

## **Youth Vulnerability and Exclusion (YOVEX) in West Africa: Mali Country Report**

**Boubacar N'Diaye**

## About this study

Youth and youth issues have emerged as key elements in the discourse and realities of Africa's conflict, security and development landscape over the past two decades. There is growing recognition that young people are at the heart of Africa's opportunities and challenges in the 21st century. This is founded on the continent's youthful demography (youth bulge) and the centrality of young people (as victims and victimizers) in civil wars, armed insurrection and stagnated socio-economic development. This study of youth vulnerability and exclusion in Mali provides empirical data and evidence of the points of contact and disconnect between the state and youth. It assesses alternative choices available to and embraced by young people (as coping mechanisms) in the context of psychological and material deprivations, and highlights the different outcomes of youth's coping strategies.

**Boubacar N'Diaye** is an assistant professor of black studies and political science at The College of Wooster.

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Conflict, Security and Development Group  
School of Social Science and Public Policy  
King's College London  
Strand, London  
WC2R 2LS, UK

Tel: +44(0)20 7848 1984  
Fax: +44(0)20 7848 2748  
[www.securityanddevelopment.org](http://www.securityanddevelopment.org)

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Boubacar N'Diaye

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# Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>ANPE</b>	National Agency for the Promotion of Employment
<b>APEJ</b>	Agence pour la Promotion de l'Emploi des Jeunes (Youth Employment Promotion Agency)
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>GDP</b>	gross domestic product
<b>GNI</b>	gross national income
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>PNPJ</b>	Programme National de Promotion de la Jeunesse
<b>UNDP</b>	UN Development Programme
<b>USD</b>	United States dollar
<b>US-RDA</b>	Union Soudanaise-Rassemblement Democratique Africain
<b>YOVEX</b>	Youth Vulnerability and Exclusion (Project)

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The views expressed here are entirely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the UK government's Department for International Development.

## Executive summary

This report presents the findings of YOVEX II-Mali, analyses the data gathered, and proffers recommendations to address the phenomenon of youth exclusion and vulnerability. One of the findings of the study is that, as a country, Mali and its youth live with, and youth policies are decided and implemented in, economic and social circumstances that are much less impressive than the country's rightly touted progress on the path of political democratization. Mali remains a poor country with a fast-growing youth population (estimated to be 70 per cent of its 14 million people), which is projected to peak in the next three to four decades. For cultural, political and historical reasons the importance of youth and their centrality in economic development efforts have always been part of the rhetoric and agendas of Mali's successive (civilian and military) governments. The creation in 2003 of the Agence pour la Promotion de l'Emploi des Jeunes (APEJ), a state-run youth employment agency, was an indication that President Amadou Toumani Touré took issues of youth employment seriously, with youth being defined as people aged 15–40 years.

YOVEX II-Mali used a survey, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and personal stories in two regions to gather evidence, based on a sample of 433 participants. The findings suggest that, although chronological age does matter in their conceptualisations, Mali's youth have a conception of youth that goes well beyond the age-based international institutions' definition of the concept. The evidence also suggests that, as expected, Mali's youth policies have definitely created a situation of youth exclusion and vulnerability. This is due in part to the low capacity of the Malian state, but also to the overall poor management and policy decisions, those pertaining to the APEJ in particular. Consequently, Mali's youth have very little faith that state policies and programmes targeting young people will meet their needs. In the personal testimonies that they offered, many youth shared the extent of their resilience, but also of their frustration at the adversities that they face when trying to find employment, or even fairness and equity, when they can count only on their own abilities and skills (and nothing else). This is particularly true for young Malians from the north who live in large numbers in Bamako. These youth deeply resent what they consider the neglect of the state, if not its discrimination against them and their region of origin. They feel left to fend for themselves, with very few options. While revolt and



rebellion have been the choice of some northern youth, many reject these options and remarkably remain confident about the future of the country. However, the evidence also suggests that this alienation does not translate into an 'exit' stance on the part of the youth. In fact, Mali's youth seem to have tapped into their cultural resources and a sense of loyalty to their society and state, as well as into the relevant social structures and networks, in order to cope with this situation. They seem to have embraced the democratic process – certainly its proxy in this study, voting – as a matter of civil and patriotic duty. As coping mechanisms, Mali's youth have engaged in a variety of activities that have sustained them, ranging from studying to engaging in agriculture and commerce in the informal sector, to any activity that will ensure that they will overcome hardship.

One of the conclusions that YOVEX II-Mali reaches is that, while Mali's youth are quite frustrated by their exclusion and vulnerability in the face of what they perceive as the ruling elite's ineffectiveness and corruption in addressing youth unemployment and other social ills, they have deliberately chosen a strategy of loyalty and voice rather than outright exit. Another conclusion is that youth in Mali are in a situation that requires that a number of measures be taken to diffuse the extreme frustration and anguish that, nevertheless, exist and have the potential of resulting in other forms of 'exit'. The report also presents cases that illustrate how Mali's youth have typically coped with their exclusion and vulnerability, and how they have pulled themselves by their bootstraps and variously managed to stay afloat or succeed, sometimes with the support of their social networks.

One of the recommendations of the study is the need to create solid and permanent linkages between an educational system in need of reform and the labour market, including by a systematic promotion of social entrepreneurship. Another recommendation is for the Mali government to adopt voluntary, proactive actions that focus on the rural food-producing sector in order to create jobs on a massive scale. More importantly, the government must demonstrate a commitment to implementing youth employment policies faithfully and firmly and to manage these programmes in a transparent manner in its various agencies. Only such a commitment can build confidence in the government's policies and reduce the widespread sentiment of exclusion and vulnerability that Mali's youth feel so intensely. Such a commitment will also be indispensable for winning over potential donors and convincing them that the government is in fact serious about addressing the challenges facing Mali's youth. Finally, since youth problems are shared by all the states in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) zone, Mali and the other ECOWAS states should recognize the implications of youth mobility and develop at the commission level and in other community organs an action-oriented ECOWAS youth policy.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Possibly more than any other non-post-conflict West African state, Mali seems to embody the dilemmas, contradictions, hopes, sense of urgency, and immense potentialities and daunting challenges that African countries experience as they face the pressing needs of their fast-growing youth populations. Anecdotal evidence aptly illustrates this condition. In his speech welcoming participants to the second ordinary session of the conference of the African Union (AU) ministers in charge of youth held in Addis Ababa on 12–15 February 2008, the AU commissioner of the Department of Human Resource, Science and Technology singled out Mali as one of only three African countries that had signed *and* ratified the African Charter of Youth adopted in 2006. In sharp contrast, only a few months earlier, Seydou Keita, a well-known analyst, in a scathing commentary on the composition of the newly appointed government of Mali's President Amadou Toumani Touré, cited a youth leader as saying, 'just what have we done to President Touré, that he tramples us under foot so mercilessly?'<sup>1</sup> According to Keita, the same prominent youth leader bitterly complained that Touré had betrayed Mali's youth after using scores of their associations to get re-elected. It should be added that, during his election campaign, Touré had promised to make youth employment the priority of his administration should he be re-elected.

