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# THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME'S CONTRIBUTION TO IMPROVING THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN MALI

RACHEL GOLDWYN, SUYOUN JANG,  
JONAS HOLM KLANGE, GARY MILANTE  
AND REBECCA RICHARDS



**WORKING PAPER**

June 2019

**STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL  
PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

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## **Methodology and disclaimer**

The Mali case study is one of four country case studies for the first phase of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute–World Food Programme Knowledge Partnership. For each case study, a joint team of staff from SIPRI and WFP conducted in-country research for approximately two weeks to identify the possible contributions to improving the prospects for peace resulting from WFP programming. The methodologies for this analysis were a literature review of the country context and of WFP and other programming; key informant interviews with WFP country office staff, beneficiaries and local experts; focus group discussions with beneficiaries; and consultations with partners and experts in the country. Each country visit culminated in a presentation of the findings and a discussion with the management of the country office on possible ways forward, which included a discussion of the contemporary political, social and technical challenges of incorporating a conflict lens, conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding work into WFP programming. The country report was then written up in consultation with the country office, incorporating clarifications and additional evidence as these became available. As a result, this analysis is not independent of the context. The findings of these four country cases informed the Global Report on Phase 1, which was published in June 2019.

The findings and recommendations and any errors or omissions are those of the authors and do not represent the position of SIPRI, WFP, or the management, executive directors or boards of these institutions.

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The Mali country visit took place in January 2019. The research team consisted of: Rachel Goldwyn (Senior Conflict-Sensitivity and Peacebuilding Advisor, WFP), Suyoun Jang (Researcher, SIPRI), Jonas Holm Klange (Programme Officer, WFP Mali Country Office), Gary Milante (Director of Studies, Peace and Development, SIPRI) and Rebecca Richards (Chief of Emergencies and Transition, WFP).

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## Abbreviations

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Database
CBPP	Community-based participatory planning
CFM	Complaints and feedback mechanism
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
ENSAN	National Food and Nutritional Security Survey
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FC-G5S	Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel
FFAs	Food assistance for assets
GDP	Gross domestic product
GFD	General food distribution
IDP	internally displaced person
MDSF	Malian Defence and Security Forces
MINUSMA	Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
NRM	Natural resource management
SAMS	Smallholder agriculture market and value chain support
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goal
SMC	School management committee
T-ICSP	Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan
TOC	Theory of change
WFP	World Food Programme



## Executive Summary

This case study is the part of a wider knowledge partnership between the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which aims to better understand and strengthen WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace. In the light of its complex context, where humanitarian, development and peace agendas intersect, Mali was selected along with three other countries (El Salvador, Iraq and Kyrgyzstan) for pilot phase research. The objectives of this phase 1 case study were to understand WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace, how WFP could enhance its contributions to improving such prospects, and how all this could be measured.

This case study report contains detailed findings from the field research. This research involved a review of country office and programme documentation and the relevant literature, and an assessment of current data sets. However, the core of the field research, and the activity on which most time was invested, was qualitative assessment through focus group discussions and research interviews involving key stakeholders within and outside WFP, as well as visits to project sites.

The case study focused on the part of WFP's portfolio in Mali that includes food assistance for assets (FFA), general food distribution (GFD), the school meals programme and a social cohesion project funded by the Peacebuilding Fund. To review which parts of the portfolio appear most promising as WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace, the case study employed the concept of theories of change (TOCs) as a tool for facilitating analysis and stimulating new thinking about how programming can contribute to improving the prospects for peace. The availability of relevant data for measuring WFP's contribution to enhancing the prospects for peace was evaluated in the light of these TOCs. The detailed methodology for using TOCs in the research is set out in the preliminary report, which was published in June 2019.<sup>1</sup>

### Conflict context analysis in Mali

#### *Context of the conflict in Mali*

In early 2012, a rebellion in northern Mali was taken over by non-state armed groups. This culminated in a political crisis and a coup d'état, which led to international involvement and later the deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in 2013. The 2015 Algiers Peace and Reconciliation Agreement ended the armed conflict and enabled the installation of interim authorities but insecurity remains high. Marginalization and limited access to services and opportunities, combined with inter-communal conflict, provide fertile ground for the expansion of non-state armed groups, illicit trafficking and extremism. Since 2016, central Mali, which is not covered by the peace agreement, has increasingly become a centre of instability due to the presence of extremist armed groups that have exploited pre-existing rivalries between farmers and herders over access to land, water and pasture. This has caused inter-community conflicts to flare up throughout the region.

#### *Food insecurity and conflict*

Mali is caught in a cycle of mutually reinforcing factors of vulnerability and instability, which makes it one of the most food insecure countries in the world. Around 25 per

<sup>1</sup> Delgado, C., Jang, S., Milante, G. and Smith, D. *The World Food Programme's Contribution to Improving the Prospects for Peace* (SIPRI: Stockholm, 2019).

cent of households are moderately to severely food insecure. Most of the regions with the highest levels of food insecurity are conflict-affected areas. The gradual erosion of livelihoods in northern and central Mali is a root cause or driver of instability. This is fuelled by marginalization, exclusion, corruption and a sense of injustice, as well as the limited capacity of the state to deliver basic services to the population. People in Mali, and youth, in particular, can be drawn into inter-communal tensions and recruited into armed violence or organized crime.

Although there is little evidence that food insecurity was a factor in the outbreak of the conflict in Mali, underlying factors affecting food security, especially food availability and access, have exacerbated some of the root causes of conflict or fuelled existing grievances. Inconsistent rains and more frequent and severe drought linked to climate change increase natural resource stresses and reduce food security, increasing tensions especially between farmers and herders. More generally, food price volatility, market closures and market access issues create shocks that further aggravate social tensions. A mixture of stress factors compounded by food insecurity intensifies the risk of conflict over resources.

### **WFP in Mali**

Following on from WFP's emergency operation in response to the 2012 crisis in northern Mali, WFP Mali is supporting communities affected by conflict and vulnerable households experiencing seasonal stresses while building their resilience to shocks through an increasing convergence of activities in central and northern Mali. The country office has begun to design food security activities that can be used as platforms for joint peacebuilding initiatives in partnership with other UN agencies, the Government of Mali and NGOs. Currently, these activities are carried out under a Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (T-ICSP), which ends in 2019. In 2020, WFP will transition to a five-year Country Strategic Plan (CSP).

### **WFP's contributions to improving the prospects for peace in Mali**

The TOCs articulated in the study are set out below, along with a summary of the relevant evidence from the peacebuilding field, potential conflict sensitivity considerations, analysis and recommendations, where relevant, on improving the prospects for peace.

*TOC 1: **If** local communities mobilize themselves to manage the school meals programme through school management committees, **then** they will demonstrate good governance at the grassroots level and strengthen cooperation and trust among community members.*

This theory is based on the assumption that a demonstrably accountable process at the local level contributes to consensus building, and that mutual interests and interaction among previously divided communities will help to reframe the perception of the 'other', build trust and change attitudes, thereby helping to create social cohesion. The relevance of this TOC is dependent on context. It is most likely to be relevant in cases where schools serve divided communities, and where levels of trust and cooperation are low. In such cases, it may be an effective mechanism for strengthening relationships locally.

*TOC 2: **If** school meals programmes contribute to keeping schools open, **then** they may strengthen the stabilizing role of education among communities affected by crisis.*

There is evidence that the restoration of services, including education, in crisis situations can restore a sense of normalcy and provide a practical 'peace dividend' for

communities. External studies show that school meals programmes have a positive impact on the survival of schools, mitigating the effects of conflict on education and stability in a community.

This TOC is particularly relevant in Mali, where the closure of schools due to insecurity and the presence of extremist groups, as well as their reopening have had strong signalling effects. Schools are a key platform for the delivery of relief and development interventions, and school feeding is a critical enabler of schools remaining open. Schools play a role in restoring normalcy and stabilizing local communities, both directly and as a vehicle for further interventions, and by investing in a new generation of human capital.

*TOC 3: If natural resources are enhanced and equitable agreements are reached on their use, then conflict/tensions over natural resource access between competing user groups will be reduced.*

The assumption behind this TOC is that rehabilitating and enhancing natural resources to increase their availability and productivity can reduce competition and disputes. The strongest contributions to peace through natural resource management (NRM) require the creation of a clear system of ownership, mechanisms to resolve disputes and the promotion of equity in benefits.

The root causes of escalating patterns of violence in Mali are land- and resource-related conflicts. Farmer–herder conflicts, which usually coincide with ethnic cleavages, have been intensified by climate change and population growth, and are sometimes leveraged by armed groups. By enhancing infrastructure to reduce land degradation and water loss, FFA enhances resource supply and thus directly helps to prevent conflict over resources at the community level. To strengthen the contribution to enhancing the prospects for peace, FFA programming should address ownership/land-use issues, which should also promote stronger equity in terms of benefits.

*TOC 4: If communities mobilize themselves to analyse their vulnerabilities through an inclusive and participatory process and work together to strengthen livelihoods, then this will strengthen the inclusion of youth and collaboration within and between communities.*

This TOC is underpinned by contact theory, which states that participatory processes can strengthen trust between community members, and by an assumption that FFA interventions can create alternative sources of power and purpose through community-based participatory planning (CBPP) processes, which provided practical avenues for youth to air their views and see them put into action, and thus experience empowerment through their involvement in enhancing livelihoods options. While CBPPs may have the potential to strengthen inter/intra-community collaboration, more evidence is required at the country office, regional and corporate levels. Moreover, this TOC hinges on the inclusivity of its decision making, and further work is recommended on analysing the involvement of vulnerable groups.

*TOC 5: If government enhances the provision of basic social services, and increases its accountability and responsiveness, then the citizen-state link will be strengthened by the state signalling its willingness and ability to respond to the population's needs.*

There is a growing evidence base that public administration and social services can enhance contact and accountability between citizens and the state by providing performance-based legitimacy for the state. Although the capacity of the government to provide essential social services in a substantial proportion of Mali is constrained by high levels of insecurity and uncertainty over the peace process, decentralization efforts support participatory budgeting and commune-level planning to increase the accountability and responsiveness of the state. WFP Mali works with the Government

of Mali and the national social protection platform to enhance social protection systems through a range of interventions.

