



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
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# **MALI** case study

Evaluation of support to gender equality  
in Danish development cooperation  
(2014-2021)

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## List of abbreviations

AGETIER	Agency for the Execution of Rural Infrastructure and Equipment Works
DKK	Danish Kroner
DTPM	Danish Transition Programme for Mali
EU	European Union
EUCAP	European Union Capacity Building Mission
FACEJ	Le Fonds d'Appui à la Création d'Entreprise par les Jeunes
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBS	General Budget Support
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GRES	Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
KII	Key Informant Interview
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
MINUSMA	Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SOMAPEP	Mali Drinking Water Heritage Corporation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

## Introduction

The purpose of this case study is to explore the translation of the policy priority of gender equality into results in Mali. Denmark has a large-scale bilateral partnership with Mali, and this study will draw on a range of instruments to understand the impact of this partnership. The instruments used will include long-term development cooperation, diplomatic and political efforts, military contributions, regional stabilisation efforts and humanitarian assistance. Denmark has an active engagement in Mali's neighbouring countries Burkina Faso and Niger as well as North Africa (in particular Libya) in domains that have an important impact on the situation in Mali and the Sahel.

This evaluation covers the 2014-2021 period. More specifically, this section locates support to gender equality in the wider country programming with four deep dives in thematic areas of:

- support to young entrepreneurs (Youth Business Creation Fund – Programme: Le Fonds d'Appui à la Création d'Entreprise par les Jeunes (FACEJ));
- climate change adaptation and stability in fragile border areas of Mali (partnership with the PATRIP Foundation);
- women in peacebuilding and reconciliation (project with United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)); and
- water and sanitation (sanitation component of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) project with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)).

## Methodology

A key priority guiding the choice of method and case selection was to analyse outcomes of targeted gender integration; another was to include development engagements with a broader focus to shed light on the effectiveness of mainstreaming and gender impact of development activities with a different primary focus than gender. Desk study and scoping interviews during the inception phase informed selection of the four project deep dives within the Mali case study. The evaluation assessed these cases in more detail in consultations with embassy staff and implementing partners, as summarised in Figure 1. In addition to the four deep dives, the evaluation also included examples of gender equality integration and social inclusion in other activities supported under the Mali country programme. These examples were not as visible in programme

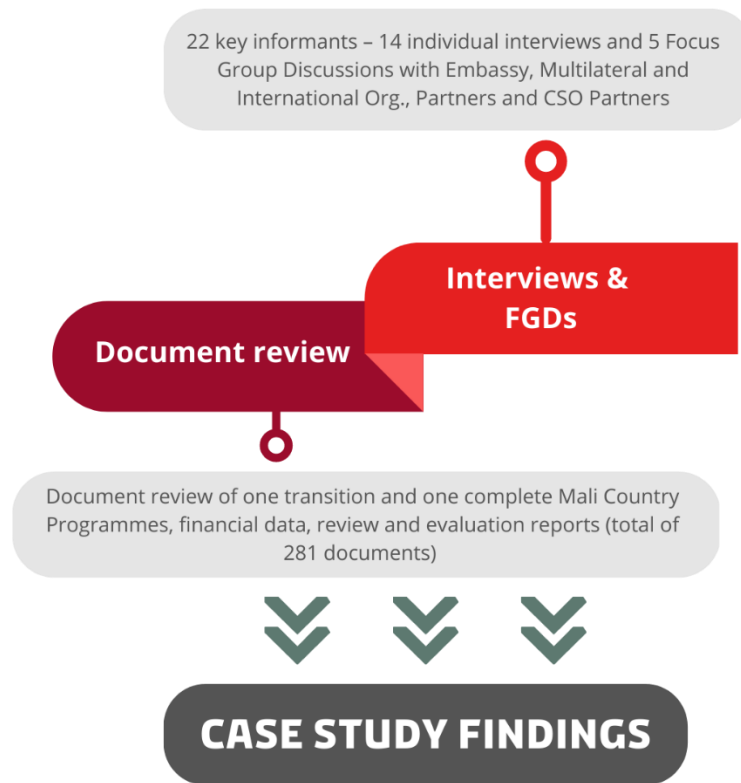
documentation but became evident in consultations during the remote data collection with key informant interviews (KIIs).

Case study preparations started in August 2022 and intensified during two weeks in November 2022, triangulating findings from a review of programme documentation with remote KIIs and focus group discussions (FGDs) (see Figure 1).

As Mali currently presents heightened security challenges, a country visit has been substituted by online data collection, with interviews conducted remotely by two evaluation core members and one regional expert based in Burkina Faso.