This eagerness to be perceived as a pioneering country in youth issues, as illustrated by the early ratification of the African Youth Charter and the astute political use of youth concerns for election mobilization, while variously found in many other countries, is certainly very pronounced in Mali. Ever since the early years of independence under the banner of the ideologically inclined and socialist-leaning Union Soudanaise-Rassemblement Democratique Africain (US-RDA) party, which governed Mali for the first eight years of independence, Mali has been known for its persistent rhetoric regarding the centrality of youth and their issues in national political

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1 See Radio Steve Bantou Biko (n.d.).

development efforts. This legacy and tradition naturally raise the profile of youth-related issues, particularly as they relate to unemployment and socio-economic and political challenges. The overall political and socio-economic background of Mali only underscores the pertinence of this study of youth inclusion and vulnerability.

## 1.1 Background

A landlocked, materially poor country in the heart of West Africa (indeed, usually referred to as one of the two or three 'poorest countries in the world'), Mali became independent on 22 September 1960 after a two-year internal autonomy interlude within the French colonial empire. The country's decolonization efforts were led by Modibo Keita, a charismatic leader and founding member of the West Africa-wide political party the Rassemblement Democratique Africain and head of its Sudanese section. The collectivist and voluntarist economic policies that Keita's government implemented at independence slowly alienated vast segments of the embryonic urban-based commercial and bureaucratic petit bourgeois elite in the context of an increasingly authoritarian and repressive political atmosphere. These policies particularly alienated officers in the military, who felt humiliated by an increasingly intrusive, irksome, omnipotent and fiercely ideological youth-based militia, the *milice populaire*. This militia was a collection of semi-literate, newly urbanized, politically mobilized and empowered youth organized into brigades and charged with the enforcement of various aspects of the policies of the US-RDA.

On 19 November 1968 the army (more specifically, its junior officers) staged a coup and for 22 years governed the country, as the military has typically done in Africa, without any more success than the regime it overthrew. Indeed, it fared far worse in the areas of both human rights and economic development. In March 1991 another coup, prompted by massive civil unrest and excessive repression, finally ended the 'civilianized' regime of General Moussa Traoré and ushered in the current, much-touted democratic political dispensation. Since the 1992 open democratic elections following an unassailable transition, Mali has been cited as an illustration of the possibilities that a democratic political system can afford in an African environment. President Alpha Oumar Konaré was elected for two terms, and dutifully relinquished power at the end of his second term. In 2002 Amadou Toumani Touré, the leader of the 1991 coup and a retired general, was elected president, and then re-elected in April 2007.

As mentioned above, Touré made youth employment one of the main issues of his presidency, setting up a youth employment programme and the Agence pour la Promotion de l'Emploi des Jeunes (APEJ) soon after his election, and earmarking a considerable amount of money (CFA francs

18,572,340,468) for the promotion of youth employment (see Appendix 2). In 2005 the Malian government elaborated a youth-focused triennial (2005–08) programme entitled Programme National de Promotion de la Jeunesse (PNPJ). Youth issues were also taken up more broadly in Touré's presidential programme, the *Projet pour le Développement Economique et Social*. It is difficult to determine whether this flurry of youth-focused institutional and programmatic activities were the result of the Touré's realization that by their sheer number and because of the role they played in the overthrow of Moussa Traoré's regime, youth are a political force to be reckoned with or a genuine political stance in favour of the socio-economic development youth. It is undeniable that Touré's government did put in place a certain infrastructural and policy orientation for the benefit of youth. According to an official of the Direction Nationale de la Jeunesse interviewed for this study, a remarkable feature of the PNPJ is that its elaboration necessitated the involvement of youth at all levels and in all the regions of Mali. It was, according to this official (whose name is withheld), a bottom-up process that took into account the sentiments and perspectives of youth themselves. This perspective certainly does not seem to be shared by many of the youth who took part in this study. Whether in the end the actual outcome matched the intended one is another matter. The PNPJ was due for evaluation at the end of 2008 and this should yield interesting data.

While by no means flawless, the Malian political system has displayed, to widespread acclaim, a remarkable ability to remain open and tolerant, despite severe long-standing strains and hardships. In addition to the legacy of decades of repression and poor governance, these problems stem from the country's very limited natural resources; incessant droughts; a fractious political class; a chronic crisis of the educational system (and the accompanying frequent student and teacher unrest); and, not least, recurring armed rebellions in the north. In the early 1990s northern ethnic Touareg, who felt neglected and disenfranchised by the Malian state, took up arms. Fighting gave way to a comprehensive peace agreement centered on directing state resources to isolated northern regions and giving them breathing room within Mali. While the implementation of the peace agreement was laborious due to limited resources, many were surprised by the rekindling of the Touareg rebellion in late 2007. This rebellion and the socio-economic context in which it is taking place continue to be of serious concern for Mali and its neighbour, Niger. These issues are, of course, closely related and both deeply affect the sentiments toward and the perceptions of the actions of the government by young Malians born in the north who now live in Bamako (see below). If the political context has been favourable for nearly a generation, the socio-economic context has been much more challenging for all Malians, whatever their region of origin, as the following data indicates.

Mali's youth live with, and youth policies are decided and implemented in, economic and social circumstances that are decidedly much less impressive than the country's political environment. The country is a vast, semi-arid territory of 1.24 million square kilometres and its population stands at 14 million (2007) with a gross national income (GNI) per capita of only USD 380, with the country ranking 185<sup>th</sup> in the world on this indicator, according to World Bank figures.<sup>2</sup> In 2000, 72.1 per cent of Malians lived on no more than USD 2 a day, while 36.1 per cent lived on USD 1 a day. The World Bank estimates that between 2001 and 2006 the percentage of Malians living in poverty fell from 56.6 to 47.4 per cent. While not absent by any means in urban centres, poverty is more prevalent in rural areas, in part because of irregular rainfall and the neglect of these areas by government policies. This results in increased migration toward fast-growing cities and exacerbates the already precarious urban economic and social conditions.

Mali has benefitted from the goodwill of the donor community toward its democratization efforts, which has helped it to record remarkable rates of economic growth. Since the adoption of democracy, its gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 4.1 per cent between 1990 and 2000, and nearly 6 per cent between 2000 and 2005. Nevertheless, in 2006 Mali ranked 175<sup>th</sup> out of 177 countries on the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index. Mali is not endowed with natural resources, besides a few gold mines, although there are hopeful signs of oil deposits in the north. Until its debt was drastically reduced in recent years, Mali carried a heavy debt burden averaging 63.3 per cent of its GDP between 2000 and 2003, falling to 30.2 per cent in 2004, which certainly compared favourably with the West African regional averages (73.1 per cent and 54.4 per cent over the same periods, respectively).<sup>3</sup> Its economy is based on the primary sector (the export of cotton and other agricultural products), with 80 per cent of its population engaged in agricultural production, and only 20 per cent in industry and services (2005 estimates), with an unemployment rate of 30 per cent (2004 estimates).<sup>4</sup> Ninety per cent of Malians are Muslim, 1 per cent Christians and 9 per cent followers of indigenous religions.