Linking up WFP's local planning processes with decentralized government planning and budgeting processes at the commune level could help strengthen the citizen-state link by building government capacities, improving service provision and accountability, and feeding into a local planning process. Despite the constraints in those parts of the country where the state is only partially present, it seems that there is untapped potential for WFP to continue and scale up capacity building and support, especially of lower tiers of governance.

### **Enhancing WFP's contributions to improving the prospects for peace in Mali: challenges and opportunities**

#### *Conflict sensitivity concerns*

The country study also identified areas in which WFP's programming might unintentionally be leading to tensions and grievances or missing out on opportunities to contribute to improving the prospects for peace. General concerns were raised about the inclusivity of participatory processes and planning tools. The main concerns were that sections of communities may not be genuinely involved in the process, especially herders, and that lower status sections of the community may not be able to speak up in community-wide processes.

Issues linked to programme participation—the selection of individuals and households to participate in activities and receive assistance—also raised important conflict sensitivity concerns. First, there can be inclusion/exclusion errors in drawing up participant/distribution lists. The most pressing problem arises if armed groups or local powerbrokers and chiefs try to influence or even control who gets on to a participant/distribution list and use this as a mechanism to reinforce their power over a community and to legitimize their position. Another issue that may arise is the redistribution of food/cash transfers by the village chief, which indicates a lack of understanding and acceptance of the selection criteria. If a chief were to favour certain groups, this could contribute to an increase in grievances among excluded groups.

Another concern raised was linked to the risk of diversion during the distribution process or the delivery of food assistance in areas with a weak state presence or under the control of non-state armed groups, where resources have occasionally been looted or misappropriated. Some modalities, such as e-vouchers to reduce the risk of resource diversion, were identified as mitigation measures. When distributions are in-kind, chiefs can also use this to solidify their own position and claim credit for the food gained for the community.

#### *Data*

Measuring contributions to improving the prospects for peace is challenging. There are difficulties linked to data collection in conflict environments and to the typically intangible nature of the results being measured, such as increased levels of trust or tolerance. WFP Mali already collects detailed data for a variety of monitoring purposes and, while these were not designed for the purpose of assessing contributions to improving the prospects for peace, some adaptations to these existing tools could help to capture relevant evidence. This data should be complemented by other qualitative data to provide a more nuanced understanding of attitudes and relationships, and the changing nature of conflict/violence in the areas of operation. Data on other areas of concern, such as physical security, market changes and market access, armed conflict

(from MINUSMA and/or the Armed Conflict Location and Event Database, ACLED) and land agreements could be used to feed into, measure and inform contributions to improving the prospects for peace. Finally, efficient complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFMs), such as the one recently established by WFP, are essential components of any effort to monitor possible inadvertent contributions to conflict.

#### *Integration of Peace and Conflict into Processes, Systems and Capacities*

To further evaluate and measure WFP Mali's possible contribution to improving the prospects for peace and integrate conflict sensitivity into all of its activities, the research mission sought to assess WFP Mali's current capacities and opportunities. Conflict sensitivity does not currently appear to be systematically integrated into project design or implementation processes, and existing monitoring tools are not designed to track levels of conflict or peace. Other than their acceptability within the community, the capacity of partners with regard to conflict sensitivity does not appear to be assessed in any formal way, although reference is made to the principles of 'do no harm' and accountability to affected populations as part of performance standards. A conflict sensitivity lens in programming is increasingly becoming a formal donor requirement, and WFP Mali has identified this as an area to be addressed and strengthened.

#### **Recommendations and way forward**

At the end of phase 1 of the SIPRI/WFP knowledge partnership, recommendations were made for inclusion in phase 2 and more generally to be carried out by WFP Mali.

- **Integrate conflict sensitivity into strategy implementation.** WFP Mali should integrate conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive approaches into all components of the operation across the programme cycle, including programme design within the five-year CSP, and ensure that staff and partners have adequate capacity.

A particular focus within the programme cycle is required on:

- **Targeting of programme participants.** Carry out operational research to identify and integrate best targeting practices to minimize conflict risks and maximize support for peace. Findings should be clearly integrated into programme design and implementation.
- **Community-based participatory planning and accountability to the most vulnerable.** Explore options for strengthening participatory planning processes, working with local authorities to link community level participatory planning processes to local government communal planning and budgeting in order to support strengthened accountability.
- **Transformative change in relation to access to resources.** Advocate for and support regional assessments of benefit capture linked to FFA interventions, and for research programmes that achieve successful transformative change in relation to land, water and other resources; integrate findings into land agreements for use in resilience programming in particular.
- **Strengthening Evidence on Conflict and Peace Outcomes.** Explore partnerships for gathering both quantitative and qualitative data that can capture changes in the quantity and quality of peace.



# 1. Introduction

The World Food Programme (WFP) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) have established a Knowledge Partnership in order to build an evidence base to assess whether—and if so how—WFP’s programming contributes to improving the prospects for peace and to identify where—if anywhere—it has unintended negative effects. The partnership will support future operational refinement based on the research conclusions, and it is expected that this work will inform an evaluation of WFP’s policy that is planned for 2021. Given the complex context in Mali, where humanitarian, development and peace agendas intersect, WFP Mali was selected to participate in the research as one of the four case studies in Phase I intended to focus the development of the evidence base. The objectives of the case studies were to understand in each context: WFP’s contribution to improving the prospects for peace; how WFP might enhance its contribution to improving the prospects for peace; and how WFP can measure its contributions to improving the prospects for peace.

The case study research involved a review of programme documents and literature on Mali, a review of the data gathered by WFP, discussions with staff and a field visit to project sites in the Mopti Region, which involved focus group discussions with programme participants and other community members. In addition, semi-structured interviews were held with a wide range of key stakeholders in Bamako and Mopti from among peer agencies and NGOs, civil society, local leaders, local partners and representatives of the Malian Government, as well as with academics, donors and experts in peace and conflict.

The case study focused on parts of the portfolio in the Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (T-ICSP), such as food assistance for assets (FFA), general food distribution (GFD) and the school meals programme, as well as on the social cohesion project funded by the Peacebuilding Fund. To assess which aspects of the portfolio appear to be most promising in terms of WFP’s contribution to improving the prospects for peace, the case study employed the concept of theories of change (TOCs) as a tool for facilitating analysis and stimulating new thinking about how programming might contribute to improving the prospects for peace. The availability of relevant data to measure WFP’s contribution to improving the prospects for peace was evaluated in the light of these TOCs. The detailed methodology for the use of TOCs in this research is included in the preliminary report published in June 2019.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Delgado et al. (note 1).



## 2. Conflict context analysis

### Situation profile

In early 2012, Mali's road to recovery from a Sahel-wide drought was cut short by a secessionist rebellion in the north of the country, which was subsequently largely taken over by extremist groups. Strategic towns in northern Mali were captured, culminating in a political crisis and a coup d'état. This in turn led to international military intervention and the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), in the north. Seven years later, despite the existence of the Algiers Peace and Reconciliation Agreement between the government and signatory armed groups, the unravelling of Mali continues. Implementation of the agreement has been slow and the north remains largely under the control of armed groups under the umbrella organizations Coordination of Movements of Azawad and the 'Plateforme', as well as the interim authorities. Clashes continue between signatory armed groups and several groups have been accused of involvement in illicit trafficking across the Sahel and North Africa. Terrorist groups operate in most parts of the north and frequently attack the Malian Defence and Security Forces (MDSF), MINUSMA and France's Operation Barkhane, which carries out counterterrorism operations across the Sahel.

Since 2016, central Mali, which is not covered by the peace agreement, has increasingly become a centre of instability due to the presence of extremist armed groups. In the 'three border zone' between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, rivalries between farmers and herders over access to land, water and pasture continue to be a source of inter-community conflict. This in turn has provoked the emergence of local self-defence militia, which despite local mediation efforts are increasingly becoming involved in atrocities against civilians. Extremist movements have exploited the widespread feelings of marginalization and have all but replaced state authorities near the Mauritanian border. The MDSF is under increasing pressure in central Mali and is reliant on MINUSMA and Barkhane. The Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel (FC-G5S), a joint force of five Sahel region countries, has been deployed to central Mali, but operations to secure border areas have stalled due to a lack of resources and attacks against the force.<sup>3</sup> State authority and presence in the region remain limited due to the prevailing level of insecurity, targeted killings and the intimidation of state representatives.

The sustained and ongoing consequences of instability and conflict include economic disruption, population displacements, the destruction of infrastructure and disruption of development efforts. Government control and the ability to provide basic social services are severely limited across much of northern Mali and the same is becoming increasingly true of central Mali, where localized conflict has led to soaring levels of displacement, the closure of schools and health centres, and reduced access to markets.

### Drivers of conflict

Negative climatic changes, the increasing occurrence of extreme weather events, demographic pressures and changes in aspirations, where traditional livelihoods strategies in rural areas no longer appeal to youth, are the root causes driving instability and the gradual erosion of livelihoods in northern and central Mali. These are often fuelled by a sense of injustice, marginalization and exclusion, as well as corruption and the limited capacity of the state to deliver basic services to the population. As a

<sup>3</sup> The four countries are Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.



result, Mali finds itself in a cycle of mutually reinforcing factors of vulnerability and instability. The population in Mali, particularly youth, is affected by socio-economic exclusion, deprivation and the erosion of traditional livelihoods exacerbated by environmental degradation and climate change, and vulnerable to being drawn into intercommunal tensions and recruited into armed violence or organized crime. Mali's economic growth—gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 5.3 per cent in 2017—is largely based on export crops and gold mining, which are geographically concentrated in the southern part of the country. This has not created opportunities for increasingly disadvantaged rural populations, particularly in the north. About two-thirds of the population live in rural areas and subsistence agriculture, livestock and fisheries account for about one-third of Mali's GDP and nearly 80 per cent of employment.

