



Billions for Mali

Hunger despite generous pledges

IN BRIEF

At the International Donors Conference in May, Mali was promised more than 3 billion euro. The amount was higher than expected and underscores the importance placed on Mali's stability worldwide. Basically, the funds are urgently needed because the humanitarian situation in parts of the country is extremely volatile. Hundreds of thousands of Malians are still trying to flee the country, and face the threat of food shortages. In order to overcome this crisis, Mali needs more than emergency aid: The country also needs support for sustainable development. However, the transition from emergency aid to development cooperation following the military intervention poses huge challenges. Many donors have placed conditions on their payments: for example, that Mali should stick to the predetermined roadmap, return to democratic order, strengthen the jury system and ensure that human rights are upheld. Given the precarious security situation, weak governmental institutions and widespread corruption, it is hard to imagine how the funds are to be successfully applied.

Mali hasn't had a moment's peace. For years the country has been caught in a complex crisis marked by poverty, population growth, chronic food insecurity and natural catastrophes.

The escalation of the conflict between the Malian transitional government and rebel groups in the north of the country has further weakened the highly vulnerable population, already sapped by the 2012 food crisis. It remains to be seen whether the French-led military intervention on behalf of Mali's transitional government can change the situation. But one thing is for sure: The situation will remain volatile for the foreseeable future and development success in Mali will be slow in coming.

The situation in Mali is extremely complicated, marked by an ominous mix of factors: international organized crime, destabilization of the entire region due to the war in Libya, Tuareg aspirations for independence, poor governance and a weak state. Despite the wishful thinking spread by many donor coun-

tries, it would be naïve to assume that Mali's development into a peaceful, democratic, cosmopolitan country – as the donor countries would have it – will go without a hitch. The situation in Afghanistan has already shown that nation building is no piece of cake.

Intervention with Consequences

In March 2012, tensions escalated in Mali. Following a coup against President Amadou Toumani Touré, the transitional government failed to prevent the advance of two armed groups – MNLA¹ and Ansar Dine – which then took control of several cities in the north of the country and later proclaimed an independent state, with backing from various armed splinter groups.² After the rebels ad-

¹ The *Mouvement national de liberation de l'Azawad* (MNLA) is comprised primarily of Tuareg representatives who used the power vacuum generated in early 2012 to achieve the occupation of the most important northern cities and the division have claimed the north as their own Free Azawad Region.

² Welthungerhilfe (2012)

vanced to the south in January 2013, the Malian transitional government declared a state of emergency and asked its neighbouring African countries and the international community for help. France reacted immediately, sending troops to Mali at the end of January. Rather quickly, French and Malian forces managed to push the rebels back, with help from neighbouring countries. In early February 2013, the people of Mali celebrated their “liberation”. Since then, military units from several countries have been patrolling the areas in the north; their presence has contributed toward maintaining relative stability. But it remains to be seen just how durable this “liberation” will be.

try. Moreover, there is not enough time to register new voters (those born in 1995).

An additional complement of 12,600 UN troops is to be sent in July (UN Resolution 2100) in order to back up the Malian military and consolidate the peace – a deployment that will be warmly welcomed in many regions of Mali.

Humanitarian Situation

Despite the victory of the Malian Army and French intervention troops and despite the heightened international awareness linked to the commitment – made at the donors’ conference – to provide Mali with 3.2 billion euro, the humanitarian situation is deteriorating in the areas impacted by the conflict. The droughts and crises of recent years have severely weakened the population, which is by far not strong enough to react adequately to the external stresses. According to OCHA, 3.5 million Malians currently are classified as “food insecure”: approximately 585,000 people in the north and 660,000 children. An estimated 1.4 million are dependent upon food aid.³

In the so-called *Période de soudure* (starvation period) from April to July, the already difficult food supply situation worsened noticeably, especially for people living in Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal. Inventories are depleted and economic activity is sporadic in such economic areas as crafts, trade or small production. Financial resources and income opportunities are thus virtually unavailable and many regions remain cut off from the marketplace. In addition, farmers have limited access to their fields due to the lack of official security forces in rural areas. The danger of armed aggression is great and it remains unclear to what extent land mines have been placed in agricultural production zones. Which means that, even with good rainfall, food production in this growing season will not suffice to feed the population.

Since trade routes officially opened between the neighbouring countries of Burkina Faso and Niger, trade has managed to pick up again recently. But the formal supply routes

Intervention Areas of Welthungerhilfe in Mali in July 2013



The impending elections are seen as an important milestone. Thanks to international pressure, especially from France and the EU in general, Mali will stick to the date of 28 July for the presidential elections. But the process faces nearly insurmountable problems. Many officials have still not returned to the north to recommence their work; the situation in the city of Kidal in the north remains uncertain, despite the Ouagadougou peace agreement of 18 June between the MNLA and the Malian transitional government; and numerous refugees have not yet registered to vote or remain outside the coun-

³ OCHA (2013 b)

across the Algerian and Mauritanian border remain closed for now.