Nearly all the various areas of Mali's demographics are an invitation to such studies as YOVEX II. Mali's population growth averages 2.6 per cent, with a median age of 15.9 years, with 48.2 per cent of the population aged between 0 and 14 years, and slightly more aged between 15 and 64 years in 2007.<sup>5</sup> Another interesting statistic is that, renowned for its culture of migration, Mali has unsurprisingly a high net migration rate (6.26 per 1,000

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2 Unless otherwise specified, the statistics on socio-economic data provided are derived from various tables in World Bank (2008).

3 ADB, 113.

4 CIA (2007).

5 Ibid.

population). Mali, like the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, has a very young population. A distinctive characteristic of its population is that, according to a World Bank study, Mali is among a group of mostly sub-Saharan African countries whose growth in their youth population (defined as those aged 14–24 years in the study), although already high (Mali will have an annual average growth of 3.1 per cent between 2005 and 2015, one of the highest), will not peak until 2050,<sup>6</sup> which suggest that existing youth-related issues will only increase in salience. Some national estimates put the percentage of Malians who are 35 years old and younger at 77 per cent.<sup>7</sup> While statistics on youth unemployment and figures on employment in the informal urban sector are not available, it is indicative of the situation of the youth that in 2001, 25.3 per cent of children aged 7–14 were economically active, of which 32.3 per cent were males and 18.6 per cent females, and that the labour force (aged 15 and over) grew by an average of 2.5 per cent between 1990 and 2005. While output in various sectors of the economy grew between 2000 and 2005 (with agriculture making up approximately 4.9 per cent of GDP growth; industry, 5.1 per cent; manufacturing, 5.7 per cent; and services, 6.2 per cent), it is clear that this growth was not enough to absorb the growth in the labour force. In sum, the foregoing comprises the socio-economic and political setting in which youth policies in Mali are enacted and implemented, and therefore constituted the environment in which YOVEX II in Mali was conducted. Additional youth-specific relevant statistics, gathered from the government's PNPJ and Programme Emploi – Jeunes, are provided in Box 1.

**Box 1: Youth in Mali: Vital signs**

- Population under 35 years: 77.1 per cent (estimate, June 2005)
- Population aged between 10 and 35 years: 56.77 per cent (2004)
- Rural youth as a proportion of youth: 77 per cent
- Urban youth (including unemployed university graduates, informal sector workers, former parastatal employees, students and pupils) as a percentage of total urban population: 80%
- Number of educational and social facilities built by the state for the benefit of youth: 72
- Number of such facilities that are up and running: 34
- Number of youth associations: 488 (2005)

## 1.2 Adaptation of the basic propositions underlying the YOVEX II Project to the Mali case study

Before discussing in the next sections the methodology used to gather the data and present and analyse the findings of YOVEX II in Mali, it is necessary to review the guiding assumptions of the overall project and gauge the extent to which they apply to or are affected by the country's particular socio-economic and cultural context. As pointed out above, in Mali, youth issues have always been – as a matter of ideology, political opportunism or just plain common

<sup>6</sup> See Lam (2006).

<sup>7</sup> See Mali (n.d.).

socio-economic sense – a subject of national conversation and concern. Culturally, there has always been a conception of ‘youth’ that derives from the agrarian way of life that is characteristic of Mali. While ‘youth’ has, of course, a chronological dimension, it involves much more than that. It also entails an entire social and cultural meaning having to do with the physical, material and psychological ability to cater to the needs of the immediate family and community, and the willingness to endure hardship; being obedient to, or at least deferential toward, older people; and even embodying certain predispositions and values (physical and moral prowess and courage, for example). The dominant Mandé culture is replete with referents to an idea of youth that goes well beyond chronological age. This socio-cultural conception of youth is most certainly different from the standard, internationally sanctioned definition of youth as those aged 14–24 years. On this account certainly, the assumption that in the West African context youth is conceived of differently from the accepted definition sanctioned by international institutions applies aptly to Mali, if only because, while essentially chronologically based, the *government* of Mali’s own definition (a person aged 15–40 years; see more details below) tends to support this assumption. It clearly encompasses certain cultural and socio-political realities that are absent from the international institutions’ perceptions. YOVEX II-Mali was carried out on the basis on the plausibility of this assumption.

As briefly suggested above, President Touré has heavily invested his political capital in expressing his sensitivity to the predicament of youth, particularly unemployment, the resulting sense of alienation and other consequences, and has pledged to address it diligently. So, with regard to the proposition that there is a strong correlation between the role, responsibility and liability of governance, on the one hand, and youth exclusion and vulnerability, on the other, YOVEX II-Mali was conducted on the assumption that this is indeed the case. As the findings of aggregate data and focus group data strongly suggest, this proposition was certainly not erroneous. Relatedly, the study was also cognizant of the fact that, rhetoric notwithstanding, government programmes intended to benefit youth tend not to incorporate the preferences of the youth themselves. Youth groups have, for example, lamented that the average age of the new government set up in 2007 is 53, with the minister of youth and sport himself one of this ageing group.<sup>8</sup> Typically, policies do not tend to be conceived in terms of specific, localized youth conditions and preferences, including the fact that there were already other actors on the ground whose input could have been sought and activities taken into account, if only for co-ordination purposes. Mali is, of course, no

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8 See Radio Steve Bantou Biko (n.d.).

exception in this regard. Both dimensions are investigated through the components of the questionnaire and discussion groups.

Another assumption of the study that is quite relevant to Mali and has been an a priori empirical observation is that, regardless of the ambient poverty and at times what appears as an intractable, indeed desperate, situation, there does not seem to be a threat of any impending outbreak of violence of the kind forecast for the sub-region by the likes of Robert Kaplan.<sup>9</sup> There indeed seems to be a tacit understanding that because of the very limited capabilities of the state, and its unwillingness or inability to provide the needed jobs, amenities and economic opportunities, individuals and informal structures must step in. Furthermore, this consensus seems to extend to the fact that even in this environment, systematic violence is not the most appropriate avenue for youth to follow, certainly not violence as a casual and legitimate outlet for the frustrations resulting from the hardships that everybody agrees are there. This assumption does not negate the fact that outbursts of violence are certainly not entirely absent in Mali's recent history. However, in Mali, the remarkable absence of any systemic and protracted outbreak of violence tends to suggest that the assumption is reasonable for Mali, subject to empirical testing, of course. Specific questions in the questionnaire and in focused conversations were crafted to test this postulation.

For a long time, youth in Mali have used the concept of '*système D*' to describe their response to their situation, with the '*D*' standing for *débrouillardise*, a French word that can be translated as managing somehow to come out on top, coping successfully with adversity and enduring difficult circumstances through resourcefulness, optimism and goodwill. Malians have, therefore, by and large, come to terms with the particular difficulty of their situation as citizens of a very poor country, the severe limitations placed on the opportunities that the state provides – or can provide – and the need to develop strategies for themselves and to be imaginative and practical in facing their predicament. A cursory look at the large number of creative avenues youth in Mali, as elsewhere in the sub-region, have developed shows that young men and women have managed to survive and build entire systems and programmes to compensate for what should have been the role of state institutions. In Mali, '*système D*' entails reliance on a vast network and numerous activities located in the informal sector. Quite often, these social, cultural and economic activities use the mechanisms of control set up by the state against state control and supervision in ways that the state may very well consider illegal, but that are another indication of the resourcefulness and dogged agency with which the youth must be credited. This particular feature of Mali's youth culture certainly justifies the assumption YOVEX II-

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9 Kaplan (1994).