As established in the inception phase for this evaluation, this case study is considered a 'medium' case study, with primary data collection for the four 'deep dive' projects not expected to be extensive, and the study is therefore expected to generate a somewhat less rich collection of insights and findings. Additionally, while the four 'deep dive' projects were carefully selected in the inception phase, some key informants were not responsive or available for an online interview in the main data collection phase. Therefore, for UN Women and some parts of the PATRIP Foundation, documents were used as the only source of data for the final analysis. These limitations led to some evaluation questions being answered in a more detailed manner than others, but the evaluation considers the quantity and quality of collected data as complete and valid enough for an assessment.

**Figure 1. Evaluation methodology**



## Country programme findings

### Country context

Denmark has a comprehensive bilateral engagement in Mali. As early as the 1990s, Mali and Denmark cooperated on drinking water supply. Later, in September 2006, when opening the embassy in Bamako, Mali became a priority country for Danish long-term development assistance.

Mali, situated in the Sahel, struggles with deep-rooted poverty, weak state institutions, widespread corruption, climate change and rapid demographic growth. With almost half of the population being under 15 years old,<sup>1</sup> and with a female population representing 50% of the population, estimated at 21.5 million inhabitants, Mali nevertheless has a low representation of women in political and organisational bodies, due to the maintenance of strong unequal social relations between women and men still anchored in the sociocultural substrate. There are historic divides between the densely populated South and the inaccessible and sparsely populated North. Since independence in 1960, Mali has seen several

<sup>1</sup> World Population Dashboard Mali: <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/ML>

armed rebellions in the North followed by unfulfilled peace agreements and is now still struggling since a 2012 coup.

### **Bilateral development cooperation programmes**

During the period of this evaluation, two bilateral development cooperation programmes have been in place: a two-year Transition Programme 2015-2016 and a five-year Country Programme 2017-2022.

### **Transition Programme 2015-2016**

Following the 2012 crisis, and in a fragile and unstable context, the embassy designed a Danish Transition Programme for Mali (DTPM) for a two-year period (2015-2016). The DTPM did not comprise all the elements normally required for a country programme, including a country policy paper. It was, rather, a transition programme developed with considerations to Mali's Transition Roadmap, through which it mostly continued existing interventions following the crisis. Therefore, the opportunities for changing strategies have been limited. The focus was on continuing to support Mali's precarious transition process while using the two-year period to formulate a coherent country policy and a country programme for the period 2017-2021, aiming for this to coincide with Mali's following five-year plan.

An immediate priority and strategic objective of the transition programme was to contribute towards laying the foundations for a sustainable peace recovery; the longer-term goal was to contribute to the development of a peaceful, inclusive and legitimate state that fights poverty and works for the strengthening of human rights.

Denmark provided General Budget Support (GBS) and three thematic programmes:

1. Promotion of democracy, peace and reconciliation.
2. Improving access to water and sanitation.
3. Strengthening private sector development.

The budget mobilised by Denmark for this transition programme was DKK 210 million. Denmark's other efforts to increase security and strengthen resilience include humanitarian assistance, a regional Sahel programme, support to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the European Union Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) Sahel, and framework agreements with Danish non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Mali.

One strategic objective over the two-year implementation period was to strengthen the application of the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), to formulate a country policy and country programme for the period 2017-2022, and to develop a stronger foundation for their subsequent implementation. Of key importance in this regard was the completion of the gender and human rights screening note and the subsequent adjustment of implementation procedures to increase effectiveness in terms of promoting human rights and green growth.

In 2016 the MFA commissioned the Danish Institute for Human Rights to conduct an evaluation study<sup>2</sup> on lessons learned on this HRBA, which was introduced through a guidance note for Danish Development Cooperation in 2013 and which accompanied the previous Development Cooperation Strategy (A Right to a Better Life, 2012). Covering the period of the transition programme, this evaluation study also focused on Mali as one of their case studies and identified the following findings and lessons learned:

- The HRBA has probably reinforced the MFA's commitment to women's rights and gender equality, especially the non-discrimination and participation principles. This was consistently found in all the reviewed activities, even in difficult contexts, such as Mali, with little government ownership and societal resistance to gender.<sup>3</sup>
- The Mali transition programme was also criticised for initial weaknesses with regard to a HRBA. The review process (referring to headquarters engagement and the internal MFA review and approval process) noted that some HRBA elements (such as participation, inclusion and accountability in the governance programme) were not new. The business and water programmes had been designed prior to the HRBA; although the business programme contained a number of relevant measures, the water programme only offered a focus on equity and targeting of the poorest. The GBS programme was seen as consistent with an HRBA. As a result of the review process, peace and governance development engagement documents in Mali have a dedicated section to systematically consider the implications of an HRBA and gender.

