel.

BOX 1. Expected outcomes –

- Strengthened participation of civil society and citizens in decision-making processes
- Strengthened protection of human rights including the right to information and freedom of expression

Strategic objective 2: Promote socioeconomic and inclusive development

Under this strategic objective, the primary engagement envisioned builds on the successfully implemented fund to support youth entrepreneurs, **FACEJ**. The FACEJ mechanism supports primarily young persons in the creation and sustainable start-up of private enterprises. This targeted approach to income-generation among youth through entrepreneurship is well suited to the fragile context with a little developed formal job sector. The approach of FACEJ aims at lasting change through creating an eco-system of mentors advising the youth and funding for their business plans via loans by local banks (against deposited guarantees). This ensures capacity building of the various local stakeholders and ultimately the creation of economically viable enterprises that generate additional employment opportunities for young people in a wide range of sectors, providing hope in times of crisis and illustrating an alternative path to radicalization, crime or migration. The mechanism promotes a gender-transformative approach, in aiming for a minimum of 40% of female entrepreneurs, and adopting specific approaches to address changing norms for women's unequal participation in the labour market, more specifically business ownership.

Under this objective, the embassy also manages parts of the regional Climate Change, Conflict, Displacement, and Irregular Migration Programme (CCDMP).

BOX 2. Expected outcomes –

- Creation of new decent jobs for youth
- Increased participation of youth and women in productive sectors

Strategic objective 3: Strengthen locally-led and conflict sensitive climate adaptation, food security and resilience

The ongoing **Mali Sustainable Urban Water Program**, commenced ultimo 2021, aims to secure and develop the water resources for the cities of Kayes, Sikasso and Koutiala through enhanced protection of existing boreholes, introduction of new technologies to reduce CO2 emissions, and exploration and operation of new boreholes to supply the cities. This will lead to strengthened resilience, health and living conditions of the populations in urban and peri-urban areas confronted with the effects of climate changes through enhancing coverage and reliability of the public water supply and an equitable distribution of drinking water, in particular to the poorer segments of the population. Given the provision of access to drinking water, this program also contributes to the second strategic objective.

Under this objective, the embassy also manages the project for Climate Change Adaptation and Stability in Fragile Border Areas (CCASFBA). A new project could also be formulated focusing on Danish priorities within climate adaptation and tailored specifically to the Malian context.

BOX 3. Expected Outcomes -

- Enhanced resilience against climate change
- Strengthened food and water security

Tentative budget estimate for Mali 2024-2027*

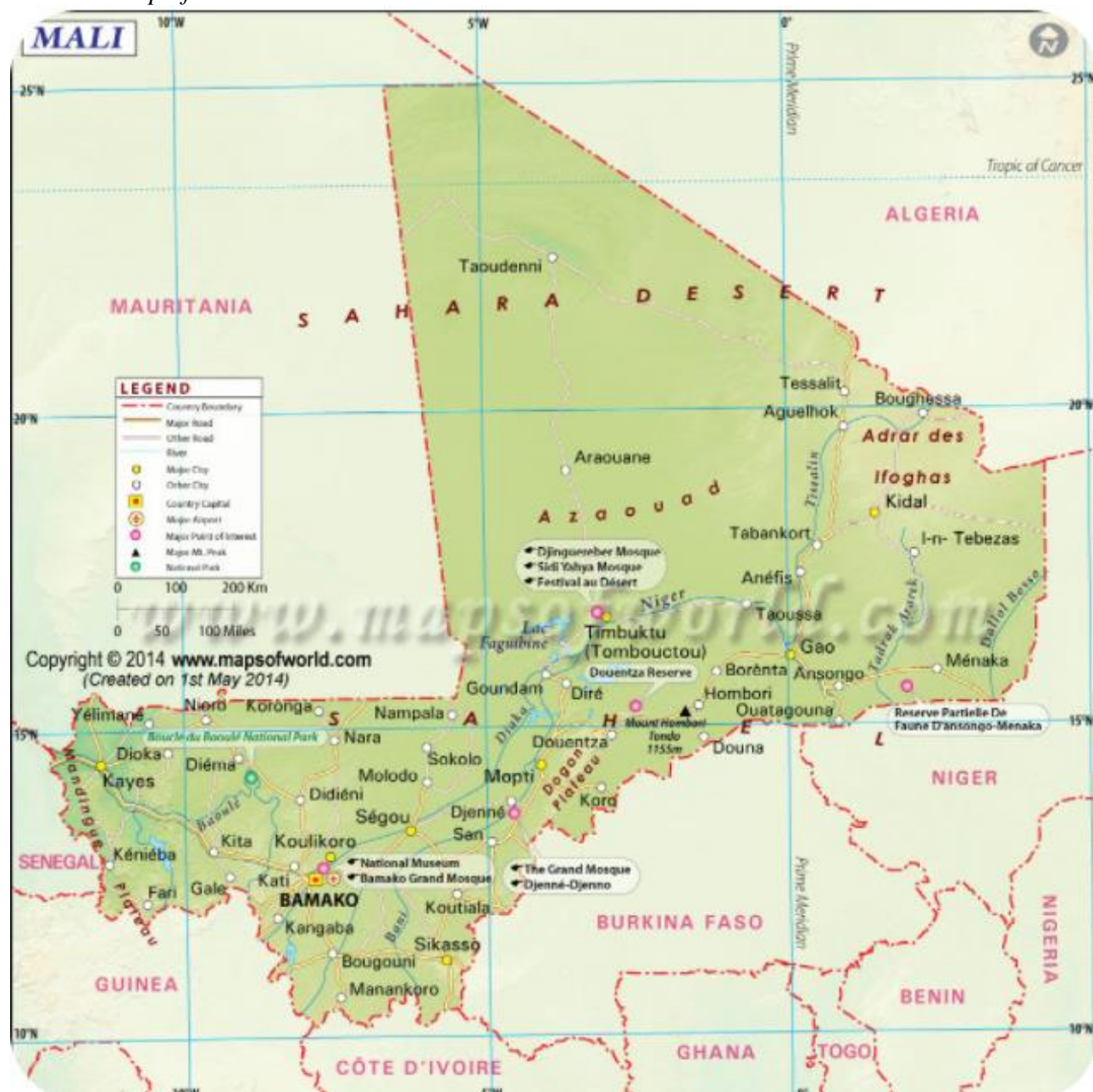
Commitments	DKK Million
Overall budget	500
Strategic objective 1	150
Strategic objective 2	150
Strategic objective 3	150
Unallocated funds**	25
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEAL) et. al. ***	25

