

# 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  |
| 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<br>(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 in which Denmark's engagement can be carried out. Any engagement in Mali is currently associated with extensive risks, which 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. The Transition Framework will therefore adopt a risk sensitive and flexible approach. It will cover a shorter period than the traditional five-year period for strategic frameworks and country programmes (three-year from mid-2024 to mid-2027) and will not include support to the central government.

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 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, such as 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 job opportunities and stability in Mali. This vision will be pursued through the following the three strategic objectives; (1) contribute to peace and stability and a strengthened civil society, (2) promote socioeconomic and inclusive development, and (3) strengthen climate adaptation, food security and resilience at a local level.

## 2. Context and challenges

### 2.1 *The Security situation and conflict dynamics*

The coups in 2020 and 2021 that paved the way for the current military regime 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 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 symbolised by the 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 call for return to constitutional rule in Niger.

The closure of MINUSMA and 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. It 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 exploitation of ancient conflicts between agricultural (Dogon/Bambara) and herding communities (Peulh) over access to dwindling natural resources, especially water and arable/grazing land by terrorist groups. MINUSMA's exit will most likely also have socioeconomic consequences as the mission employs 2-3.000 Malians on top of derivative employment and this in turn will increase the possibility of terrorist recruitment. 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.

## *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 groups<sup>1</sup>, 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

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

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. 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 that plays a key role in safeguarding democratic rule in West Africa. 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.

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 independent electoral body (AIGE) is controlled by the 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 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 and fertile 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 affects 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 "no-objection notice" for all activities prior to commencement and monthly reports on activities and monthly financial reporting.

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. Among Malians, migration is traditional coping strategy especially for men between 15 and 30 years. The numbers have increased significantly in recent years. Migrants from across West Africa travel through transitory routes across the region for seasonal work, and many of these migrants return to Mali. 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 government forces. 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 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. 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.

### **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, 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 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. Currently the second scenario is 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, with an embassy in Bamako coordinating the engagements since 2006. Denmark's engagement in and with Mali has build 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.

##### *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.

On democratic governance and the promotion and protection of human rights, Denmark has successfully established a fund mechanism to enable civil society actors to engage in promoting a more peaceful and resilient society with respect for human rights; a fund to support change agents in the Malian society (**FAMOC – Fonds d'appui aux Moteurs de Changement**). The FAMOC mechanism supports various parts of Malian civil society in active citizenship, objective media, fighting disinformation, protection of human rights and engagement in the democratic and public processes. A key objective of the broader programme has been to promote stabilisation and peaceful co-existence. This has been done through promoting local peace agreements, which include supporting the establishment of effective conflict resolution mechanism at community level.

Another important achievement has been 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.

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. Through **FACEJ (Fonds d'Appui aux Créations 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 is 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 direct “peace dividend” to local communities, through the Danish Peace and Stabilisation Programme for the Sahel, which works for stabilisation and various levels including addressing instability at the regional level in the border areas, through the UNDP Stabilisation efforts in the Liptako-Gourma border area, through the EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali (EUCAP), and through 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*

Denmark remains committed to engage in strategic alliances and equal partnerships globally. However, the military coups Mali have challenged the setting for Denmark's engagement in Mali. As a result, this transition frame as the strategy for Danish engagement consolidates the redirection away from direct government 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. Danish trade relations with Mali are not considered relevant, and the scope for Danida Business instruments is considered very limited.

Denmark's commitment to cross-cutting issues such as humanitarian principles, gender equality, human rights, and youth 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. 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

These following instruments listed below are applied directly in Mali and through Denmark's engagement with the EU, UN organisations, the IFIs and regional organisations. In the individual organisation strategies consultations with relevant organisations as well as in bilateral cooperation agreements the Danish priority for the Sahel and Mali are reflected. In dialogue with relevant SPA partners the direct results of the engagement of Danish CSOs in Mali are highlighted.

- Pursuing active diplomacy and political dialogue, including through the EU
- Bilateral development projects
- Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) for Mali
- EU Institutions and programmes, including EUCAP Sahel Mali
- The Regional Peace and Stabilisation Programme for the Sahel
- Climate instruments, including the regional programme on climate change, conflict, displacement, and irregular migration in the Sahel (CCDMP)
- Other regional programmes and initiatives, including the Africa Programme for Peace (APP).
- Strategic Partnerships with Danish CSOs (CARE, Danish Refugee Council, Danish Red Cross, DanChurchAid, International Media Support, ActionAid Denmark (Mellemfølkeligt Samvirke), Oxfam IBIS, Save the Children and DFPA (Sex og Samfund from 2024)
- Human Rights and Democracy Partnerships (DIHR), i.e. Dignity
- Humanitarian aid (multilateral organisations and Danish CSOs)
- Danida Fellowship Center (DFC)