### **Country Programme 2017-2022**

The Country Programme Document 2017-2022 provides an overview of how Denmark's bilateral development cooperation with Mali for the period 2017-2022 will contribute to the vision and strategic objectives of the Country Policy Paper 2016-2021, which was approved and launched in January 2016.

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<sup>2</sup> Lessons Learned on the Danish Human Rights-Based Approach. Evaluation Study. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Danida, International Development Cooperation, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Referring to societal norms defining opportunities based on gender/limiting women's opportunities.



The country programme, being implemented as an integral part of Denmark's comprehensive foreign policy engagement in Mali, aims to contribute to three strategic objectives:

▪ **Strategic objective 1 – Peaceful Co-existence, Stability and Security**

Mali's stability and ability to protect its people from conflict and shocks as well as its populations' resilience is vital and is a first condition for efforts to reduce poverty, strengthen democratic transition, and pave the way for an inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

▪ **Strategic objective 2 – Democratic and Inclusive Governance**

Economic inequalities and political exclusion have been behind historical resentments against the state, especially among northern communities. A legitimate state must be based on democratic values, transparency, rule of law and inclusion. Democratic governance holds the promise of containing Mali's internal conflict potential, managing fragmentation tendencies and neutralising socioeconomic conflicts of interest.

▪ **Strategic objective 3 – Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth**

Acknowledging the security-development nexus, improvements in peace and security will only be maintained if followed by inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The large youth population needs to be recognised as a resource, and their resilience to crime, violent extremism or migration needs to be strengthened by offering them better alternatives. Likewise, reintegration of internally and externally displaced people in the Malian economy is crucial.

The country policy objectives are aligned with key Malian policy and development documents, including the Peace Accord, Danish development policy, the European Union's (EU's) strategic plans for Mali and the Sahel region, and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The country programme aims to particularly contribute towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all) and 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels). Through the pursuit of these SDGs, the country programme aspires to contribute to ending poverty in all its forms in Mali by 2030 (SDG 1).

With the goal of achieving sustainable peace and development, and being based on inclusive and legitimate governance and respect for human rights for the Malian people, the country programme is implemented through three thematic programmes:

1. Promoting private sector employment (DKK 260 million), launched in 2019 with the aim of strengthening inclusive growth stimulated by the private sector to increase income and create jobs/self-employment.
2. General decentralisation support (DKK 409 million), aimed at strengthening citizen participation and improving the delivery of public services at local level.
3. Good governance (Democracy, Peace and Reconciliation) (DKK 294 million) to promote a more peaceful and resilient Malian society, respecting human rights.

### **Analyses during programme design of the gender and social context**

Various analyses carried out in the preparation for the country programme, including the embassy-financed ‘Drivers of Change Study’ (2014), point at four major factors negatively affecting the social contract between the Malian population and the state:

- **ineffective institutions**, perceived as being corrupt, lacking political will, and contributing to a lack of accountability and insecurity;
- **weak capacity** across all institutions – governmental as well as non-governmental;
- **significant challenges** facing the peace and reconciliation process; and
- **inadequate inclusion and civic engagement** resulting in marginalisation and apathy as well as local conflicts.

As experience showed, these factors have overlapped and mutually affected each other and consequently undermine attempts at good governance and exacerbate the tensions between the population and the state. A key conclusion emerging from the preparatory analysis was that the restoration of the social contract between the Malian state and its citizens would be essential to reversing the negative trends.

Further findings of the preparatory analysis included the following:<sup>4</sup>

- Ranked 179th out of 188 countries (the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP’s) Human Development Index 2015), Mali is one of the world’s poorest countries.<sup>5</sup> Should be a small 5
- According to the Multidimensional Poverty Index, 54.5% of Malians live in severe poverty, deprived primarily of education, access to cooking fuel and

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark: Mali Country Programme 2017-2022 (February 2017), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Mali’s Human Development Index score to measure the economic progress was 0.434 in 2019 and ranked Mali as 184th out of 189 countries.

water and sanitation, and experience high child mortality rates and poor nutrition.

- A population growth rate of more than 3% constitutes a huge challenge for reducing poverty. The poverty incidence has steadily decreased up to 2012, yet the absolute number of poor is increasing due to the high population growth rate.
- Although national gender-disaggregated poverty data is scarce, gender equality does not seem to have improved, and poverty has an adverse impact on the livelihood of women and young people.

Danida-funded comprehensive research carried out over the period from November 2013 to March 2015, during which more than 4,700 Malians were consulted, identified the erosion of societal values as the key main obstacle to peace in Mali, followed by limited access to employment for youth, deficiencies in governance in the areas of public affairs, and chronic insecurity.