Mali has a young and fast-growing population. The fertility rate of six children per woman is the third-highest in the world, and the population is projected to double by 2035. About 52 per cent of the population is under the age of 15. Future increases in demand for land and water will put further strain on an already degraded resource base. The lack of employment opportunities means that many unskilled youths migrate from rural areas to urban centres. The urbanization rate of 5 per cent per year is among the highest in the world and there is widespread urban poverty. The dearth of sustainable livelihood strategies in many parts of Mali feeds a sense of disenfranchisement and grievance, and potentially serves as a push factor for radicalization. The relationship between urbanization and radicalization is complex—urbanization may be a valve for releasing societal pressures that might otherwise result in youth radicalization.<sup>4</sup>

Climate change, land degradation and demographic challenges have led to increased competition for resources such as land, water and pasture for livestock. This contributes to increased levels of inter-communal conflict between pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, especially in the Sahelian zone. It is estimated that 60 per cent of Malians live on degraded land, where soil degradation is accelerated by unsuitable agricultural practices, overuse of land due to rapid population growth, overgrazing or the lack of alternative livelihoods. Climate change and the related degradation of soils, forests and water ecosystems further aggravate these conditions and thus levels of poverty. In central Mali, where competition for land underpins much of the conflict, the emergence of militant extremist groups is a recent evolution of much longer term structural drivers of conflict.

## **Food insecurity and conflict in Mali**

### *Food insecurity and conflict*

Mali is one of the most food insecure countries in the world. Almost 25 per cent of households are moderately to severely food insecure.<sup>5</sup> Most of the regions with the highest levels of food insecurity are conflict-affected areas, such as Kidal (29 per cent), Mopti (28 per cent), Gao (47 per cent) and Timbuktu (30 per cent). The 2018 population survey identified that the primary concern for 92 per cent of Malians is to nourish their families, and that people believe that the Government of Mali should make food security a priority.

While there is a general understanding of the devastating impact of conflict on food security, there is less evidence that food insecurity itself is a factor in the outbreak of conflict in Mali. Nonetheless, the underlying factors affecting food security, especially

<sup>4</sup> Sukarieh, M. and Tannock, S., 'The global securitisation of youth', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 5 (2018), pp. 854–70.

<sup>5</sup> Government of Mali, *Enquête Nationale sur la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle (ENSAN Mali)* (Le Système d'Alerte Précoce du Mali, SAP: Bamako, Feb. 2019).

**Box 2.1. Humanitarian action in an integrated mission context**

Established by UN Security Council Resolution 2100 (2013), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was deployed to Mali in 2013. MINUSMA has had its mandate renewed by subsequent Security Council resolutions, the latest being Resolution 2324 (2018) which also expanded it to cover central Mali. Its mandate is focused on supporting the implementation of the Algiers Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. MINUSMA is the world's second largest UN peacekeeping mission. It has over 15 000 authorized personnel and an annual budget of \$1.1 billion for July 2018 to June 2019. The mission has also suffered one of the highest rates of fatalities of any peacekeeping operation.

The UN Country Team has been part of an integrated mission context since the deployment of MINUSMA. The UN Development Assistance Framework, 2015–2019 (UNDAF+), which provides the overall framework for the UN System's development assistance, including MINUSMA's contribution, contains a pillar on Peace, Security and National Reconciliation.<sup>a</sup> The majority of WFP's activities that could help to improve the prospects for peace, as described in this report, fit within the UNDAF+ and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

MINUSMA's proximity to other security actors, including counterterrorism operations such as Operation Barkhane and the Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel, means that some armed groups do not perceive it as impartial. As a result, efforts to strengthen complementarity between the mission and UN agencies, as required by Security Council resolutions and reflected in the Integrated Strategic Framework, must carefully consider the risks of compromising on the principles of humanitarian action. The conflation of counterterrorism, security and development/humanitarian agendas can risk undermining principles of neutrality and impartiality, and losing the trust of local populations.

<sup>a</sup> The UNDAF+ will be replaced by a UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2020–2024, which is currently under development by the UN Country Team with participation from MINUSMA. Resolution 2423 (2018) requests the development of an Integrated Strategic Framework to orient the UN's overall vision, joint priorities and internal division of labour for sustaining peace in Mali and ensuring an efficient division of tasks and complementarity of effort between MINUSMA and UN agencies, funds and programmes.

food availability and access, exacerbate some of the root causes of conflict or fuel pre-existing grievances to trigger conflict.

Inconsistent rains and more frequent and severe droughts linked to climate change increase natural resource stresses and reduce food security, increasing tensions especially between farmers and herders.<sup>6</sup> Food price volatility, market closures and market access issues create shocks that further aggravate social tensions. A mix of stress factors compounded by food insecurity intensifies the risk of conflict over resources.

*Food insecurity and violent extremism*

Multiple perspectives were captured from across the stakeholder interviews on whether food insecurity plays a role in recruitment for violence. The link to food insecurity was weak—only one respondent identified hunger, or fear of hunger, as a key recruitment driver. Other informants argued that there was no obvious profile for, or driver as the main reason, why youth join extremist, armed or self-defence groups. Unemployment and a poverty of opportunity were widely cited by informants, as well as economic incentives. Renegotiating social status by joining a group, including gaining a voice in decision making, a sense of injustice linked to heavy handed actions by the MDSF, as well as anger over poor governance and/or poor resource management were also cited. Self-defence against attack, to obtain protection and being caught up in vicious circles of revenge were discussed. Some are simply forced to join.

*Food assistance and migration*

Globally, the correlation between food aid and migration is rarely direct, and access to food or other forms of assistance is not the only determinant of people's decisions

<sup>6</sup> World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Monitoring Food Security in Countries with Conflict Situations: A Joint WFP/FAO Update for the United Nations Security Council*, no. 4 (WFP and FAO: Rome, Aug, 2018).

to migrate. However, in situations where survival strategies have been exhausted and people are forced into distress migration, the availability of food assistance can be considered an inducement to help enable people to remain in their home areas throughout a period of severe stress. Furthermore, although the initial driver of migration differs across contexts, onward movement is driven by a common desire for stability, and livelihoods and food security are key pull factors.<sup>7</sup> The National Food and Nutritional Security Survey (ENSAN) collects data on the movement of people, including destination areas and reasons for movement/migration in the Mali context. However, there is no hard evidence that food assistance helps to prevent migration in Mali.

<sup>7</sup> WFP, *At the Root of Exodus: Food Security, Conflict and International Migration* (WFP: Rome, 2017).

### 3. WFP in Mali

WFP has been present in Mali since 1964. It provides assistance through a three-tier approach focused on crisis response, resilience-building and capacity strengthening of government services as part of its T-ICSP, 2018–19 (see figure 3.1). In addition to the Country Office in Bamako, WFP has sub-offices in Koulikoro, Kayes, Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao. Following on from WFP’s emergency operation in response to the 2012 crisis in northern Mali, WFP Mali has been supporting communities affected by conflict and vulnerable households experiencing seasonal stress while building their resilience to withstand shocks. There is an increasing convergence of activities on central and northern Mali. In partnership with other UN agencies, the Government of Mali and NGOs, the country office has begun to design food security activities that can be used as platforms for joint peacebuilding initiatives.<sup>8</sup> WFP plans to transition to a five-year Country Strategic Plan by 2020.

Strategic Result 1 Everyone has access to food (SDG 2.1)		Strategic Result 2 No one suffers from malnutrition (SDG 2.2)	Strategic Result 3 Smallholder productivity and incomes (SDG 2.3)	Strategic Result 5 Countries have strengthened capacity to implement the SDGs (SDG 17.9)	Strategic Result 6 Policies are coherent (SDG 17.14)	Strategic Result 8 Global partnerships (SDG 17.16)
CRISIS RESPONSE	RESILIENCE BUILDING	RESILIENCE BUILDING	RESILIENCE BUILDING	ROOT CAUSES	ROOT CAUSES	CRISIS RESPONSE
<b>Strategic Outcome 1:</b> Crisis-affected populations are able to meet their basic food and nutrition requirements during and after crises	<b>Strategic Outcome 2:</b> Vulnerable people in food-insecure and post-crisis areas are able to meet their basic food and nutrition requirements throughout the year	<b>Strategic Outcome 3:</b> Targeted populations (children 6-59 months and PLW) have reduced malnutrition in line with national targets	<b>Strategic Outcome 4:</b> Population has enhanced livelihoods and resilience to better support food security and nutrition needs all year-round	<b>Strategic Outcome 5:</b> Government and civil society have strengthened capacity to manage food security and nutrition policies and programmes by 2023	<b>Strategic Outcome 6:</b> Government efforts towards achieving Zero Hunger by 2030 are supported by effective and coherent policy frameworks	<b>Strategic Outcome 7:</b> Humanitarian partners have access to common services throughout the year
<b>ACTIVITY 1:</b> Unconditional cash or food transfers	<b>ACTIVITY 3:</b> Unconditional cash or food transfers	<b>ACTIVITY 5:</b> Nutritious complements and cash for prevention of malnutrition	<b>ACTIVITY 8:</b> Food assistance for assets	<b>ACTIVITY 10:</b> Technical assistance to Government for food/nutritional security analysis and emergency preparedness and response	<b>ACTIVITY 12:</b> Support to the Government Zero Hunger Review	<b>ACTIVITY 13:</b> Technical expertise and services related to logistics, communications and information management and food security cluster
<b>ACTIVITY 2:</b> Blanket supplementary feeding	<b>ACTIVITY 4:</b> School meals	<b>ACTIVITY 6:</b> Treatment of malnutrition – including support to caregivers	<b>ACTIVITY 9:</b> Support to smallholder farmers’ organization and enhancing value- chains	<b>ACTIVITY 11:</b> Coordination in the nutrition sector through REACH mechanism		<b>ACTIVITY 14:</b> UN Humanitarian Air Service

**Figure 3.1.** WFP Mali Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan, 2018–19

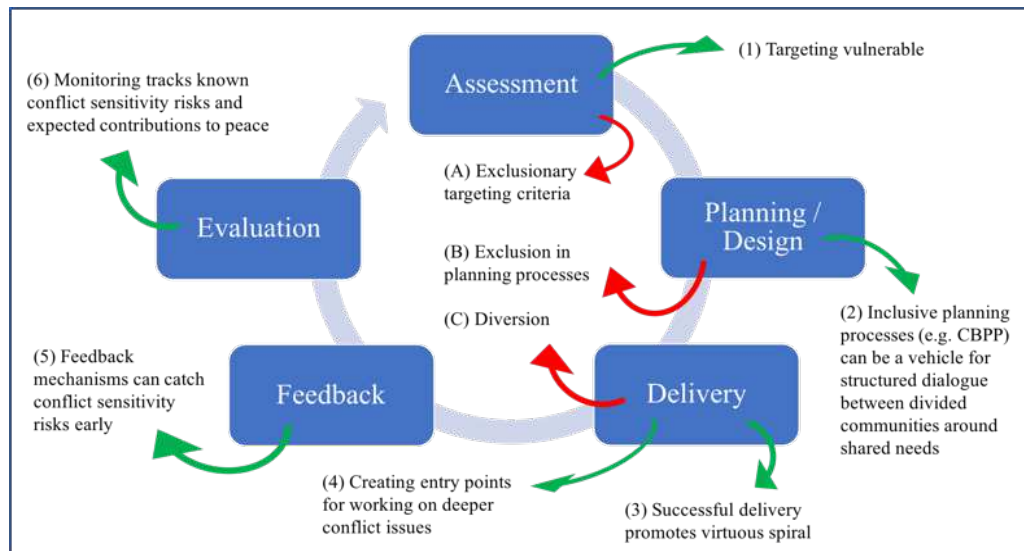
Increasing insecurity in northern and central Mali and terrorist threats limit WFP’s access to populations in need. WFP Mali implements most of its activities through local and international non-governmental organization partners. Monitoring is mostly carried out by third parties. The fact that WFP has limited access to monitor implementation could potentially affect the likelihood of improving the prospects for peace and limit WFP’s ability to ensure that interventions are conflict-sensitive.