As a result of this development, prices for basic food remain high, at about 20-30 % above the five-year comparison. At the same time, prices for seeds and other agricultural products are rising. It's nearly the same for the cattle market. Cattle-raising nomadic peoples are struggling with difficulties in selling their animals, whose condition is also worsening. Many nomads have wandered towards the south or fled the country altogether with their herds. Competition over limited natural resources such as pasture and water increasingly has led to conflicts between local landowners and nomads.

Food security in the pastoral zones in the north already appears vulnerable to a developing crisis situation during the starvation period. Rice-producing zones and agro-pastoral areas in the north are classified as vulnerable because they depend on the support and opening of markets.⁴

Elsewhere in the country, such as in the regions of Kayes and Mopti, the population has not yet recovered from the 2012 food crisis. In particular, the extremely vulnerable population groups will face further food shortages if they receive no assistance. Although the most recent growing season (2012/13) was marked by a relatively good harvest when compared to the previous year, resulting in a lessening of the food crisis in broad regions of Mali, the impact of the 2012 food crisis is still felt and the food situation remains worrying. This situation has, for example, hindered farmers from replenishing their grain inventories, since the repayment of credits and necessary investments took precedence.

The military intervention also triggered a renewed increase in the movement of refugees in the south. By the end of June the number of refugees was estimated at 527,584, including 353,455 internally displaced persons on the move within Mali and 174,129 in neighbouring countries.⁵ Most of the internally displaced persons moved in with friends

⁴ FEWSNET (2013)

⁵ OCHA (2013 a)

and family, placing an additional burden on their hosts, whose own reserves often are already stretched to the limit. Due to the volatile security situation as well as the lack of supplies and access to public facilities, very few refugees have returned home to date. Pastures that normally would be readied for planting at this time of year are lying fallow and will most likely remain so for this season. Furthermore, the now seasonally urgent cultivation of fields is virtually absent due to a general lack of resources – including seeds, fertilizer and diesel fuel for irrigation pumps. One may thus conclude that large parts of the population in the Timbuktu region will remain dependent upon food aid or financial support at least until the next harvest in September 2013 if not through the following harvest, in February/March 2014.

The situation is also tense in Mali's breadbasket – the Niger basin. There, rice farmers are having difficulty profiting from sales of their harvest: Trade routes are blocked, markets are closed and lower prices are a disincentive to production.

Resources Must Arrive

Although access to foodstuffs has improved over the short term in some areas thanks to humanitarian interventions, there currently is no sign of a comprehensive improvement of the situation. By the end of June 2013, only 33% of the promised international financial aid had arrived. In addition, it is currently very difficult to obtain the latest information about resources available to implementing organizations. These conditions make it impossible to respond efficiently to the needs of the population in the north.

In order to avert the immediate crisis and improve the nutritional and food security of vulnerable populations in a sustainable manner, one must

- ensure a significant increase in food distribution together with an increase in food production;
- provide funds in the form of cash transfers, cash for work and so on, in order to re-stimulate markets;
- rebuild and strengthen the resiliency of the population, including through im-

proved access to agricultural products, diversified crops, customized storage options and comprehensive early warning systems;

- strengthen and adapt available potential in the areas of food and nutritional security, for example through the introduction of vegetable gardens, promotion of local products, processing of foodstuffs and manufacture of food supplements as well as the resumption of livestock farming and veterinary care;
- closely integrate all target groups, both in the north and in the adjacent buffer zones as well as in the south, in a way that is appropriate to each of their situations: especially those populations remaining in the north population groups (small farmers and nomadic groups) and host families in the south, as well as internally displaced persons or returnees in the north.

The prerequisite for all these measures is the upgrading of decentralized services aimed at improving the response to local needs: In order to enable humanitarian and development organizations to do their work, local government structures must be empowered to provide the necessary information, such as lists of refugees.

Addressing the Causes of Conflict

Without consideration of the actual causes of conflict and structural challenges, the transition from the relief phase to development phase – and with it to stable development – is impossible. Despite the military intervention, the government is hardly in control of the northern regions.

- Only a prompt agreement among the decision makers in Bamako – AU, ECOWAS and UN as well as international government representatives – will trigger sustainable development processes in Mali, given the goal of sustainable conflict resolution with consideration for territorial protection, civil security, the restructuring of the north and the transparent, non-violent organization of the upcoming elections.

- In order to prevent conflicts, transparent communication on the part of the UN and clear execution of the mandate of the MINUSMA-Mission is necessary, taking into account humanitarian principles and a clear separation of civil and military mandates.
- In dealing with human rights violations, in conflict management and in overcoming the crisis that developed over recent months, the active participation of civil society structures and the close integration of the population must be guaranteed. This includes the promotion of inter-Malian and inter-ethnic dialogue.
- Project planning that is sensitive to the conflict, and civil conflict management that takes into account traditional approaches to conflict must be given top priority in development cooperation work and humanitarian aid.
 - An important target group that must not be neglected is young adults, who are particularly vulnerable to armed groups. Young adults must be strengthened through the creation of alternative modes of employment.

Given the complexity of the situation in Mali, success may be slow in coming. But at least these measures are small steps in the right direction.

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