- In the Global Gender Gap Report 2015, Mali is ranked 137th out of the 145 participating nations. Mali falls far below parity in all categories: women's economic participation and opportunity (109), educational attainment (139), health and survival (141), and political empowerment (116). Among the participating countries in sub-Saharan Africa, only Chad (142) ranks lower.
- On 12 November 2015 the Malian National Assembly adopted a historic gender quota bill. The new law, which requires that at least 30% of elected or appointed officials be women, is a result of concerted actions to reverse several years of negative trends in women's representation in positions of power. The law follows on similar initiatives over recent years, including the decision that women should have access to a minimum of 30% of the state-owned land under irrigation.

At the time of developing the country programme 2017-2022, the latest Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data showed that in 2013, official development assistance (ODA) represented nearly 10.9% of the Malian Gross National Income, highlighting how dependent Mali is on external concessional finance for the implementation of its national plans.

### **Contextual risks impacting country programme implementation**

The two bilateral development cooperation programmes (Transitional Programme 2015-2016 and Country Programme 2017-2022) covering the period of this evaluation were operating in a high-risk and unstable context. Both programmes took their point of departure in the context of continued political, socioeconomic and security-related fragility and were designed to be robust in this context. The Country Policy Paper 2016-2021 was designed in such a way for

the country programme to be flexible, aiming at responding to both positive and negative developments in the overall situation of the country while preserving a focus on results.

This requires embassy staff to balance pragmatism and realism with the integration of gender priorities and other needs in a conflict setting. By having country and context specifics always as a starting point, the embassy has proven to be flexible by the following:

- **Adapting the gender lens to Mali's context:** Throughout interviews with embassy staff, there was a common understanding that gender aspects in the context of a fragile state and a complex crisis differ from gender aspects in a “normal” development context that are not necessarily reflected in the MFA's Gender Strategy (2014).
- **Appointing a local staff member and an MFA posted staff as Gender Focal Points:** Facing a quite short-term rotation process for MFA staff (standard two years in Mali), the embassy applied a dual Focal Point role model for each of their Focal Points, starting around two years ago. This means, including for the Gender Focal Points, that there is one local staff member and one MFA posted staff appointed as Focal Points. That way, by marrying the local expertise with the Danish understanding, the embassy ensures that Danish policies are translated into the Malian context in the most organic and synergetic form.
- **Country programme extension to spring 2024:** Given the exceptional circumstances in Mali, it was decided to extend the current programming. The prolongation of the programme covers a transition period of 16 months until April 2024 and allows for a continuation of selected ‘flagship programmes’ in the current country programme.

### **Key trends of gender budgetary allocations**

Mali has received bilateral aid from Denmark since 2006 when it opened the embassy in Bamako and when Mali became a priority country for Danish long-term development assistance.

*EQ 1 and EQ 2: What have been the development and key trends of gender budgetary allocations the Mali country programmes over the period 2014-2021?*

*What has been the proportion of gender allocation against the overall development and humanitarian aid yearly portfolio?*

*What have been the main drivers behind these priorities?*

*What are the main factors behind the shift in integrating gender equality in Danish development cooperation?*