Mali made that youth do indeed ‘exercise considerable social agency’, because they must develop meaningful strategies and tactics in response to the alienation that the dearth of state-directed programmes and activities always imposes on them. Here again, the study built this assumption into the questionnaire, other investigative tools and activities.

The final assumption of the study seems also to apply aptly to Mali, and this also needs to be examined in order to wrap up this brief review of the theoretical propositions that the study is based on. Violent conflicts in Africa have tended to result from the struggle for power at the national level or severe disruptions of national life, often overshadowed by grievances couched in communal, regional or other identity-based disputes. Youth, who typically are used as cannon fodder in these conflicts, are drawn to one side or the other of the conflict. However, whether or not these conflicts develop in the first place and, more importantly, find ready legions to join the opposing sides may very well be dependent on local dynamics and young people’s ‘cost/benefit’ analysis of their options and opportunities and assessment of what the future holds, given these *localized* economic, social and overall life chance conditions. This certainly is relevant to Mali, as the conflict in the north of the country seems to have reignited amid severe strains on youth everywhere in the country, but more acutely in the conflict zone. Hence, for YOVEX II-Mali, it is most certainly appropriate to posit the proposition that the immediate circumstances surrounding Mali’s youth are more decisive in shaping the choices that they make than the extent to which, at the national level, efforts are pursued (or not) to address the socio-economic developments and other political challenges that the country faces. Consequently, the study posited this putative correlation between youth reactions and decisions regarding their future and local (as opposed to national) conditions. Similarly, this proposition was tested through questionnaire and focus group discussions.

## Chapter 2

### Methodology and research processes

YOVEX II-Mali was carried out according to a carefully thought out methodology and process that, nevertheless, had to take into consideration the time and material constraints under which the research had to be executed. It also had to bear in mind the particular context, research environment and other limitations (and opportunities) that Mali presents. It should be further noted that, while the principal researcher is indeed quite familiar with the Mali socio-political context, YOVEX II was the first major sociological, survey-based research that he had carried out in the country. Care was taken to involve individuals who lived in the country and had experience of such targeted systematic inquiries and to provide them with the training YOVEX II necessitated.

Fieldwork to gather data was conducted from December 2007 to March 2008 by a team of seven duly trained research assistants overseen and coordinated by a local, more experienced supervisor who remained in constant communications with the principal researcher based in the United States. The research team was made up of seven young male Malians aged 19–33. Three among them were unemployed after having completed some schooling, and they benefitted from some training in a profession, while four were employed more or less steadily. Among the unemployed research assistants, two were engaged in petty commerce and occasionally acted as middlemen in business dealings in order to make ends meet. Among the gainfully employed researchers, two were schoolteachers (working for private schools), one was employed in a non-governmental organization (NGO) providing support for rural development while he pursued a university degree, and one was a hotel employee. The latter subsequently lost his job. The team proved to be not only very aware of youth issues in Mali, but to be living out such issues themselves, along with close family members and friends, which made them particularly effective in the data-gathering process.

For the purpose of fieldwork and data collection, Mali was initially divided into four zones. Two were situated in the district of Bamako, the capital city. Zone I consisted of neighborhoods surrounding the centre of the capital and the commercial and business districts. Zone II consisted of (more or less) newer, peripheral neighbourhoods.

In this regard, Bamako was particularly interesting for the overall YOVEX Project. According to some estimates, it is the fastest-growing city in Africa and the sixth fastest-growing city in the world.<sup>10</sup> While Bamako is indeed a bustling urban centre, its outlying areas (most of Zone I), in which part of the research was conducted, have a distinctly rural rather than urban character, and youth who inhabit them have been there typically only for a short period of time. They live in an 'urban' area (the concept does not really fit), but are actually still very rural in every respect of their lives. Therefore, the choice of Bamako (and definitely Zone II) has the advantage of making it possible to capture respondents who are part of this very interesting and data-rich demographic of youth who are, for all practical purposes, rural youth, but *in the process of being urbanized*, with all the accompanying psychological, sociological and other transformations such Malian youth go through. To repeat, the fact that Bamako was selected for the study does not imply that it concerned only urban, more or less educated youth. Furthermore, the study also covered Kayes and neighbouring villages, which are definitely more rural than Bamako.

Zone III, consisting of the administrative region of Kayes, enabled another aspect of rural youth data to be captured. Kayes, the regional capital of Mali's second region, and its surrounding rural communities are the foremost purveyors of migrant labour to Europe and neighbouring countries. Data was collected in the city of Kayes and two adjacent communities. The fourth zone was supposed to be the region of Gao in northern Mali, selected because it has been affected by the Touareg rebellion, which was sparked in large part by the feelings of marginalization many inhabitants of Mali's northern region experienced in the early 1990s. In 2007 these same grievances led to a flare-up of rebellion. Unfortunately, however, resource and time constraints – and, more crucially, the aggravation of tensions and occasional fighting in the area, which led to many civilian casualties – made it impossible to gather data in Zone IV. However, in June 2008 two focus groups were conducted with youth essentially from the northern part of Mali, in addition to in-depth interviews with youth also from the north. The data gathered is analysed below.

In order to meet the requirements of randomness, diversification and balance, Bamako's zones were further sub-divided into the following sub-

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10 See IRIN (2007).

zones, corresponding to neighbourhoods, and assistant researchers were assigned to a cluster of such sub-zones:

**Zone I**

Centre ville  
Bamako Koura  
Dar Salam  
Medina Koura  
Djelibougou  
Korofina  
Bozola

**Zone II**

Bulkassoumbougou  
Kouloubeni  
Sangarebourgou  
Kalaban(s)  
Nyamakoro kourani  
Hotel Sanga

A conscious effort was made to cover several neighbourhoods. In all the zones, particular care was taken to involve youth of different backgrounds, educational levels, marital status, religions, gender, professional occupations and other categories, particularly as far as the rural–urban split is concerned. Research assistants were particularly sensitized to the need to include females in the targeted respondents and to follow up on contacts.

This sub-division was meant to improve the likelihood that the samples of respondents were representative enough of the diversity of Bamako's youth population in every respect, particularly the balance between newer immigrants to the city and those who had lived in the city all their lives. Data-gathering methods consisted of questionnaires, personal life histories (filled in on forms), focus groups, personal in-depth interviews and observations. The original questionnaire was translated into French and a number of questions modified or refined, and a few more added to increase the chance of capturing critical information. One of the unforeseen outcomes was to add an additional page to the original one-page questionnaire. In order to gather data from participants who could not read or write French, research assistants were trained to translate questions and answer inquiries in the most frequently spoken languages in the areas. In all three zones, 1,200 two-page questionnaires were randomly distributed, yielding 433 responses. Further information about and analysis of the information garnered is provided in the next section of this report. While questionnaires and personal life history forms were mainly distributed by research assistants, interviews, focus group discussions and other data-gathering methods, as well as in-depth interviews

and participant observation, were carried out by the principal researcher while in the field.