#### WFP Mali programming and improving the prospects for peace

While the research mission focused on specific activities in the Mali T-ICSP that could either contribute to improving the prospects for peace or inadvertently generate tensions or aggravate conflict, the researchers considered the entire programming cycle. Thus, the analysis and the imputed theories of change encompass entry points and risks that go beyond the mere delivery of an activity.

<sup>8</sup> WFP Mali receives funds from the Peacebuilding Fund and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)-managed UN Trust Fund for Stabilization and Peace in Mali.

In figure 3.2, the programme design and implementation cycle is supplemented by the prospects for doing harm and the entry points for contributing to peacebuilding through WFP programming. Poor design or implementation of WFP programming can be a source of grievance that creates the potential for future conflict and possible harm, as represented by the red arrows and letters. Possible contributions to improving the prospects for peace are represented by green arrows and numbers. The examples are illustrative rather than exhaustive.



**Figure 3.2.** Entry points for peacebuilding in the programme design and implementation cycle

Where the programme fails in delivery (the red arrows), a vicious circle is created in which a promised service is not delivered and lack of trust in the service provider is reinforced by the lack of delivery. In these situations, exclusion and capture reinforce negative expectations and make trust in service delivery mechanisms more unlikely in the future.

- **Exclusionary targeting criteria.** The determination of who will or will not receive resources is the most significant conflict flashpoint in all forms of aid. Even with carefully crafted vulnerability-based criteria, the most vulnerable may coincide with specific ethnic or linguistic groups and thus feed grievances.
- **Exclusion in planning processes.** Exclusive definitions of who constitutes the ‘community’ and/or significant power dynamics within the community can result in groups being excluded from participatory community planning processes or having no voice within them. Processes can reinforce the domination of some by others.
- **Diversion.** Diversion or misappropriation of resources by powerful individuals can feed grievances and heighten tensions over corruption.

Where the programme understands and adapts to a conflict context (the green arrows), it contributes to a virtuous spiral, creating an expectation among recipients that is reinforced by successful delivery and further reinforces expectations of service delivery in the future.<sup>9</sup> The numbered paths below demonstrate how successful delivery can, theoretically, reinforce this virtuous spiral and contribute to the prospects for peace.

<sup>9</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report, 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People* (World Bank: Washington, DC, 2004).

- People have expectations about fairness that are reinforced positively when the vulnerable are properly targeted for assistance. (Even when they are not recipients, people usually value the fact that the vulnerable are recipients.)<sup>10</sup>
- Inclusive processes such as community-based participatory planning can create opportunities for divided community members to work collectively to identify and plan to address shared needs, and build relationships across existing divides through repeated interaction.
- Successful service delivery creates expectations of future delivery; if these services are delivered by the government this can reinforce trust in government/state functions.
- Successful delivery of basic needs, such as food, can create entry points for other work to address conflict drivers, by building relationships and credibility with communities.
- Feedback mechanisms can capture conflict-sensitivity concerns early on and help to demonstrate accountability mechanisms at the grassroots level.
- Monitoring mechanisms can track known conflict-sensitivity risks and expected contributions to peace, possibly using non-indicator-based techniques.

<sup>10</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report, 2015: Mind, Society and Behavior* (World Bank: Washington, DC, 2015); and Narayan, D. et al., *Voices of the Poor: Crying Out for Change* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2000). This was reinforced by reporting from the interviews with cooperation partners and during the field research.



## 4. WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace in Mali

The research team articulated a number of TOCs linked to WFP programming activities. Drawing on the available documentation and a literature review, and more broadly on interviews with key informants about project aims and results, these TOCs were narrowed down to those included below for which there is support from the evidence base. Attribution of WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace is complicated by the complexity of the conflict context and the difficulties in measuring resilience in such an environment (see box 4.1). The TOCs are linked to the Strategic Outcomes of WFP Mali's T-ICSP (see figure 3.1).

### **Strategic Outcome 2: Vulnerable people in food-insecure and post-crisis areas are able to meet their basic food and nutrition requirements throughout the year**

With a focus on vulnerable people in recurrently food-insecure and post-crisis areas, this strategic outcome aims to build resilience among targeted populations, particularly children, pregnant and lactating women, and those affected by periodic shocks and/or acute malnutrition. This objective includes unconditional cash transfers to vulnerable people affected by seasonal shocks and the provision of school meals in targeted areas. Two separate theories of change were proposed for the school meals programme:

*TOC 1: If local communities mobilize themselves to manage the school meals programme through school management committees (SMCs, see box 4.2), then they will demonstrate good governance at the grassroots level and strengthen cooperation and trust among community members.*

#### *Evidence from the peacebuilding field relevant to this theory of change*

The assumptions underpinning this theory of change relate to: (a) demonstrating good governance at the grassroots level; and (b) strengthening trust between community members.

**Demonstrating good governance.** The assumption is that if accountable processes are applied at the local level, these will produce learning-by-doing and provide a demonstration effect of accountable processes at the local level. Lessons from the peacebuilding field show that building good governance from the ground up requires long time lines and significant per capita investments in order to bring about changes in governance practices.<sup>11</sup>

**Strengthening trust.** The assumption is that participation in common projects of mutual interest and structured interaction among previously divided communities will help to reframe perceptions of the 'other', build trust, dispel negative myths and facilitate changes in perceptions and attitudes. The fact that school meals and, more broadly, the management of education-related activities is a non-contentious, positively perceived aspect of the community's life is crucial. Providing a safe space to engage in dialogue could potentially be extended to other, more contentious, issues once relationships have been established. This is based on contact theory—whereby positive interaction is believed to humanize 'the other side', with a particular emphasis

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. Humphreys, M., Sanches de la Sierra, R. and van der Windt, P., *Social and Economic Impacts of Tuungane: Final Report on the Effects of a Community Driven Reconstruction Program in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo* (Columbia University: New York, 2012).

**Box 4.1.** The link between resilience and conflict prevention in the Mali context

The drivers of conflict and violence in Mali existed prior to 2012 but the onset of violence has coincided with multiple drivers occurring simultaneously. Communities that otherwise might be able to accommodate one or more of these shocks find that coping mechanisms (institutions, intra-community and inter-community trust, assets) are tested and can break when exposed to the multiple shocks that Mali is facing. Manifestations of violence, including violence between ethnic groups and violent extremism, represent failures of these overlapping systems to resolve conflict/tensions between persons and groups. Building resilience in Mali will not just require building trust between ethnic groups and trust in state institutions. It will also require the creation of new social safety nets and institutions that can accommodate climate change and demographic pressures. Strengthening resilience by building inclusive and participatory planning processes, reducing stresses on populations and creating new assets and livelihoods that reduce the impact of stresses can help to prevent violence.

on working on shared needs. There is an expectation that these contacts can be scaled up and form relationships between divided groups to manage tensions and prevent violence.<sup>12</sup> Some research also highlights the need for work *within* communities to build trust as a prerequisite for strengthening state–citizen relationships.<sup>13</sup> Nurturing peaceful transactions and solidarity within society provides an enabling environment for communities to develop a shared understanding of core threats and take collective action, including engagement with the state.

*Conflict sensitivity considerations*

WFP’s use of cash transfers to SMCs to enable them to procure food and prepare meals has the potential to stimulate the local economy by increasing demand. However, locally produced rice is relatively expensive in many regions of Mali, so each SMC spends a proportion of its budget on procuring imported rice through local traders. Thus, there are missed opportunities to support the local economy to the greater benefit of the community, which may also represent a missed opportunity to strengthen peace through enhanced economic opportunities.

*Data availability*

WFP Mali’s current monitoring mechanisms do not assess whether—and if so how—a functioning SMC contributes to increased cooperation and trust locally. Metrics alone cannot measure changes in levels of conflict/tension within a community that could be attributed solely to the school meals programme, as local conflicts will have multiple drivers and the SMC will, at best, be only a partial influence on wider community trust and cooperation. Demonstrating good governance could be assessed by verifying the existence and quality of the involvement of minorities in the SMC, and/or by assessing community perceptions of the performance of the SMC. Consultations and surveys could also capture evidence of how SMCs are used to resolve conflicts within a community or to deliver other services.