**Figure 2. Budgetary allocations as measured by the gender equality marker**

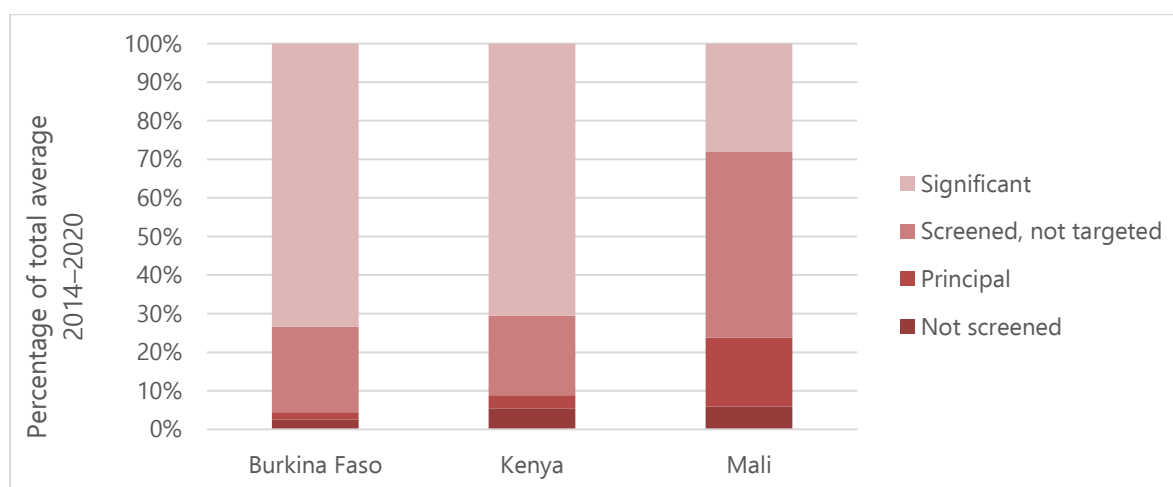


Figure 2 shows the total average of budget allocations measured by the gender equality marker over the 2014-2021 evaluation period. As can be seen, for Mali only a little under 30% of budget allocations have “significant” gender equality integration, about 15% have gender as “principal”, 5% are “not screened” and the remaining over 50% are “screened but not targeted”.

### Case project findings

*EQ 5: To what extent are gender-related results in Mali programming qualifying as ‘gender sensitive’, ‘gender responsive’ and ‘gender transformative’, and why?*

*EQ 5: In which thematic areas do gender transformative results appear the most, and why?*

Four projects were selected for deeper analysis during the remote data collection phase in November 2022, representing varying degrees of gender focus as shown in the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) assessment graphic (Table 1).

Partner	Title	Thematic Focus	Geographical Focus	Budget	Timeline
<b>PATRIP Foundation</b>	Climate Change Adaptation and Stability in Fragile	Climate	At borders to Burkina Faso and to Niger	Danish contribution – DKK 55 million	2021-2025

Border Areas of Mali					
<b>Consortium PlanBørnefonden – SwissContact</b>	FACEJ – Support to young entrepreneurs /Youth Business Creation Fund	Private sector development and climate – focus on green business	In region Sikasso, District of Bamako and urban zones of Kati, Koulikoro, Tombouctou, Ségou, Mopti and Kita	Danish contribution – DKK 85 million (the financing agreement covers the period from 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2022)	2019-2022
<b>UNICEF</b>	Improving Access to Safe Water and Sanitation	Water and sanitation	Three target regions: Mopti, Koulikoro and Sikasso	2015-2016: DKK 75 million (funded by Danida)  Budget all went to the Mali Drinking Water Heritage Corporation (SOMAPEP) (sub-partner) to expand the Urban Water Supply. No budget for UNICEF and the Agency for the Execution of Rural Infrastructure and Equipment Works (AGETIER) (sub-partner) as this was a no-cost extension of their ongoing project (from 2010). No complementary fund was needed.	2015-2016  Prior work: 2010-2014 Basic drinking water and sanitation project

					Previous Grant:
					Water and Sanitation programme Phase II 2010-2015, DKK 340 million
<b>UN Women</b>	Women in peacebuilding and reconciliation	Governance	Regions: Gao, Ségou, Mopti, Tombouctou, Ménaka, Bamako, Koulikoro, Kayes, Sikasso, Kita	DKK 56 million	2016-2022

**Table 1. GRES scale assessment of Mali case project**

	CRITERIA						
	Does the project include objectives coherent with Danish gender objectives?	Does the project integrate the results of an internal or external gender analysis?	Does the project document integrate the results of consultations with women and men in the area of intervention across the project cycle?	Does the project have any earmarked gender funding?	Does the M&E framework for the project include SADD systematically?	Has the project received any support by a gender advisor?	Is the partner assessed as having gender expertise?
FACEJ	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Gender Focal Point	X
PATRIIP	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
UN WOMEN	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	Gender Programme Specialist	✓
UNICEF	✓	X	✓	X	X	Gender Advisor	✓

	Project results suggest the following:				
	Results had a negative outcome that aggravated or reinforced gender inequalities and norms.	Results gave no attention to gender and failed to acknowledge the different needs of men, women and other marginalised groups. Provide examples	Results focused on the number of women, men or marginalised populations targeted and included. Provide examples	Results addressed the different needs and interests of men, women and marginalised groups and focused on equal distribution of benefits, resources, etc. but did not aim to influence and change gender relations. Provide examples	Results contributed to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequality & discrimination.
FACEJ	X	X	✓	Targeting 40% women; inclusion of men in process of communicating a change	Women reaching a level of independence and change of status in community
PATRIIP	X	X	✓	Emphasis on extreme vulnerable women and girls and inclusion of men	X
UN WOMEN	X	X	✓	Addressing boys and men considered as fundamental	X
UNICEF	X	X	✓	Reaching out to men regarding SRHR	X



As proposed in the inception report, the terminology of ‘gender sensitive’, ‘gender responsive’ and ‘gender transformative’ was revised to align to the five-point GRES scale.

**In which thematic areas do gender transformative results appear the most, and why?**

From the data provided, it is not possible to identify with certainty where some of the projects sit in the GRES scale. However, data provided suggests that two of the four projects in Mali are ‘gender responsive’.