Aside from the constraints mentioned above, one of the aspects of YOVEX II-Mali that is worth stressing is the difficulty of carrying out research in the Mali environment. The principal researcher's efforts to enlist the support of relevant actors in youth policy and programmes were frustrated by the difficulty encountered when attempting to meet with them. Given the time constraints, after three days of vain attempts to meet with the director of youth, the director of the APEJ and the secretary-general of the Ministry of Youth and Sports,<sup>11</sup> he had to give up and resign himself to conducting the initial study without the 'official' sanction that would have possibly lessened the difficulties that assistant researchers and the principal researcher himself had to deal with in the course of the research. Time constraints also made it impossible to devote enough time to pre-testing aspects of the research instruments. Such pre-testing would have possibly helped foresee the less-than-perfect nature of, among others, the questions designed to capture an important aspect of the project: the institutional profile, i.e. some ranking of the institutions that, in the view of respondents, mitigate and lessen exclusion and vulnerability. More time (and financial resources) would possibly have also helped to design/revise a question to capture better (more quantitatively, anyway) some of the concrete ways in which the government could help youth or the reasons for optimism or pessimism respondents proffered in their answers to open-ended questions. Nonetheless, the data gathered does teach us a great deal about young Malians' perceptions of their vulnerability and exclusion; about ways to address these issues; and, in general, how youth in Mali can be situated in relation to important aspects of the youth *problématique* in West Africa.

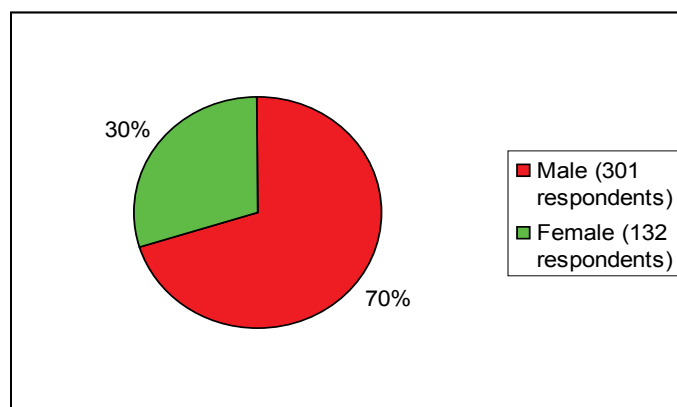
Survey activities for YOVEX II-Mali yielded a total of 433 detailed responses to the questionnaire, in addition to substantial evidence gathered from interviews, focus groups and personal stories. Among the respondents, 132 were females (30.5 per cent) and 301 males (69.5 per cent). A total of 280 (64.66 per cent) of respondents lived in Bamako's two zones, while 153 (35.34 per cent) lived in Zone III, i.e. Kayes and neighbouring communities. Among the respondents, 261 (60.3 per cent) were single, while 165 (38.1 per cent) were married and seven (1.6 per cent) were of another marital status. With regard to the educational attainment of respondents, it reflected the great diversity of Malian youth in this area. Among respondents, 93 (21.47 per cent) had no formal education or had attended only Qur'anic schools, the curricula of which focused only on the recitation of Qur'anic verses. A total of 27 (6.23 per

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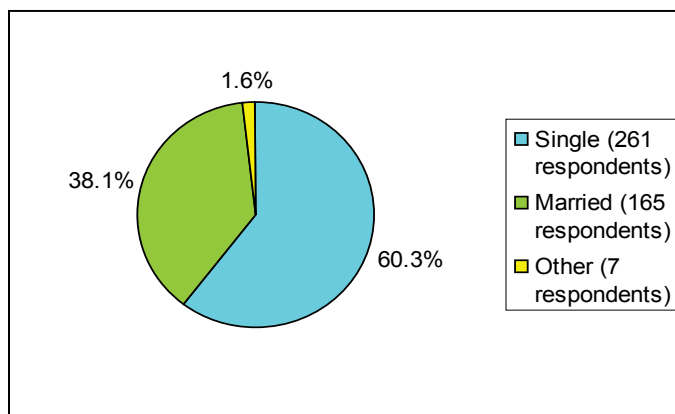
11 While initial attempts failed, the secretary-general of the ministry was gracious enough, toward the end of the study, to grant a brief meeting, and to direct the principal researcher to the appropriate youth service and junior collaborators, which helped immensely in accessing relevant youth-related documents and data.

cent) had attended only primary school, and 89 (20.55 per cent) middle school or high school. The most educated among respondents had attended either a professional school (104, or 24 per cent), or had received (or were still receiving) a university education (120, or 27.71 per cent). Looked at from a gender angle, roughly the same number of female respondents had no formal education (33, or 25 per cent) or attended university (36, or 27.27 per cent); while nine (6.81 per cent) had attended primary school, 29 (21.96 per cent) high school or middle school; and 25 a school for professional training (18.93 per cent). Male respondents displayed roughly the same general demographic characteristics. Here also the largest number of them had reached the university education level (84, or 27.9 per cent), while 79 (26.24 per cent) had attended or were attending a professional school, and 60 (roughly 20 per cent) had reached middle school or high school. An equal number (60) did not have formal schooling, while 18 (roughly 6 per cent) had attended only primary school.

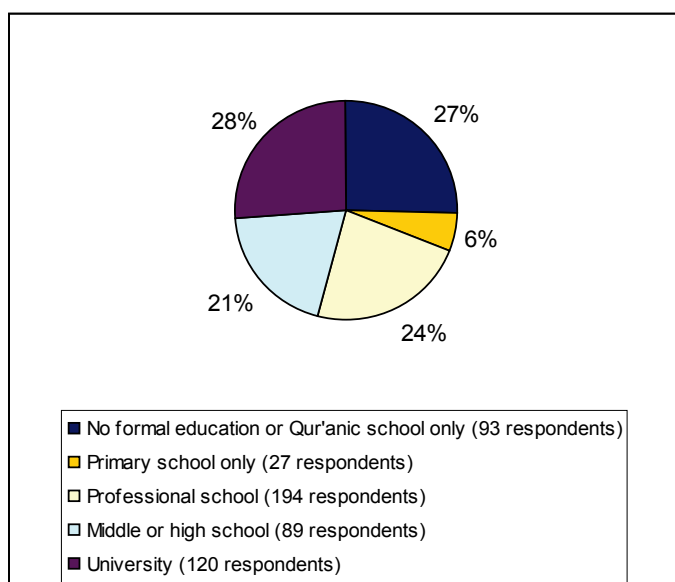
**Figure 1: Respondents' composition by gender**



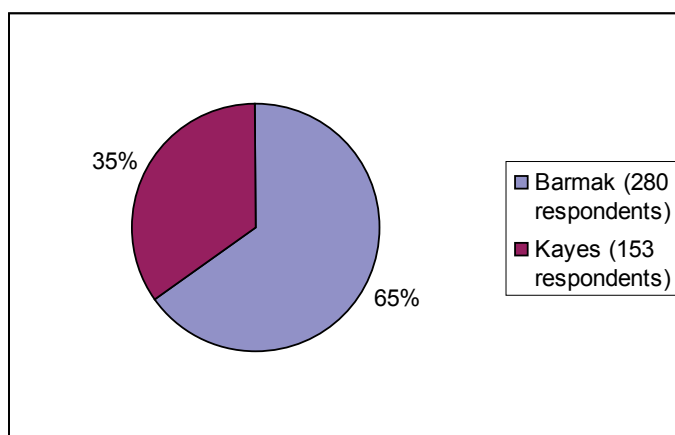
**Figure 2: Respondents' marital status**