- Multilateral organisations, funds and programmes, including earmarked funding to UN agencies (e.g. IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP), the World Bank, and the African Development Bank
- Financial instruments including the African Development Bank and the Green Climate Fund

## 5. Strategic objectives for Denmark’s engagements in Mali

Throughout the timeframe of the transition framework, Denmark will pursue an integrated engagement targeting the Malian population. The overall vision is to support sustainable development and stabilisation in order to give Malians the opportunity for a safer, more productive and dignified life. To this end, the following three strategic objectives will be pursued:

### 5.1 Strategic objective 1: Contribute to peace and stability and strengthened civil society



The first strategic objective focuses on strengthening peace and stability and civil society based on respect for human rights, equality and dialogue. Working directly with the security sector in Mali is currently not an option. There will be a special focus 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. Promoting the right to free speech and access to information has in Danish supported programmes translated into supporting critical use of media and countering disinformation spread through social media. These activities will be continued and if possible informed also by the EU strategic information priorities in Mali.

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 2024, a third phase is currently being planned. The strategy of the PSP programme has been adjusted to the current situation and new activities are either addressing local peace and stabilisation activities in cross border areas, mainly between farmers and herders, or addressing an 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 has deployed 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 through strengthening the ability of the AU and ECOWAS to engage in preventative diplomacy, mediation and democratisation engagements, is underway. Denmark also provides flexible and risk tolerant support to Mali, among others, through the **UN Peacebuilding Fund**. UNDP stabilisation initiatives have been supported in the border region between Mali, Niger

and Burkina Faso and have developed local peace agreements as well as promoted direct support to stabilisation activities prioritised by the community.

At the regional level the Sahel Alliance has been promoting joint development work at community level. Denmark is for example partnering with Spain and the World Bank on the promotion of economic development in specific locations within existing programmes. The current security situation is limiting this approach, but the structure is still working as a forum for exchange of experience and information.

The embassy also 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.

### 5.2 Strategic objective 2: Promote socioeconomic and inclusive development



The second objective focuses on promotion of 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.

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 programme on **Climate Change, Conflict, Displacement, and Irregular Migration**. This programme seeks to strengthen conflict sensitivity in climate adaptation, to expand social protection, and to expand climate-smart agriculture to vulnerable demographic groups. Thus crossing across the second and third strategic objective.

Activities undertaken through **Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPA)** with Danish NGOs as well as with the Danish Institute for Human Rights contribute to all of the strategic objectives. The 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.

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 climate adaptation, food security and resilience



The third objective focuses on strengthening locally-led climate adaptation, food security and resilience with the aim 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 **the Climate Change Adaptation and Stability in Fragile Border Areas (CCASFBA)**. The project uses an integrated community approach stabilisation by strengthening the resilience of Mali's fragile border areas towards Burkina Faso and Niger through provision of 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, particularly regarding 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.

## 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. The present security situation in the country does not allow for 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 2026.

The overall risk assessment will be anchored at the Embassy in Bamako and will be part of a yearly review of engagements. Supported by implementing partners, the review will assess achievements of planned outcomes and generate lessons learned for future engagements as well as providing information and evidence for possible programme adjustments. Monitoring mechanisms are complemented by the embassy having regular dialogue with civil society and NGOs, notably Danish strategic partners present in Mali.

In addition to the existing bilateral engagements and the regional programmes, new engagements will be formulated under the transition framework, albeit to a smaller extent than under a country programme. Given the context, with a need for flexibility and influence, implementation of key projects are planned through fund management secretariats. A strong focus on financial capacity and local presence 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 in Mali will be pursued where possible.

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.

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.

### *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.
- Management will be agile and build on the lessons learned, applying flexibility and adaptability to ensure a continued relevance of the engagements.
- 

### *7.2 Bilateral Danish engagements in support of the strategic objectives*

The 3 major strategic objectives are described below:

#### *Strategic Objective 1: Contribute to peace and stability and strengthened civil society*

Under this strategic objective, the primary engagement envisioned builds on the learnings from **FAMOC**, the mechanism supporting various parts of Malian civil society in active citizenship, objective media, protection of human rights and engagement in the democratic and public processes.

##### 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, and with a special focus on young women, in the creation and sustainable start-up of private enterprises.

##### 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-based climate adaptation, food security and resilience*

The existing **Mali Sustainable Urban Water Program** 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 strategic objective, a new project could be formulated focusing on Danish priorities within climate adaptation and tailored specifically to the Malian context.