UN Women’s project, which falls under the governance theme focus of this evaluation, suggests in its annual report 2019<sup>6</sup> that it is achieving transformative results by strengthening women’s leadership and capacity to participate in the peacebuilding, reconciliation and recovery process. However, the accurate number of women reached through the project is not clear, and the actual value obtained was not provided by UN Women. It is unclear from the data what the transformative impact is for these women. Having said that, in terms of promoting peace and social cohesion,<sup>7</sup> UN Women organised and supported the involvement and participation of women and youth through four peace huts in Timbuktu, Ménaka, Gao and Berrah. 1,320 women and young women were strengthened and involved in living together, preventing gender-based violence (GBV), and enabling economic activities in their communities. Six watchdog mechanisms of 56 women are active in Timbuktu and Mopti and participate in monitoring security incidents at the local level in connection with the WANEP-Mali early warning system.

By providing support to young entrepreneurs, it is widely reported to the evaluation team that the project FACEJ contributes to changes in norms, cultural values and the roots of gender inequality and discrimination. Although it is primarily a private sector development programme, within this evaluation it falls under the category ‘climate change/green growth’, as it also focuses on green businesses and incorporates a climate-sensitive approach, with a target of at least 40% of entrepreneurs being female. To facilitate the achievement of this target, FACEJ conducted a gender study to define an operational plan. The annual report 2019<sup>8</sup> indicates that 119 young entrepreneurs (78 enterprises in creation and 41 enterprises in growth phase) in the sectors of food processing, horticulture, breeding and renewable energies/environment are strengthened and supported. 65 of these 119 are men; 54 are women, who reached a certain level of independence, a change of status in the community and became providers for a wider family system. Further, in its annual report for 2021<sup>9</sup> FACEJ indicates to

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<sup>6</sup> UN Women. Rapport annuel 2019, p. 50.

<sup>7</sup> Annual Report 2019 country programme, p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> Annual report 2019 country programme, p. 37.

<sup>9</sup> FACEJ. Rapport annuel 2021, p. 4.

have almost reached its 40% gender target – 38% of the selected business plans were presented by young female entrepreneurs.

For the UNICEF project, the data does not show a clear picture of transformation achieved. However, the respective project ended six years ago in 2016, under the previous Transition Programme 2015-2016. Since then, UNICEF has advanced its approaches and is currently piloting an intervention specifically to transform discriminatory social norms. In a context such as Mali, where discriminatory gender and culturally social norms regulate women's and girls' lives, UNICEF is piloting a new approach that specifically targets frontline workers, aiming to create forces with the ability to integrate the gender component into their personal and professional lives. Starting with an assessment of capacity building of frontline workers, including WASH frontline workers, UNICEF developed specific modules that integrate the different aspects of gender equality in the personal and professional life of real-time workers and then engages with the lead, women-allied organisation for the implementation phase. UNICEF plans to scale up this approach across all UNICEF programmes including WASH and protection.

When it comes to the PATRIP Foundation, it is challenging to provide an overall assessment as to how transformative PATRIP's contribution is. PATRIP works with multiple sub-partners, and the role of PATRIP to their substantial work is not always clear. While documentation<sup>10</sup> and interviews with sub-partners reveal clear gender efforts, emphasising extreme vulnerable women and girls and describing activities to transform the dynamics of gender relations and strategies, including involving men, PATRIP itself is not as explicit as its sub-partners. This was also pointed out in an MFA appraisal report.<sup>11</sup>

### Where are the gaps and missed opportunities?

#### **Organisational gaps**

The evaluation observed one opportunity for the embassy in Bamako regarding gender mainstreaming and policy dialogues. Multi-donor platforms in countries, including Mali, provide a space and opportunity to identify political priorities and to improve the coordination not only of aid systems but also of gender equality. The platform's working group on women's and girls' empowerment meets regularly in Bamako and provides an opportunity for Denmark to become a prominent player in the international arena regarding gender issues. Through these meetings, Denmark can explore ways to enhance its gender mainstreaming strategy, such as improving the integration of gender into all economic, political

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<sup>10</sup> PATRIP. Rapport annuel 2021.

<sup>11</sup> MFA Denmark. Appraisal Report DTPM, p. 16.

and social policies in Mali, and supporting the Minister for Women and Protection of Children and Family in these efforts.

### **Gaps in project activities**

The evaluation observed some gaps in the projects assessed. One such area relates to the collection of data, which has an emphasis on the method of reporting and further planning. A document review of the selected case projects establishes that gender and age-disaggregated data is not systematically included, and that this therefore needs improvement.