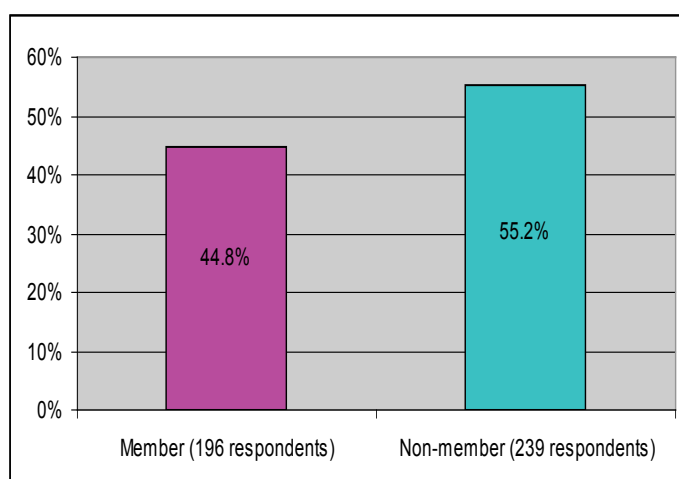
**Figure 3: Respondents' educational level**



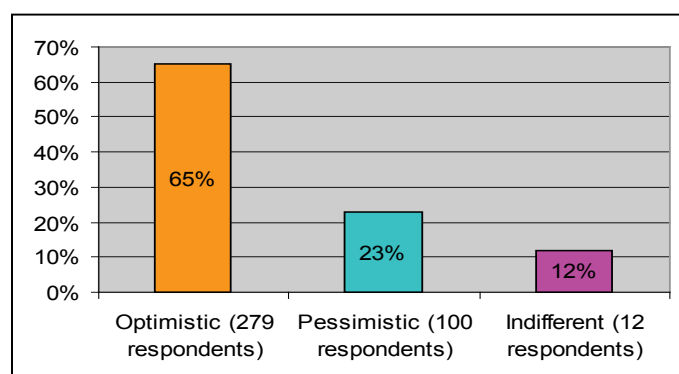
**Figure 4: Regions from which the sample was drawn**



**Figure 5: Respondents' youth group membership**



**Figure 6: Respondents' perspective on the future**



Although response to the query about religious affiliation was optional and a few respondents chose not to answer it, the sample also reflects roughly the religious affiliation of Malians: 22 (5 per cent) were Christian and 5 (1 per cent) said they were followers of traditional religions (although, as we will see below, a large number of respondents referred to religious and spiritual traditional practices as avenues to cope with exclusion and vulnerability). In addition to the few respondents who did not answer the question on religion, a few said that they had no religion. The overwhelming number of the others, roughly 90 per cent, said that they were Muslim. A closer analysis of the responses as they pertain to the four themes at the heart of YOVEX II are respectively examined below, namely: (1) youth identity and how the concept of youth is understood; (2) the context in which youth exclusion and vulnerability occur; (3) the coping mechanisms youth have developed; and (4) the social outcomes that result.



# Chapter 3

## Research themes and findings

### 3.1 Theme 1: Youth identity and understanding youth: Definitions of youth

The ultimate state document dealing with youth issues, and youth employment in particular, in Mali is the Programme Emploi – Jeunes (PEJ): Document – Cadre enacted in May 2003 for a period of five years.<sup>12</sup> This programme was part of the broader anti-poverty strategy of President Touré. It is a comprehensive programme not just dealing with employment, but also with training and building the capacities of young Malians in a variety of areas and sectors of the economy.

The document states the following, which also encapsulates the official definition of youth that the government of Mali has adopted: ‘The programme aims to contribute to the economic and social development of Mali by providing *youth between 15 and 40 years* of age with maximum waged employment opportunities as well as self-employment.’<sup>13</sup> It is evident that this goes beyond the internationally recognized definition of youth. This is one of the fundamental reference documents for youth policy in Mali, particularly the part dealing with youth employment and social development. However, it is not the only one. In 2005 the Malian government issued another document that also embodies and contains its youth policy and orientation, i.e. the Programme National de Promotion de la Jeunesse (PNJP), which goes beyond employment to embrace all other areas of interest to young people, such as leisure, culture and education, social vulnerability, insertion, communication, etc. In this document, elaborated for a period of three years, there is another, more direct definition of concepts such as ‘youth’, ‘young’ and related terms. The PNJP defines youth as

*... a period of life situated between the acquisition of psychological and physical autonomy and the completion of the biological and psychological growth process.*

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12 For the text of this document, see Appendix 2.

13 Author’s translation; emphasis added.

*Youth is a moment, a short period of life during which one acquires the social and competencies and potentialities that will prepare one for the responsibilities and trials of adult life.*<sup>14</sup>

In the PNPJ, 'young' is defined also in contradistinction to the United Nations (UN) definition to refer to 'all persons whose age is between 10 and 35'. The document specifies that this definition take into consideration 'scout educational activities in which the child is inducted starting at age 10 up to when he/she becomes autonomous'.<sup>15</sup> The difference between the PNPJ definition and that of the UN seems to simply reflect the different focus that the two place on employment, while, importantly, the PNPJ definition also seems to be an effort to reflect some indigenous/cultural dimensions of youth in the Malian context.

In the introduction to this report, the ideological and cultural origins of a certain approach to youth were evoked. In Malian society (among its dominant Mandé cultural component certainly), the notions of the 'Kamalinw' and 'Kamalinya', i.e. youth (young men specifically) and the status of being young, have always had a special place. They are central to a society that is agrarian and to a culture steeped in, and organized around, age groupings and age cohorts where old age is revered and youth celebrated, both playing important and intertwined roles. Furthermore, in the absence of a modern welfare state, a social security system and old-age services in particular, young men and women become the only support for ageing parents and therefore form a central pillar of the social structure and the coherence and integrity of communities. The importance of youth and how it is conceptualized has also to do with these added responsibilities of youth and young people's importance to a rapidly changing society. Evidently, in addition to the strictly economic challenges of creating enough employment for a very fast-growing, young, active population, successive Malian governments have also paid keen attention to ensuring that youth are kept under a certain level of institutional control, with a large number of decrees and laws being devoted to youth and their socio-cultural activities both in the capital and in the regions of the country, while the creation of youth recreational centres is another prime example of this concern.

As already mentioned, governmental authorities in Mali have a clear and specific definition of youth, of which many participants in the survey seem to be aware. Respondents seemed to have their own conceptions of youth, which definitely has a chronological dimension. Indeed, some said that it is 'determinant', but is nevertheless quite different from that of the international institutions as limited to people aged 14–24 years. With very few

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14 Mali (2006); author's translation, as are other quotes from the document.