<sup>12</sup> According to critiques of contact theory, increasing contact can result in worsening prejudice, especially when the contact is involuntary or when there is a large power differential between the different groups in the contact. See Babbitt, E., Chigas, D. and Wilkinson, R., *Theories and Indicators of Change: Concepts and Primers for Conflict Management and Mitigation* (USAID: Washington, DC, 2013). In addition, there is little evidence on the longevity of attitude change, and problems of ‘re-immersion’ are widespread. A number of studies also highlight that individuals may collaborate in a minimalistic sense to achieve personal economic benefit but actively prevent this from affecting relationships across divides. See Woodrow, P. and Oatley, N., ‘Practical approaches to theories of change in conflict, security and justice programmes’, Part I, ‘What they are, different types, how to develop and use them’, *Practice Products for the Conflict, Crime, and Violence Results Initiative (CCVRI)* (UK Department for International Development and CDA Collaborative Learning Projects: London, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Spearing, M., *Addressing State Fragility from the Bottom Up Through Inclusive Community Governance: Exploring Theories of Change* (CARE Netherlands: The Hague, 2016). See also United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Local Governance in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings: Building a Resilient Foundation for Peace and Development* (UNDP: New York, 2016). This capacity of groups to agree on how to live and govern together is one of three key pillars within UNDP’s Social Contract Framework for Governance.



**Box 4.2. School management committees**

School management committees (SMCs) are purpose-driven working groups which are representative of local communities. All public schools are required to have an SMC. Their mandate is to manage and take decisions on all aspects of the school's life. SMCs are a combination of an administrative body and an elected institution. Some of its members are elected by the local community while others are ex-officio. WFP Mali's school feeding programme is implemented with and through SMCs, which receive monthly cash transfers to procure food and prepare meals for the students. The SMC mobilizes volunteer cooks and collects contributions from the community.

*Analysis*

The relevance of this theory of change is context-dependent. If schools serve divided communities where levels of trust and cooperation are low, then it may be an effective mechanism for strengthening relationships locally. However, in homogenous communities where trust and cooperation are already strong, it may have limited utility. Mixed schools that operate across communities and are attended by children from several ethnic/livelihood groups are common in Mali. WFP, however, does not currently collect data on whether school populations are mixed in this way. Nor does it have any information on local tensions or divisions. If WFP Mali considers that the potential contribution of SMCs to improving the prospects for peace is sufficiently significant to warrant further investigation, then it should:

**Recommendation 1.**

Conduct qualitative research across a small sample of SMCs to understand whether there is enhanced trust and cooperation among the SMC members and, where this is transferring to the wider community, what enables this transfer or 'ripple' effect to take place.

**Recommendation 2.**

Gather data to map where SMCs are working with mixed schools in divided communities to understand whether, beyond WFP's traditional school feeding aims, the programme has an added value in such communities.

Recommendation 3. Further assess the use of cash in the school feeding model, in particular its potential 'stimulus effect' on the surrounding community.

*TOC 2: **If** the school meals programmes contribute to keeping schools open, **then** they may strengthen the stabilizing role of education among communities affected by crisis.*

*Evidence from the peacebuilding field relevant to this theory of change*

Services such as education, health care and the provision of water and sanitation allow societies and economies to function. They are often disrupted by conflict. If a community loses hope of access to basic services, this can lead to anger. The reinstatement of basic services restores normality and a belief in a more peaceful future.<sup>14</sup> The resumption of services, most notably schools, can be a more tangible 'peace dividend' for a population than security sector or constitutional reform.<sup>15</sup> It demonstrates that the reasons that led to the closure are no longer applicable. Thus, reopening schools or keeping schools open can provide people with a sense of normalcy, safety and unbroken routine in times of crisis.

<sup>14</sup> Government of the United Kingdom, *The UK Government's Approach to Stabilisation: A Guide for Policy Makers and Practitioners* (Stabilisation Unit: London, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> McCandless, E., *Peace Dividends and Beyond: Contributions of Administrative and Social Services to Peacebuilding* (UN Peacebuilding Support Office: New York, 2012).

WFP's school meals programme in this context can provide an incentive to keep schools open by using the school institution as an instrument for the delivery of food, which results in improved attendance and attentiveness in class and helps create a generation of human capital.<sup>16</sup> Thus, school meals can directly contribute to restoring a sense of normalcy in crisis-affected societies. Furthermore, in situations where other social support structures have broken down, school feeding can enhance the role of schools as social support structures for children. It may thus be possible for educational, nutritional and psychological gains to emerge from this existing school infrastructure and for benefits to accrue synergistically.

### *Conflict sensitivity considerations*

In Mali, schools close for a range of reasons. Some are threatened because they teach the official curriculum, which is referred to as 'the French school'. School closures or the reopening of schools has a major signalling effect in Mali. Jihadi groups have targeted schools for attack and often close schools on securing control of an area to undermine state authority and as a rejection of Mali state policy on secularism in schools.<sup>17</sup> However, many schools also close because their working conditions are difficult due to the limited presence of the state in the area.

WFP school canteens are only established in public schools that teach the official curriculum established by the Malian state. In zones with a significant presence of or controlled by extremist groups, schools have received threats, in many cases related to the education of girls, and some have been forced to close. Working only with public schools could be perceived by armed groups as an abandonment of impartiality, and at worst contribute to putting pupils, teachers and WFP staff and partners in harm's way.

### *Data availability*

WFP's process monitoring tools collect some data on the functioning of a school:

- If the school does not work, why? (suspension of the school canteen/insecurity/no participation of community, etc.)
- Has the introduction of cash in the canteen caused conflicts within the community? If yes, what are the reasons for this conflict?

However, WFP does not collect any specific data to substantiate how school meals programmes might contribute to keeping schools open or to stabilizing conflict-affected communities.

### *Analysis*

The opening or closure of schools has a major signalling effect in conflict-affected areas of Mali. Where jihadi groups have targeted schools for attack the Government of Mali has made the reopening of schools a symbolic act through a back to school campaign. While the country office does not collect much data relevant to this TOC, external studies show that the school meals programme has a positive impact on the survival of schools, mitigating the effects of conflict on education and stability in the community.<sup>18</sup> A recent study using quasi-experimental methods has shown that in

<sup>16</sup> Moussa, S., 'Keeping schools open: School feeding in conflict and crisis', *SCN News*, 24 July 2002, pp. 54–59.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education* (UNESCO: Paris, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. USAID, 'Projet "Activité d'Appui à l'Éducation En Situation d'Urgence-USAID-EESA": Analyse Rapide des Besoins liés à l'Éducation (RNA) dans les régions de Ségou, Mopti, Tombouctou, Gao et Kidal' [Project 'Emergency Education Support Activity-USAID-EESA': Rapid Analysis of Educational Needs (RNA) in the regions of Ségou, Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal], 2016; Education Emergency Support Activity (EESA), Rapid Education Risk Assessment (RERA) for the regions of Ségou, Mopti, Tombouctou, Gao, and Kidal. Bamako, USAID Mali; and Plan Ireland, *Falling Through the Cracks: Barriers to Conflict Affected Malian Children's Education* (Plan Ireland: Dublin, 2014).

conflict-affected areas of Mali, school feeding increased school enrolment rates by 11 percentage points between 2012 and 2017 and increased the duration of schooling by an average of 0.5 years per child.<sup>19</sup> In addition, school meals reduced the engagement of children in child labour. These effects were more significant in areas where conflict intensity was higher.

Schools are a key platform for the delivery of relief and development interventions, and school feeding is a critical enabler of schools remaining open. Thus, schools can play a role in restoring normalcy and stabilizing local communities, both directly and as a vehicle for further interventions.

#### **Recommendation 4.**

Monitoring tools should be further developed to capture the outcomes of the programme on local peace and stability. This would involve a baseline assessment of local conflicts, qualitative or quantitative study of the impact of schools on stabilization and local peace, and assessment of the impacts on local governance and service delivery.

#### **Strategic Outcome 4: Populations in targeted areas, including vulnerable smallholder farmers, have enhanced livelihoods and the resilience to better support their food security and nutrition needs all year round**

This strategic outcome aims to build resilience among targeted populations by preserving and increasing the productive capacity of their resource base and promoting increased revenues through technical support and strengthening the linkages to markets. It involves FFA activities,<sup>20</sup> as well as smallholder agriculture market and value chain support (SAMS).<sup>21</sup> WFP's joint pilot project funded by the Peacebuilding Fund (see box 4.3) fits within this outcome. The research team proposed two potential theories of change for this strategic outcome.

*TOC 3: **If** natural resources are enhanced and equitable agreements are reached on their use, **then** conflict/tensions over natural resource access between competing user groups will be reduced.*

#### *Evidence from the peacebuilding field relevant to this theory of change*

The proposed theory of change assumes that conflict over natural resources is caused either by reduced or limited supply or by inequitable use of resources.

Enhancing the supply of resources. In areas where different factors, such as demographic change, market pressures and environmental change, push people to exceed the sustainable limits of natural resources, competition over access to resources intensifies. Rehabilitating and enhancing natural resources to increase their availability and/or productivity can reduce competition for such natural resources.

Equitable use of resources. A major lesson learned from a wide range of programmes combining conflict resolution and natural resource management (NRM) is that the design of the NRM components must consider the conflicts related to resource management. To maximize peacebuilding outcomes, such programmes should create

<sup>19</sup> Aurino, E. et al., 'School feeding or general food distribution? Quasi-experimental evidence on the educational impacts of emergency food assistance during conflict in Mali', *Innocenti Working Paper* no. 4 (2018), UNICEF Research Office, Innocenti, Florence.

<sup>20</sup> FFA activities are undertaken to develop, restore and rehabilitate productive community infrastructures, and designed through participatory community processes.

<sup>21</sup> SAMS involves activities to strengthen the livelihoods of vulnerable farming communities, such as technical support, facilitating access to markets, enhancing value-addition and reducing post-harvest losses.

**Box 4.3. Peers for Peace: Building social cohesion in the Mopti and Ségou Regions**

This pilot Peacebuilding Fund project is jointly implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with WFP as the lead agency. The project targets 500 households (peers for peace) and involves strengthening community-based conflict mediation mechanisms and enhancing livelihoods and community infrastructure. The project's theory of change is that: If community structures for conflict prevention and transformation are strengthened, and local livelihoods are improved through income generating strategies, then communities will be more resilient to violent conflict related to natural resource management, social fabric will be restored and social cohesion will increase.