The other areas that need attention are the gender-related priorities, the gender mainstreaming at project level and its lack of allocated budgeting. For instance, at UNICEF, to ensure the screening of gender across all their areas of intervention, all their gender priorities are aligned with the Gender Action Plan 2020-2025. As an example, UNICEF promotes the quality of maternal health care or invests in addressing GBV, including sexual exploitation and abuse, by defining specific action for adolescent girls, which is UNICEF's main target group.

***EQ 5: What kind of interventions, approaches or strategies in Mali have been well suited to supporting transformational gender changes and what lessons can be drawn?***

The engagement of men alongside women in gender transformative programming has been proven to be fundamental to address gender inequality in Mali. Three of the four case projects have reported success by including men into gender interventions.

By aiming to not impose their view on gender roles, FACEJ addresses some of their participants' husbands by simply explaining what benefits entrepreneurship has and how it can support the family in a broader sense. Also, by nominating "essential ambassadors", especially in rural regions in Mali, FACEJ works with former project participants who now own successful businesses. The experienced female entrepreneurs meet once a month with FACEJ participants in the region to discuss challenges and find ways how to support each other, e.g. with childcare. Starting next year, FACEJ plans to bring the husbands to that table as well.

By sensitising communities on WASH and sexual reproduction elements, UNICEF for instance organises focus groups to reach out to men regarding sexual and reproductive health.

***EQ 3: What are the key challenges and barriers for promoting gender equality in Mali (evidence from each thematic area)?***

As mentioned above, with regard to the country programmes, the Mali context is characterised by complexity: women and girls in Mali are facing multiple forms of

discrimination, economic marginalisation and GBV, including child marriage, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation. Availability of data is poor, and this lack of data does not allow for effective programming, especially within the current country context, where rights have become a taboo on the political level. However, this also provides evidence about the high gender inequality in the country and demonstrates that a gender lens is even more needed as a tool to understand how conflict and insecurity are impacting men and women differently. The project FACEJ, with its 40% gender target even during the conflict in Mali, is praised as the best example of gender integration in the country.

PATRIP, in its annual report 2021,<sup>12</sup> elaborates that “the main challenge in the implementation of this project has been the very volatile security situation which has deteriorated with an impact on the effective conduct of the latest activities. In addition to the security challenge, there is the issue of the Covid-19 pandemic in both countries. This has contributed to a real slowdown of all project activities for several months. In addition to these constraints, access to several localities during the winter period has always been a major challenge due to the poor state of the roads, forcing the teams to postpone certain activities or even to adapt the activities according to the seasons.”

Having said that, some project partners indicated in interviews that Denmark is an important and relevant partner, especially because of its flexibility in funding, which is crucial for the programmes to keep running. Particularly in the complex context of Mali, where things are constantly evolving and where certain crises are emerging in different areas, the flexible funding is crucial to be able to quickly pivot and target those emerging areas.

***EQ 9: What is the level of gender knowledge and expertise at the embassy of Denmark Bamako?***

Findings on knowledge levels reveal a mixed picture. Most of the staff consulted assessed their level of knowledge to be sufficient to carry out their day-to-day tasks. KIIs and FGDs with embassy staff confirmed a basic understanding of concepts such as targeted interventions and gender mainstreaming. Also, respondents were able to give examples of gender elements in their programmes to varying degrees.

However, the evaluation finds that new staff members could benefit from compulsory training on gender mainstreaming as part of their on-boarding. This was seen as potentially helpful in raising knowledge levels and providing staff with expertise to do more mainstreaming.

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<sup>12</sup> PATRIP. Rapport annuel 2021.

## How is gender perceived across staff and management at the embassy of Denmark Bamako?

Management at the embassy perceives gender equality as a key policy priority, widely shared by staff.

KIIs and the FGD with embassy staff gave evidence of varying degrees of actual engagement in gender programming, combined with high overall levels of gender knowledge. All interviewees and participants were aware of gender challenges within the country context, recognised these challenges to merit a programmatic response and understood the distinction between targeted interventions and the more challenging imperative of mainstreaming engagements.

Overall, staff were found in interviews and discussions to reflect broad recognition of the relevance of gender integration in programming and saw actual gender elements as value-addition to programme engagements. No respondents questioned the rationale for this.

## Conclusions

Given the fact that gender-disaggregated data is scarce, an overall finding from the Mali case study indicates that to derive the kinds of gender equality results envisaged, gender needs to be part of the design and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) and reporting requirements.

Across the thematic programmes, it has been a strategic consideration to address Mali's poor record in terms of including women in key processes and gender equality in general. With the continued violence in general and GBV in particular, women and girls remain in an extremely vulnerable position in Mali. Special attention has therefore been given to including women and girls throughout the entire process and ensuring their participation on an equal footing at all levels.