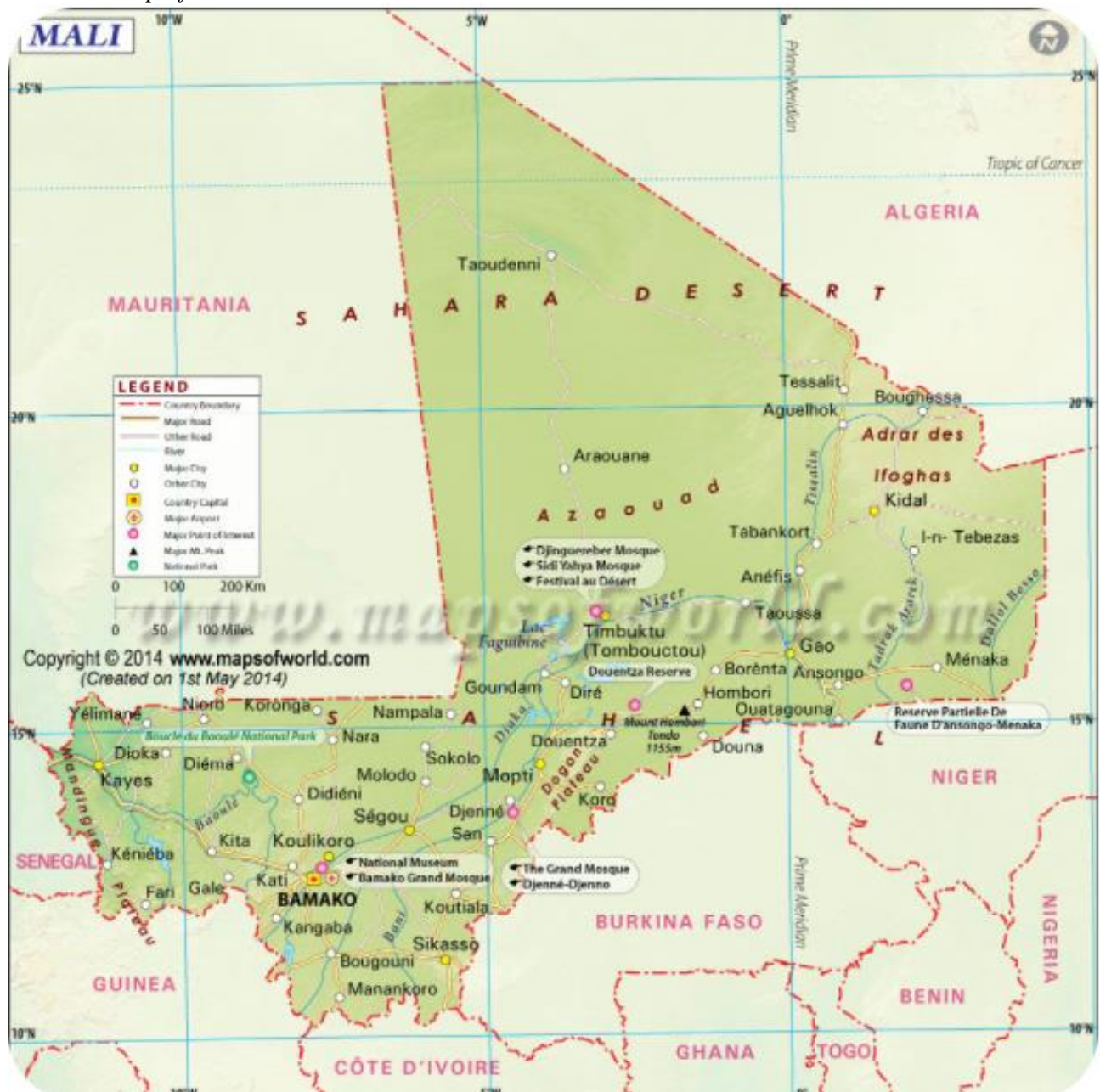
|   |
|---|
| <p><b>BOX 3. Expected Outcomes -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced resilience against climate change</li> <li>• Strengthened food and water security</li> </ul> |
|---|

**Tentative budget estimate for Mali 2024-2027\***

| <b>Commitments</b>                                 | <b>DKK Million</b> |
|--|--------------------|
| Overall budget                                     | 500                |
| Strategic objective 1                              | 150                |
| Strategic objective 2                              | 150                |
| Strategic objective 3                              | 150                |
| Unallocated funds                                  | TBA                |
| 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, thus twice the size of the programme presented for 2024-2027.

Annex 1: Map of Mali



*Anneks 2: Key Data / Figures – Mali*

| <b>Indicator</b>  | <b>Value</b> | <b>Year</b> | <b>Source</b>         |
|---|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Key economic data</b>  |              |             |                       |
| 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                |
| <b>Key social data</b>  |              |             |                       |
| 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                |
| <b>Key environment data</b>   |              |             |                       |
| 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                |
| <b>Key human rights data</b>  |              |             |                       |
| Political rights, 0-40 points   | 8/40         | 2023        | Freedom House         |
| Civic liberties, 0-60 points  | 21/60        | 2023        | Freedom House         |