The research team met with cooperation partners in Mopti but was unable to visit project sites for security reasons. Significant changes have been observed by cooperation partners in the commune of Diankabou in the Koro Cercle of Mopti region, which is covered by the project, but these are not yet properly reflected in reporting. In particular, there has been a decrease in the severity and extent of inter-community violence. Prior to the intervention, there had been numerous cases of inter-communal violence between Fulani pastoralist and Dogon farmers that involved killings and the burning of villages. Dogon community members were subsequently unable to access fields near the Fulani village. In the initial planning phase, community members were too afraid to enter each other's village. However, tensions have significantly reduced since the beginning of the project. There has also been an increase in economic interdependence between villages—Fulani allow Dogon to bring their animals to their village to drink from the pastoral well that was built through the project, while the Dogon are selling vegetables to the Fulani that were grown in the market gardens supported by the project. In addition, village credit and savings groups have provided an opportunity for empowerment through access to small credits while allowing members to build chains of solidarity and dialogue. There has also been an increase in the movement of people between villages.

Anecdotal evidence of increasing trust has been noted by partners but current metrics do not capture these observations well. Alternative sources of data could better inform outcome indicators:

- the number of conflicts resolved through supported conflict resolution mechanisms and the level of satisfaction with the result;
- movement maps to show increased interaction between communities;
- data to capture economic interactions, through markets and economic integration;
- Most Significant Change could be used to capture evidence of change among community members for donor reporting.

The changes observed in the conflict context are stark. At the same time as the project was starting up, however, the Malian Defence and Security Forces were deployed to the area to prevent inter-communal violence and to fight violent extremist groups. Security force bases also appear to have been recently installed in other project locations and this may provide an alternative explanation for the sudden and significant change in levels of violence. This needs investigation.

a clear system of ownership, create mechanisms to resolve disputes and promote equity in benefits.<sup>22</sup>

*Conflict sensitivity considerations*

When designing activities that aim to improve or expand the natural resource base it is important to consider who will ultimately benefit from or be affected by the intervention. This also applies to WFP's work to construct or rehabilitate productive assets. In order to prevent conflict over the ownership and usage of, for instance, improved land, WFP's cooperation partners are brokering agreements within communities to determine land usage rights. In the context of an oral tradition, these agreements bring in state actors to formalize land status in the legal realm. This is a practical response to previous instances where landowners, which had been willing to allow vulnerable communities to use their land, reasserted their claims to ownership and exclusive usage once the land had been improved through FFA interventions.

Sensitivity concerns emerged over this practice during the field research, and in some cases landowners appeared to capture significant benefits from the rehabilitation of lands/assets even though the activity is aimed at vulnerable community members. To strengthen WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace, a transformative approach could be taken whereby work to improve land/water resources strengthens

<sup>22</sup> See e.g. USAID, *Water and Conflict: A Toolkit for Programming* (USAID: Washington, DC, 2014).

access for vulnerable groups, achieves social justice and avoids reinstating inequitable access. The struggle over power and resources is at the heart of many conflicts in Mali, and it is important to examine the potential and risks of such a transformative approach while also understanding where minimum standards of 'do no harm' fall. Contesting traditional practices such as these raises new risks. Challenging social stability in a wider conflict context could significantly destabilize communities and lead to open violence. There are also practical considerations. The timescale during which WFP must be present and accompany a community through such a transformational process is long term. When embarking on FFA programming in Mali, WFP seeks to support communities for a minimum of three years in order to achieve sustainable results.

#### *Data availability*

An external evaluation of a joint resilience programme by WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) identified that FFA had a positive impact on social cohesion.<sup>23</sup> The evaluation attributes this contribution to the improvement of livelihoods through FFA (asset creation/rehabilitation) and SAMS (support to smallholder organizations) and to the negotiation of land usage/grazing rights. A cost-benefit analysis of FFA carried out by WFP Mali in 2018 also identified that inter-ethnic clashes had been reduced by the creation of assets through FFA activities.<sup>24</sup>

The country office does not collect data on what usage agreements have been brokered where or the perceptions of equity of those involved. Nor is any data gathered on whether the agreements hold, although it is believed that if an agreement had been overturned WFP would have heard about it through the cooperation partners. It is not clear how widespread the problem of benefit capture is, and this issue warrants further interrogation.

#### *Analysis*

Among the root causes of escalating patterns of violence in central Mali are land- and resource-related conflicts. Farmer/herder conflicts, which usually coincide with ethnic cleavages, have intensified due to climate change and population growth, and are sometimes leveraged by armed groups. By enhancing infrastructure to reduce land degradation and water loss, FFA activities enhance supply and thus directly help to prevent conflicts over resources at the community level. To strengthen the contribution to improving the prospects for peace, FFA programming should address the ownership/usage issues identified above, which should also promote stronger equity in benefits. Given that FFA and SAMS are part of a comprehensive approach to resilience strengthening for the Sahel led by WFP's Regional Bureau in Dakar, efforts to further examine conflict sensitivity issues linked to FFA should have regional ownership.

#### **Recommendation 5.**

Advocate for the Regional Bureau to take the lead on research on programmes to achieve successful transformative change in relation to land. Support the Regional Bureau to conduct such research and scope the potential for the WFP to play a role in land and water issues. Integrate the findings into land agreements, in particular for use in resilience programming. This could involve identifying best practices regionally

<sup>23</sup> FAO and WFP, *Évaluation conjointe FAO/PAM du projet 'Appui à la résilience des populations vulnérables au nord du Mali*, Rome, 2019, <[www.fao.org/evaluation](http://www.fao.org/evaluation) - [www1.wfp.org/independent-evaluation](http://www1.wfp.org/independent-evaluation)>. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

<sup>24</sup> Sissoko, K. and Troré, M., *Evaluation des Impacts (Coûts/Benefices) des Activités Food for Assets (FFA) au Mali* (WFP Mali: Bamako, 2019).

**Box 4.4.** Community-based participatory planning

Community-based participatory planning (CBPP) is a ‘bottom up’ tool that ensures communities have a strong voice and will take the lead in setting priorities for activities such as food assistance for assets. It is used to develop multi-sectoral plans tailored to local priorities, and to ensure prioritization and ownership by communities.

In Mali, WFP applies a ‘watershed approach’ where all settlements on the same watershed are represented in the CBPP. This is because they face the same problems and the effects of an intervention will also affect neighbouring communities. This offers a forum where, for instance, farmers and herders can meet and interact.

among agencies that have worked directly on transformative change in relation to land agreements. This would then allow a more informed debate on the possible role of WFP in this area.

*TOC 4: If communities mobilize themselves to analyse their vulnerabilities through an inclusive and participatory process and work together to strengthen livelihoods, then this will strengthen the inclusion of youth and collaboration within and between communities.*

*Evidence from the peacebuilding field relevant to this theory of change*

This TOC is underpinned by both contact theory (for a discussion of how participatory processes can strengthen trust between community members see TOC 1) and the assumption that FFA interventions can create alternative sources of power and purpose through community-based participatory planning (CBPP) processes, thereby providing a practical avenue for youth to air their views and see their suggestions put into action (see box 4.4). This can be particularly relevant to enabling the inclusion of otherwise marginalized youth, who can experience empowerment through enhanced livelihoods options.<sup>25</sup>

*Conflict sensitivity considerations*

Given the different power relations within the community, not all community members will be able to participate in the CBPP process on equal terms. This could be linked to intra-community caste differences or gender inequality, or because pastoralist communities are not integrated into the CBPP process.

*Data availability*

While WFP and its partners document the CBPP process, the country office does not have the tools or processes to evaluate whether it contributes to increased collaboration and trust within and between communities, or if this spills over into activities/spheres that are not part of any given intervention. WFP Mali has commissioned a study from an external consultant on the possible contribution of WFP’s programming to social cohesion, and the CBPP process will be among the activities covered by this research.

WFP collects data to determine whether a management committee exists for a specific asset, and to monitor its composition and functioning, but WFP does not consider the quality of processes, such as who is included in decision making. No data, for instance, is collected concerning youth perceptions on sense of empowerment or prospects for the future. Survey data on youth economic migration and perceptions of prospects for the future would fill this data gap. A more qualitative enquiry would also be helpful here.

As noted above, reduced conflict between livelihood groups has been documented in a recent evaluation, although no detail is given on the incidence of conflicts.<sup>26</sup> Thus,

<sup>25</sup> Peace Direct, *Evaluation of Livelihoods Support and Peacebuilding Project* (Peace Direct: Kismayo, Somalia, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Sissoko and Troré (note 24).



current data does not provide full insights into the possible effects on peace or possible conflict-sensitivity concerns.

### *Analysis*

CBPP brings communities together to discuss their problems and identify solutions. If the process includes representatives from divided communities and takes an approach that promotes equity and tolerance, it has the potential to contribute to improving the prospects for peace. As discussed under TOC 1, critics of contact theory note that interaction can worsen a situation if the contact is forced or power is clearly asymmetrical. If CBPP processes were successfully changing attitudes to 'other' groups, this would be demonstrated through collaboration stretching beyond the CBPP process and wider interactions between divided communities. The country office's initiative to commission an external study on social cohesion could provide valuable insights, but more evidence, including on the potential exclusion of vulnerable groups and youth, will be needed. Since CBPP is a corporate tool of WFP, such evidence could also be sought at the corporate or regional levels. A deeper understanding of the aspirations and frustrations of youth seems warranted. The relationship between WFP programming, social cohesion and peacebuilding is further discussed in box 4.4, which describes the Peers for Peace Peacebuilding Fund project.

### **Recommendation 6.**

**Enhance monitoring mechanisms to understand youth perspectives on the future, empowerment and sense of purpose.**

### **Strategic outcome 5: Government and civil society have strengthened capacity to manage food security and nutrition policies and programmes by 2023**

Food security and nutrition policies are at the forefront of the government's development policy agenda. This strategic outcome aims to address the root causes of food insecurity and hunger by strengthening the capacity of government at the central and local levels to manage and implement food security and nutrition policies.

*TOC 5: If government enhances the provision of basic social services and increases its accountability and responsiveness, then the citizen-state link will be strengthened by the state signalling its willingness and ability to respond to the population's needs.*

### *Evidence from the peacebuilding field relevant to this theory of change*

Weak service delivery and failures of governance have been widely recognized as underlying causes of conflict. There is a widespread assumption that underpins a wide range of state building programming that public administration and social services—delivered in an effective and equitable manner—can enhance contact and accountability between citizen and state, thereby providing performance-based legitimacy for the state. Routine interaction with the state over service delivery, such as school feeding or nutrition services, may be the citizen's only routine interaction with the state. However, the evidence for this assumption is mixed and some argue that there are too many variables to demonstrate a direct causal linkage between enhanced service delivery and increased state legitimacy.<sup>27</sup> Service delivery models with built-in redress mechanisms, which foster relationships between service providers and users, appear to have greater success in shifting attitudes.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Government of the United Kingdom (note 14).