When assessed based on the four case projects selected for the evaluation, the picture that emerges is one where the country programme has been effective in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Mali.

Out of the four projects being assessed, two were identified as being 'gender responsive'.

Given the exceptional situation regarding gender relations in Mali, the assessed project engagements were found to be highly relevant in addressing discriminatory practices and unequal power relations. Articulating clear gender-related results against which projects are required to deliver, as observed in at least three of the projects, enhances the potential that overall the current country programme will contribute to transformative gender changes.

Key impacts of the projects have been in influencing behavioural change. By interacting with communities, the projects aimed to engage with and to influence negative social and cultural norms that have a negative impact on gender equality and women's empowerment.

It appears that the major challenge for Mali remains that of security, stability and inclusion to initiate economic, social, inclusive and sustainable development. This challenge integrates a multitude of dimensions, including (a) political and economic, (b) cultural and religious, and (c) social and its corollaries – the protection, promotion and inclusion of women and girls, youth and the vulnerable.

## Recommendations

***EQ 12: What strategic and practical considerations might Denmark engage in in Mali to gain a leading role in supporting gender equality and women's and girls' rights?***

***What institutional barriers might Denmark address in Mali to gain a leading role in supporting gender equality and women's and girls' rights?***

Two potential recommendations emerge from the case study of Mali:

### HQ level

**#1 Provide up-to-date strategic programming guidance to embassies** on what is expected from embassies on gender programming in the context of emphasis on priorities such as climate and green transition.

**#2 Provide a designated gender advisor to embassies.**

Embassies would benefit from a designated gender advisor whom embassies can draw upon, involve in developing policies or consult during the process of programming. Instead of having a mechanical application of gender aspects, the expertise of a gender advisor would allow for a more fluid, organic sort of dialogue in the programming phase. This designated gender advisor could be an individual at the MFA Team Equal Opportunities that the embassy can use as a one-stop-shop entry point.

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## Annex A: People consulted

	Name	Sex	Designation	Organisation	Location
1	NN	F	Interim Head of Cooperation, Mali	Embassy of Denmark in Mali	Mali
2	NN	F	Gender Focal Point, Mali	Embassy of Denmark in Mali	Mali
3	Astrid Mechior Olesen	F	Programme Manager, PATRIP and Gender Focal Point	Embassy of Denmark in Mali	Mali
4	Monika Tortshanoff	F	Board of Directors	PATRIP Foundation	Mali
5	Guilhem Faydherbe	M	Monitoring team, Bamako	GCF Monitoring team, CCASFBA project	Mali
6	Mialy Raveloarison	F	Programme Manager	PATRIP Foundation	Mali
7	Augustin Go	M	Monitoring team, lead on social cohesion	GCF Monitoring team, CCASFBA project	Mali
8	Rolf Holmboe	M	Ambassador	Embassy of Denmark in Mali	Mali
9	Vibeke Mortensen	F	Head of Cooperation	Embassy of Denmark in Mali	Mali
10	Jonas Palmstrøm	M	Conseiller Financier (CFO)	Embassy of Denmark in Mali	Mali
11	Bocar Ba	M	Project manager	Embassy of Denmark in Mali	Mali
12	Maike Schäfer	F	Project manager	Embassy of Denmark in Mali	Mali
13	Ely Dembele	M	Project manager	Embassy of Denmark in Mali	Mali
14	Kola Sow	M	Project manager	Embassy of Denmark in Mali	Mali

15	Youssef Barry	M	Project manager	Embassy of Denmark in Mali	Mali
16	Kerri Agee	F	Head of Programs for Mali	CRS (Catholic Relief Services) Mali	Mali
17	Ibrahim Bakoye	M	Program Manager for Emergency and Recovery projects in Niger	CRS (Catholic Relief Services) Mali	Mali
18	Lompo Hamada	M	Head of Program	Help – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe au Mali	Mali
19	Toureba Keita	F	M&E Coordinator	Help – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe au Mali	Mali
20	Yagaré Diakité	F	Gender and Communication Manager	Help – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe au Mali	Mali
21	Taka Nina	F	Directrice Pays	Mercy Corps Mali	Mali
22	Wise N'Gasa	M	Directeur de la mise en œuvre des Programmes	Mercy Corps Mali	Mali
23	Issa Diarra	M	Coordinateur des Programmes ReClis et AVERTII	Mercy Corps Mali	Mali
24	Amraoui Yasmine	F	Proposal development and grants manager	Mercy Corps Mali	Mali
25	Chloe Rissmann	F	Communication and Gender Officer	Swiss Contact, FACEJ	Mali



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