15 'Scout' is a translation of the French '*pionnier*'; these are youth programmes aimed at instilling basic life skills into very young children.

exceptions, respondents definitely perceived themselves as 'young' and saw the concept in terms of more than just age. Answers such as 'I consider myself young because I am full of vigour' or because 'I am not married', 'I can do hard physical work', 'I do not have white hair', or 'I am less than 45 or 50' demonstrate that here youth is conceptualized differently. Another sentiment often expressed is reflected in the following answer to the question 'Do you consider yourself to be young?':

*I am healthy, and I am under the age of 30 and I do not live in my father's house. Actually, in addition to my own family (my wife and three children), I also help my father and mother and other relatives.*

Indeed, by an overwhelming margin, 396 (91.45 per cent) of the total number of respondents said 'yes' to the question 'Do you consider yourself to be young?' Of the 37 (8.54 per cent) who answered 'no' to this question, 18 (4.15 per cent) were males and 19 (4.38 per cent) females. The explanations given both by those who considered themselves young and those who did not were open-ended and may not be easily amenable to quantitative categorization. However, the gist of some of the answers was recurrent enough to suggest that respondents did not 'buy' the 14–24 age bracket and that this rejection reflected local concepts of 'youth', and hence tended to support one of the key propositions of the study, i.e. that 'youth' is best understood in local terms. One respondent, for example, said that she did not consider herself young because she was 'more that 50 years of age', while another said, 'because I have a family to feed'. Another (female) respondent said that she was no longer 'young' because she 'has children'; while another, although aged 25–35, said 'because I am married'; while yet another said 'because I am wiser'. The data also shows an interesting (related?) and instinctive conception of the differences between young men and young women. By a surprisingly large margin, 269 respondents (62 per cent), both males and females, said that there is a difference. When broken down by gender, the margin is even more surprising, since 66.66 per cent of females share the same opinion, while 'only' 60 per cent of males believed that there was a 'difference'. Of course, ultimately, this should not be that shocking, since the even more powerful socialization of females into such beliefs can be pointed to as being responsible for this statistic. Furthermore, the question may not have been phrased to elicit answers beyond the obvious difference in sex. While some answers delved into religion and culture, a large number of answers based the 'difference' on physical or sexual/reproductive abilities or functions. Interestingly, there seemed to be no difference between the answers of more educated respondents (i.e. those who had progressed beyond high school) and less educated ones.

### 3.2 Theme 2: The context of youth exclusion and vulnerability

As previously mentioned, Mali is a country situated in a climatically inhospitable region with deteriorating environmental conditions and with few natural resources. Consequently, the state has had a very hard time providing the adequate living and working conditions for its population, and for its youth in particular, who also happen to be the bulk of that population. Chief among the concerns of both the Malian state and the youth themselves is, of course, the issue of employment. The rhetoric about the criticality of youth employment and, starting in 2003, the notable effort of setting up an agency exclusively for the employment problems of youth are inescapable. Nevertheless, the data strongly suggests that youth in Mali do indeed face major socio-economic problems that lead to strong feelings of exclusion and vulnerability. While unemployment figures specific to youth are unavailable, with an overall unemployment rate of 30 per cent,<sup>16</sup> it is evident that, as the answers and comments of respondents clearly indicate, youth in Mali are concerned about their current circumstances and do not see solutions coming necessarily from the state. The data certainly indicates that the youth are estranged from the state and tend to perceive government actions to assist youth as inadequate and lacking the required care, impersonality, objectivity and effectiveness. Answers to questionnaire questions indicate that Malians put more faith in and rely more on non-governmental institutions, NGOs, and other non-state actors, including foreign states, than their own government. While this leads to often stridently expressed frustration and resentment (palpable in focus group discussions), it does not necessarily translate into any form of 'exit' stance.

A majority of respondents (256, or 59 per cent) said that they had participated in a programme targeting youth, but a large number 177 (41 per cent) had not. The proportions are similar when broken down by gender. While it was not possible to break the data down meaningfully by how frequently such activities were participated in or how long ago the respondents took part in such activities, or who for the most part set up these programmes, most seem to have been organized by non-state actors. The activities tended to relate to health education, anti-HIV/AIDS education in particular, and youth mobilization activities for neighbourhood clean-up, for example. The US Agency for International Development, UNDP, religious associations, women's cultural associations and international NGOs are a few of the institutions often cited. These are typically the actors that youth tend to see as more effective than the state, although the APEJ is rather frequently referred to as an institution that helps (or can help) young people. There may very well have been confusion in the minds of respondents between actually

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16 See CIA (2007).

helping and having the potential or vocation to help youth. The narrative many youth had of their experiences and some of the answers proffered afforded an insight into their perception of exclusion. To be sure, it was nearly impossible to quantify the answers given to the question on the institutions that respondents had relied on in the face of the inadequacy of government's approaches to the challenges confronting them. Answers were confusing because of the multiple answers (without ranking) that respondents gave. Nevertheless, one is struck by the fact that almost no respondent chose 'social services' to indicate the institutions that have an influence on youth, and very few chose 'politicians'. Instead, the most recurrent answer had to do with sports organizations, mosques or churches. Respondents also tended to cite micro-credit availability as the most useful tool to help youth. Among the activities most cited as helpful were sports and music. In focus groups and in-depth interviews, an overwhelming number of respondents expressed their frustration at the APEJ and the feeling of exclusion and anger that resulted from the nepotism that this agency is alleged to be known for and display. Interviewed youth often expressed the view that only those who had connections could hope to receive either the training, internships or employment that the agency was supposed to provide objectively and without favour to qualified Malians aged 15–40. Example after example was given of the manifestation and consequence of this feature of the APEJ, which, in the respondents' view, was only a manifestation of the state of things in the country generally. Of course, given the limited capacity of the Malian state to provide employment and other services to its fast-growing youth population, it is evident that Malian youth have had to develop effective coping mechanism in order to survive.

### **3.3 Theme 3: Youth coping mechanisms**

By all accounts, Mali is a democratizing country forging ahead rather peacefully, although very limited economic resources and capabilities severely constrain its options. Since the rebellion in northern Mali has resumed in recent months, one has to recall the sinister prophecy that the likes of Kaplan made a decade ago to put this segment of the Mali study in some kind of context. In 1996 Kaplan wrote that young West Africans males, 'out of school, unemployed, [are] loose molecules in an unstable social fluid that threaten to ignite' and that the ineluctable violence that will ensue will be perpetrated by urban dwellers 'with no rural experience from which to draw'.<sup>17</sup> This meant that young people such as the Malians studied in YOVEX II-Mali would be divorced from their cultural referents and would wantonly engage in violence in the face of the immense challenges that they face. This

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<sup>17</sup> Kaplan (1996), 16, 12, respectively.