<sup>28</sup> See Slater, R., Merry, M., Tan de Bibiana, M. and Jang, S., *Service Delivery in Fragile Settings* (SIPRI and ODI: Stockholm and London, 2016).

In Mali, WFP works closely with the Ministère de la Solidarité et de l'Action Humanitaire, which is responsible for the overall coordination of social protection activities through various line ministries. WFP and Jigisemejiri, the national social protection platform, have been collaborating for several years on different aspects of social protection, such as nutrition, the productive orientation of safety nets and school meals, and have developed standards for technical norms on asset creation with the competent ministries.

#### *Conflict sensitivity considerations*

WFP Mali's current approach to participatory planning processes risks bypassing, or even undermining, decentralized planning processes and tools. Decentralized tiers of governance, such as districts and communes, have their own planning cycles and tools, which despite the participation of local technical services are separate from WFP's three-pronged approach.<sup>29</sup> If WFP aspires to strengthen the citizen-state link through capacity building with government, better service provision and greater accountability, the three-pronged approach needs to feed into local planning processes.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, when government, including at decentralized levels, fails to deliver and/or when resources are diverted or misappropriated by the authorities, this can undermine the credibility of WFP and its programmes as well as its contribution to improving the prospects for peace.

#### *Data availability*

WFP does not collect data to measure perceptions of service delivery or trust. External entities such as Afrobarometer ask questions about service delivery and accountability. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) incorporate the governance agenda into SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and have adopted a specific target (16.6) on developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.<sup>31</sup> In Mali, civil society has set up a 'veille citoyenne' (citizen watch) mechanism to collect information at the community level and consolidate it at the partner level. This could be a resource for monitoring perceptions of local service delivery.

#### *Analysis*

The capacity of the Government of Mali to provide essential social services in a substantial portion of the country is constrained by instability, insecurity and uncertainty over the peace process. In addition, many informants noted that the government does not seem to have any intention of improving the public services provided to the population or that services cannot be delivered due to lack of effective resource allocation, including from the centre to local authorities, insufficient capacity, weak accountability lines, bureaucratic inefficiency or, in some cases, misappropriation of resources.

Decentralization efforts support participatory budgeting and commune-level planning to increase the accountability and responsiveness of the state. Budgets and plans also need to respond effectively to the priority needs of the most vulnerable, but

<sup>29</sup> The three-pronged approach (3PA) is an innovative programming approach developed by WFP in consultation with governments and partners. The aim is to strengthen the design, planning and implementation of programmes on resilience building, safety nets, disaster risk reduction and preparedness. The approach consists of three elements: integrated context analysis, seasonal livelihood planning and community-based participatory planning.

<sup>30</sup> While this may also be true of the emergency response planned through the cluster structure that complements government response plans, this is especially problematic for medium- to long-term development-oriented activities such as SAMS and FFA.

<sup>31</sup> For more information on SDG 16, see United Nations, 'SDGs Knowledge Platform: Sustainable Development Goal 16', <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>>.



there is often a lack of structured participatory analysis of need or of prioritization in decentralized planning, as well as insufficient analysis of issues related to livelihoods. The most vulnerable are not able to express their priorities effectively and their participation at the commune level, let alone district or regional level, is often limited.

In significant parts of the country, the state is not present or has only very limited capacity. In northern Mali, for instance, interim authorities, usually affiliated with signatory armed groups, take responsibility for service provision in the areas under their control. In many situations, cooperation partners' coordination with local authorities is limited and the capacity for service provision is low in most cases, as many civil servants are still displaced. Despite these constraints, however, there is still untapped potential for WFP to continue and scale up its capacity building and support, especially at the lower tiers of governance.

**Recommendation 7.**

Support the creation of complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFMs) for government-led national social protection programmes, building on internal best practices and the expertise accrued from WFP's own CFMs, to be applied to school feeding and other social protection instruments.

## 5. Cross-cutting issues: Conflict sensitivity, participatory planning and data

As section 4 demonstrates, a number of issues transcend individual project or programmatic approaches to delivery and are cross-cutting for WFP Mali. Among the major issues are: (a) conflict sensitivity concerns; (b) the challenges and opportunities presented by participatory planning; (c) data, or the difficulties of designing measurement and monitoring processes specific to measuring contributions to improving the prospects for peace; and (d) process, system and capacity issues. These issues and associated recommendations are discussed in more detail below.

### **Conflict sensitivity concerns**

During the research in Mali, a number of potential conflict sensitivity concerns emerged that may warrant further investigation. While the concerns related directly to the TOCs and the specific activities of WFP Mali are described above, some concerns are of a more general nature and related to all or several activity types.

#### *Targeting of programme participants*

The targeting process of choosing who does or does not get access to resources is the most common conflict sensitivity flashpoint the world over. Conflict sensitivity risks relating to targeting emerge in two forms.

### **Inclusion/exclusion errors on participant/distribution lists**

The problem of inclusion/exclusion errors appears to be widespread in Mali, and not specific to WFP but also important for other agencies. The most pressing problem is if armed groups or elites try to influence or control who gets on to a distribution list and to use this as a mechanism to reinforce their power over a community and to legitimize their position and role.

Another exclusion concern is related to possible tensions between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities. Elsewhere, assistance based on displacement status has provoked grievances if host community members are equally vulnerable. In Mali, WFP provides emergency food assistance to IDPs immediately following displacement for 90 days. After 90 days, both IDPs and host populations are assisted based on their level of vulnerability. This is an excellent conflict sensitivity practice. Providing assistance on the basis of vulnerability rather than victimhood can help to prevent tensions building between IDP and host communities.

### **Inputs are collected and redistributed on the basis that all community members are vulnerable**

In some circumstances the distribution committee provides a distribution list to WFP but when inputs are provided (food/cash), these are collected by the chief and redistributed across the entire community on the basis that all community members are vulnerable. Such redistribution of food assistance was described by cooperation partners, and views were generally mixed as to whether this occurs voluntarily or involuntarily—although it is clear that if a family decided to keep their rations and to refuse to participate in the redistribution they would be ostracized. The scale of the practice is open to debate, but it appears to be fairly widespread in the Segou and Mopti regions. From a conflict sensitivity perspective there are risks that efforts to reach

the most marginalized could end up reinforcing their marginalized status within the community, with no power to control the assets targeted to them and the potential for abuses of power. If there is no clear understanding and acceptance of the selection criteria among communities, this could contribute to increasing the grievances of excluded groups—especially if a chief were to favour certain groups.

This issue is related to the role of traditional leaders and cannot be addressed without considering possible unintended consequences. If traditional leaders and their practices are undermined, this could threaten the social fabric, making communities more vulnerable to shocks of any kind in a context of instability and tension. A complaint and feedback mechanism (CFM) is already in place. Increasing community awareness of the CFM could help WFP understand the scale of the phenomenon and to inform decision making on the actions required to address the issue.

### **Recommendations on revisiting targeting of individuals and households for assistance**

Based on discussions concerning targeting practices and the various challenges encountered, it is recommended that the country office explore best practices on the selection of beneficiaries and integrate these into programming. Targeting of assistance to individual beneficiaries should not just aim to understand and avoid exclusion and inclusion errors. It should also explore other potential risks where targeting might contribute to increased tensions or miss opportunities to positively contribute to improving the prospects for peace. This would build on and complement a recent review and mapping of targeting approaches by the Regional Bureau in Dakar. The operational research would involve examining the targeting methods used by a broad range of agencies in Mali and regionally, and how these approaches affect conflict or peace. It should feed into a systematic revision of processes within WFP Mali, including enhanced provision of information to communities. This operational research and integration into WFP processes should be carried out in the period June 2019 to May 2020 and focus on:

- Identifying best practices on preventing exclusion and abuses;
- Exploring the different approaches to engaging traditional chiefs or local government authorities in generating participant/distribution lists;
- Identifying red lines and providing guidance for WFP;
- A revision of WFP's targeting practices.

The research could potentially be conducted in conjunction with other humanitarian actors in Mali and/or other WFP country offices.

#### **Recommendation 8.**

The country office should review and improve its targeting, identify best practices that will reduce the risk of exclusion and other conflict sensitivity risks, and incorporate the results into its programming. WFP Mali should also enhance information provision to communities.

#### *Diversion*

In the process of distributing and delivering food assistance in areas controlled by non-state armed groups or where there is only a weak state presence, resources have occasionally been looted by armed actors and or criminal groups, or misappropriated. In 2018, there were several instances of convoys transporting commodities being ambushed and commodities being either stolen or destroyed. There have also previously been incidents where vouchers have been looted from cooperation partners' offices or

from distribution points. The transfer modality can mitigate this risk to some degree. E-vouchers, for instance, can reduce the risk of resource diversion and are currently being used by WFP in most locations in Mali. Furthermore, when distributions are made as in-kind assistance, local powerbrokers and chiefs can use this to solidify their own position and claim credit for having secured the food assistance for the community. This issue seems to be less of a concern with cash-based transfers, such as vouchers, where vulnerable households have agency and choice when receiving assistance.

*Transformative change in relation to access to resources*

Given the conflict sensitivity considerations that may exist around benefit capture, there is interest in understanding the extent of this issue in Mali. Activities by which WFP can facilitate communities in their negotiation of land agreements are part of a broader regional approach to resilience strengthening in the Sahel led by WFP's Regional Bureau. Thus, efforts to further examine concerns around land agreements should ideally be regionally led. The country office should support these efforts and explore best practice among agencies that have worked directly in this area in Mali and the Sahel (see recommendation 5).