* An estimated amount of DKK 500 million has been allocated to Mali for the period 2024-2027. The amount can be adjusted according to circumstances in accordance with the above-described flexible approach. Additional engagements through humanitarian and multilateral partners can be expected. The former country programme for Mali amounted to ca. DKK 1 billion during the period 2017-2022.

** Unallocated funds to be allocated at later stage in accordance with above mentioned priorities.

*** This line includes, among others, third-party support for MEAL, sponsorship of Malians to DFC learning programmes and expenses related to the Youth Sounding Board.

Annex 1: Map of Mali



Annex 2: Key Data / Figures

Indicator	Value	Year	Source
Key economic data			
Surface area (in sq.km)	1,240,190	2020	WB WDI
Population (million)	22.6	2022	WB WDI
Gross Domestic Product, GDP (current USD, billion)	18.8	2022	WB WDI
GDP growth (annual per cent)	3.7	2022	WB WDI
GDP per capita (current USD)	833.3	2022	WB WDI
“Ease of doing business” index	148	2019	WB WDI
General government final consumption expenditure (pct. of GDP)(current USD)	15.8	2020	WB WDI
Tax revenue (per cent)	16.7	2022	WB WDI
Net ODA received per capita, current USD	65.0	2021	WB WDI
Net ODA received (% of GNI)	7.7	2021	WB WDI
Current account balance (% of GDP)	-1.7	2020	Afr. Economic Outlook
Total debt service (% of GNI)	1.6	2021	WB WDI
Inflation, consumer prices (annual per cent)	3.9	2021	WB WDI
Key social data			
Population growth (annual %)	3.1	2022	WB WDI
Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	58.9	2021	WB WDI
Population ages 15-64 (total) (per cent)	50.4	2022	WB WDI
Urban population (per cent)	45.4	2022	WB WDI
Mortality rate, under 5, per 1,000 live births	97.0	2021	WB WDI
Maternal mortality ratio, modelled estimate, per 100,000 live births	440.0	2020	WB WDI
People using basic drinking water (% pop.)	82.5	2020	WB WDI
Physicians (per 1,000 people)	0.1	2018	WB WDI
Prevalence of HIV (15-49 years) (per cent)	0.8	2021	WB WDI
School enrollment, primary (% gross)	79.0	2020	WB WDI
Literacy rate (% pop. above 15 years old)	31.0	2020	WB WDI
Key environment data			
Forest area (% of land area)	10.9	2020	WB WDI
People using at least basic sanitation services (pct. of population)	45.4	2020	WB WDI
CO2 emissions (metric tons per capita)	0.2	2020	WB WDI
Renewable electricity output (% of total)	43.5	2015	WB WDI
Arable land (% of land area)	5.3	2020	WB WDI
Key human rights data			
Political rights, 0-40 points	8/40	2023	Freedom House
Civic liberties, 0-60 points	21/60	2023	Freedom House

Annex 3: Overview of planned engagements managed by Bamako from May 1st 2024

	2024	2025	2026	2027
§06.32.01.20 – Mali				
FAMOC II (strategic objective 1)				
FACEJ II (strategic objective 2)				
<i>Other</i>				
Anti-corruption (UNDP)				
Artistic Citizenship (Jysk Musikkonservatorie)				
MEAL				
§06.34.01.40 - Energy and Water Resources				
Urban Water Project (strategic objective 3)				
§06.34.01.75 – Environmental Support and Resilience Against Climate Change				
CCASFBA - Climate Change Adaptation and Stability in Fragile Border Areas (PATRIP)				
§06.32.08.80 – Global Framework for Integrated Stabilisation				
PSP – Peace and Stabilisation Programme in Sahel II*				
§06.34.01.10 Natural Resources, Energy and Climate Change in Developing Countries				
CCDMP - Climate Change, Conflict, Displacement, and Irregular Migration – UNDP regional climate security project				
Approved and ongoing engagements				
New engagements				

* Third phase currently under formulation