*Integrating conflict sensitivity into strategy implementation*

In the lead up to the start of the Country Strategic Plan (CSP) 2020–24 in January 2020, WFP Mali should undertake a number of initiatives to define how to better integrate conflict sensitivity into the implementation of the CSP. WFP Mali has expressed strong interest in integrating conflict sensitivity into its programming and ensuring that WFP staff and partners have sufficient capacity to identify and act on conflict sensitivity concerns. This could involve training in conflict sensitivity as well as other capacity building measures and the identification of specific conflict sensitivity risks and adjustments to programme design, as well as specific efforts to more systematically integrate conflict sensitivity into all stages of programme design and implementation processes, and to build partnerships with other agencies with expertise in the field of conflict and peace. These efforts will combine support from the Emergencies and Transition Unit at WFP Headquarters with new partnerships with external actors, such as peacebuilding NGOs with the capacity to train country office staff and partners on conflict sensitivity, or Malian social scientists/anthropologists who can help deepen understanding of local contexts. The country office has committed to implement this recommendation before the start of the CSP in January 2020. In order to achieve this, WFP HQ should work with WFP Mali to articulate a road map for integrating conflict sensitivity to identify the actions in more detail, including the identification of sources of support for component elements.

**Recommendation 9.**

WFP Mali should integrate conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive approaches into all components of the operation across the programme cycle, including programme design under the five-year Country Strategic Plan, and ensure that staff and partners have adequate capacity.

**Community-based participatory planning processes**

Informants raised concerns about the inclusivity of participatory planning processes in general (not specific to WFP). These involved:

- Sections of communities not being involved in the processes, especially herders, either because they are absent long term or because they are not deemed to be part of the community as they are not permanently present.
- That lower status sections of the community are not able to speak up in community-wide processes as they are expected to defer, in particular to the chief and his close circle.

The CBPP process in Mali is typically managed by the cooperation partners and local technical services, with support from WFP. They brief the community on the process, which the community then takes leadership of. There are specific checks and balances to ensure participation from across all socio-economic classes. There may be potential to contribute to improving the prospects for peace through the CBPP process, through:

- More inclusive processes at the community level; and
- Strengthening accountability relationships between communities and local government if they participate in the CBPP and ensure that the CBPP is linked to planning and budgeting processes and tools at the commune level.

Traction on local governance will increase when planning processes shift from a WFP tool for FFA/SAMS planning to a commune-level tool that promotes community priorities for decentralized planning and budgeting. Delivering on this transformation would involve supporting a certain level of integration of the community planning process into decentralization processes.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) uses an approach that is centred on rebuilding citizens' confidence in the state. Its work concentrates on strengthening local authorities by supporting them to develop and resource a local plan. This contrasts with the WFP approach, in that WFP invites local authorities into planning processes initiated by WFP at the local level rather than participating and delivering through a plan developed by the local authorities. The SDC approach thus helps to make local authorities accountable and can serve to minimize the risk of capture of resources. While the cluster system may preclude this approach from being used for humanitarian assistance, it could be applied to more developmental programming. Given the country office's intention to strengthen government capacity and to gradually hand over seasonal response and school feeding interventions in the longer term, and the country office's aim to work at a decentralized level, the SDC approach may warrant further consideration, particularly if the country office wishes to engage in more transformative programming, notably on building citizen-state links. WFP Mali has already begun initiatives to include school feeding programmes in communal budget plans with advice from the SDC.

*Community-based participatory planning processes and accountability to the most vulnerable*

WFP Mali is currently exploring a potential collaboration with decentralization actors, such as the German Agency for International Cooperation and the SDC among others, to work on the linkage between participatory community level planning and the communal/decentralized level, as a contribution to a strengthened accountability framework and the progressive restoration of the social contract.

**Recommendation 10.**

Explore options for strengthening participatory planning processes and working more directly through local authorities to link community level participatory planning processes to local government communal planning and budgeting in order to support

strengthened accountability. This would include reviewing the CBPP methodology and the application of CBPP to ensure that marginalized groups are not excluded from decision making.

## Data

Measuring contributions to peace presents challenges not only because it is hard to collect data in conflict environments, but also because the results sought are typically intangible, such as shifts in levels of trust and tolerance, or in perceptions of ‘the other’, as well as potential wider ripple effects that transform cultures or norms. Many interventions are based on experimental designs that do not have a well-developed evidence base, and lessons from one context may not be transferable to another. Addressing conflict is often a complex problem in which causal pathways are emergent or adaptive.

WFP Mali already collects detailed data for a variety of monitoring purposes. Although these were not designed for the purpose of assessing contributions to improving the prospects for peace, some adaptations to these existing tools could help to capture relevant evidence. However, this data should be complemented with other qualitative data to provide a more nuanced understanding of attitudes and relationships, and the changing nature of conflict and violence in its areas of operation. WFP Mali has commissioned additional qualitative studies to achieve this, most notably a study by a local consultant of the effect of WFP programmes on social cohesion.

With regard to physical security, a number of questions are already asked in the process monitoring tools, including questions about distribution, access and security. These can be cross-referenced or cross-tabulated with data on the time taken to reach distribution, the time waiting for distribution, the gender and age of participants/recipients, and so on, to provide descriptive statistics on security risks. Because data can be geo-coded, these statistics can be compiled across beneficiary communities to identify regions where security is a constraint on delivery. Additional questions can be added to the current post-distribution monitoring mechanisms to gather information related to security. One example might be: ‘In the past 12 months, how often have you or someone in your family felt unsafe in the neighbourhood?’<sup>32</sup> Further questions on the movement of people, such as on whether family members have recently migrated or returned, and on investments in farms or businesses, would help capture perceptions on prospects for the future.

Data on markets and changes in markets through, for example, the market information system and the agricultural market observatory can be used to measure changes in market access, security of access to markets and, depending on the level of specificity of the analysis, the types of products brought to market, which might reflect increased inter-ethnic economic interdependence. For instance, if milk or meat become more available in a market this might mean that local Fulani have gained access to that market, which would previously have been impossible.

Furthermore, conflict data from MINUSMA and/or ACLED can be overlaid with activities—for example, school feeding and conflict, FFA/SAMS and conflict, and food distribution and conflict—to identify places where interventions are limited or affected by conflict prevalence and/or places where distribution is linked to or correlated with but not necessarily a cause of a decrease in conflict. A simple application would be to

<sup>32</sup> Afrobarometer, Mali Round 6 Questionnaire, ‘The quality of democracy and governance in Mali’, 2014, <[http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/questionnaires/Round per cent206/mli\\_r6\\_questionnaire.pdf](http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/questionnaires/Round%20per%20cent206/mli_r6_questionnaire.pdf)>



compare general food distribution with armed conflict over time to identify the level of access and the impact of conflict on delivery.<sup>33</sup>

Statistics on land agreements, usage rights and land titling are not immediately available. If possible, visual records (scans) of agreements and statistical records (counts) of such agreements and their geo-referenced implementation should be used to monitor WFP involvement in land agreements. Additional qualitative enquiry will be needed to enable the country office to understand the impacts of such agreements.

A CFM is an essential component of any effort to monitor possible inadvertent contributions to conflict. WFP has recently established a CFM, which is a significant achievement. Other, more open-ended, qualitative processes are also needed.

#### *Strengthening Evidence on Conflict and Peace Outcomes*

During the case study, several monitoring tools were reviewed and adjusted in the light of inputs from the research team. Following the mission to Mali, further discussions were held to assess whether monitoring and evaluation tools collect data relevant to the proposed TOCs. While quantitative data can provide useful insights, understanding WFP's interaction with conflict (positive or negative) requires more open-ended inquiry to understand why and how change happens. Surveys may not be the best tool. Strong interest was expressed by the country office in collecting more qualitative data, in particular by building partnerships with other agencies with expertise in this area.

#### **Recommendation 11.**

Explore possible partnerships for gathering qualitative data, including through non-survey methods, that can capture outcomes on peace and conflict.

### **Integration of peace and conflict into WFP Mali's processes, systems and capacities**

The research team also sought to assess the current capacities of and opportunities for WFP Mali to further evaluate and measure its possible contribution to improving the prospects for peace and integrating conflict sensitivity into all of its activities.

#### *Staff capacity and interest in conflict sensitivity*

The country office benefits from employing a staff member in a specialist conflict/peace role. Beyond this post, some staff members are familiar with the concept of conflict sensitivity, even though there has not been any staff-wide training on conflict sensitivity or peacebuilding.

#### *Integration of conflict analysis into design and implementation*

Conflict has been taken into account implicitly in context analysis, programming and implementation, but the country office does not systematize the integration of conflict sensitivity and analysis. At the macro level, broad strategic frameworks, including the T-ICSP and the National Zero Hunger Strategic Review, analyse the context of ongoing conflict and insecurity, and their impact on food security in Mali. At the micro-level, conflict sensitivity does not appear to be integrated into project design or implementation processes. For example, there have been recent attempts to add a conflict layer to the integrated context analysis by integrating external conflict data

<sup>33</sup> For a useful resource with multiple layers of relevant data on transhumance migration routes, ACLED conflict data, displacement and water access, among other things, see <[www.earthtime.org](http://www.earthtime.org)>.

sets such as ACLED and that of the Joint Mission Analysis Centre.<sup>34</sup> However, the country office does not have any clear guidelines on how this tool can be used for targeting. Similarly, CBPP by its nature considers conflict and risk in the locality, but does not appear to require conflict analysis as part of its processes.

*Monitoring of impacts on conflict/peace*

Existing monitoring tools were not designed to track conflict or peace. Some questionnaires in post-distribution monitoring capture protection risks around location and procedures for distribution to prevent negative consequences from WFP's intervention.<sup>35</sup> Staff capacity to monitor conflict and peace, however, is low. Onsite project monitoring and the recently launched CFM provide opportunities for feedback during implementation. The social cohesion study and the current Peacebuilding Fund project potentially provide opportunities to monitor WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace or any inadvertent negative effects.

*Donor requirements*

Donors may increasingly make conflict sensitivity a formal requirement in award/contribution documents and will expect the country office to demonstrate compliance and capacity.

<sup>34</sup> The current 3PA guidance does not require conflict analysis. A full review of the 3PA methodology from a conflict/peace perspective is planned by WFP HQ.

<sup>35</sup> WFP, 'Response to the Sahel crisis: Lessons learned from PDM in Mali', Presentation by the Monitoring and Evaluation team, Bamako, Mali, Feb. 2019.







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