predicted doom-and-gloom scenario certainly has not obtained in Mali. The coping mechanisms that youth in Mali seem to have developed in reaction to the exclusion and vulnerability that they undoubtedly experience in their relationship with the state have involved their tapping into their cultural resources and into what appears to be an unshakable patriotism and faith in their own resilience and that of their national community. Evidence of this was provided by their perspective on the future, even as they harshly criticized the difficult conditions that they face (see figure 6, above). The overwhelming majority of respondents said that they were optimistic about the future (279, or 64.43 per cent), i.e. nearly two-thirds, while 100 (23 per cent) said that they were pessimistic, and 54 (12.47 per cent) said that they were indifferent or didn't know. For those who were optimistic, the reasons given were overwhelmingly love for country and community and the necessity never to make sacrifices and to be resilient in the face of adversities. The latter reason is very much a prescription of Malian culture, which is known for its insistence on the concept of '*mugnu ni sabali*' (patience and abnegation) as cardinal values for all people, the youth in particular. It is also interesting, keeping in mind Kaplan's predictions, that the percentage of young Malians who are optimistic about the future is roughly as high among males (63.45 per cent) as it is among females (66.66 per cent). To the open-ended question 'What scares you the most?', a large number of respondents listed or mentioned 'unemployment' and 'corruption or corrupt practices', but also 'conflict', 'violence' or 'war', along with pandemic diseases, such as HIV/AIDS. To a large extent, this general pattern of simultaneously exercising loyalty and voice, as opposed to 'exiting', seems also to be reflected in the respondents' views of political participation, and of voting more specifically. While only about 40 per cent of respondents said that they had not voted during the last election, and gave as the typical reasons that they either had not reached voting age or had not been properly registered, 72 per cent said that they intended to vote in the next election. And the most frequent reason given was that it was the 'civic, patriotic duty' of young people to vote. It is worth mentioning that males, with an impressive 82.72 per cent, seemed to have embraced the democratic process even more strongly than females. Again, for young Malians, the option of engaging in wanton violence or warfare to lash out at the state or society did not seem to be the most likely one, which tends to support one of the assumptions of YOVEX II. In only one instance was the notion of joining a 'rebel group' referred to by a respondent in a personal story, when he stated, 'I no longer have hope and am now looking to join a rebel group if possible so that I can engage in any illicit activity that will help me to get out of my current situation' (see below). Interestingly also, a very large number of answers to the survey, personal interviews and focus group discussions frequently referred to 'Komo' and other mystical, spiritual rituals and practices as sources of strength in young

people's efforts to meet the challenges of unemployment and an uncertain future. In one of the focus groups, more than half the participants acknowledged that they consulted fortune tellers or participated in esoteric or mystical rituals related to traditional religions and practices. The importance of family and other communal support systems was recurrently mentioned.

Surprisingly, however, Malian youth do not seem to have joined associations in large numbers to seek companionship and support environments outside the purview of the states, as one would have expected of those looking for ways out of isolating and disempowering situations. In the sample surveyed, only 196 respondents (45.27 per cent) had joined a youth association, while 237 (54.73 per cent) had not, in spite of the fact that according to the National Direction for Youth, in 2005 there were more than 488 youth associations in Mali. One of the questionnaire questions was aimed at capturing the personal efforts made by respondents to 'succeed', i.e. to cope successfully with their circumstances. This was an open-ended question, and both respondents and participants in focus group discussions and in-depth interviewees typically answered '*je me débrouille*' (I manage). More specifically, they typically mentioned pursuing an education, engaging in petty commerce or agriculture, learning crafts and professions, 'hard work', and having courage and perseverance, as the personal stories below illustrate. While no specific mention was made of outright illegal and violent activities, there were several suggestions that this '*système D*' does include cutting corners and engaging in activities of questionable morality by Malian society's standards, such as being the facilitators and middlemen of schemes to defraud the government, influence peddling or prostitution. Indeed, there were several suggestions that following a moral code would be ill advised if one wants to succeed in 'today's Mali'.

### **3.4 Theme 4: Social outcomes**

In Mali's socio-economic environment as portrayed above, young men and women are socialized to 'get out there' and apply their God-given talent, and to reach deep into culturally reinforced values and norms of doggedness, perseverance, industriousness and economy in order to 'arrive'; to prosper so that they can support themselves; and to fulfil their moral/religious duties toward parents, relatives and the larger community. This is reinforced in modern Malian society, among others, by female *griots* (praise singers and social historians), for example, through an endless stream of popular songs praising successful self-made people, stressing their generosity and accomplishments, and encouraging youth to follow suit. Most young Malians, consciously or not, are influenced by this socio-cultural reality. Whether they succeed in emigrating or remain in the bustling urban centres, and whether they are ultimately successful or struggle endlessly, Mali's youth live out this

tradition. The following cases, captured in personal stories, illustrate this reality. These are the stories of young Malians whose itinerary is not atypical of most urbanized Malians. Most went to school and completed high school, some had a university degree, while others even had an internship after graduation. For example, Ngoin Happa (not her real name), who is 30, stated:

*After completing high school, I went on to train in administration and got a diploma in 1998, and had an internship in a variety of governmental agencies. I soon discovered that I did not have the connections some of my colleagues had to land a job after the internship. Tired of looking for a job in my specialty, I ended up calling on the financial support of my mother to first start a petty commerce business between Mali and neighbouring Senegal, before I settled down and opened a small public telephone business, while also selling cold drinks in the market of Bozola, one of the original neighbourhoods of Bamako. Soon the wireless revolution caught up with my business. I had to revert to transforming my phone business into a beauty salon and started braiding hair, although I had no training in this profession.*

Ngoin is clearly frustrated, continues to struggle, and resents the fact that after getting an education she still has to perform what she considers to be menial work in order to survive. She continues:

*To cope, I relied mainly on my immediate family, my mother in particular. I certainly did not receive any help from the government, just as scores like me. I know personally at least seven young men and women who, though educated, have not been able to work either. My strongest wish is for state authorities to stop discriminating again people like me who do not have connections.*

Ngoin can be considered an example of struggling young Malians who, with a professional diploma, have to rely on their own resourcefulness and family members to survive. One cannot escape the sense that she considers herself to have failed in her goals so far.

She certainly is not alone in this situation. The following is another example of the same syndrome:

*My name is Nyele Kamissoko [not her real name]. I hope that this personal testimony will help you understand better what we, the youth, experience here in Mali. I come from a poor family and was kicked out of high school because I was unable to make steady progress. I was unable to pay for an additional school year to be able to try my luck at a BT [a technical certificate of achievement]. Faced with immense needs, I had no choice but to try to get an unpaid internship where I had to pay even for transportation to and from work. After two months, I had to stop going because of lack of financial means. As a result, I have learned nothing since I quit high school, have no skill, and was utterly lost, but I had to survive, like my other girl friends. I was hired as a waitress in a restaurant for CFA francs 15,000 a month. That was the beginning of it all. Men who frequented the restaurant/bar started to give me tips and relations developed between some of them and me. Sometimes I went out with some of them and started to enjoy the easy money. Now it is hard for me to abandon this life of secret prostitution that we prudishly call the life of a free woman.*



*Despite all the adverse consequences such as AIDS and other STDs and the social stigma, it is hard for me to just stay there and do nothing, and to keep asking for help from my relatives. Hence, I have no choice but this temporary way of doing things.*

*I am looking for a dignified employment as a secretary. However, to get help from the APEJ, one needs a degree. I am looking for help to learn a profession or a craft such as sewing or to set up a bar, since I have a solid experience in this area. Everything I earn goes into social helping (of others), my cosmetics and health needs. I can hardly save.*

*Even if one is a militant of a political party, when the time comes to 'share the cake', one is forgotten, as they only think about their own brothers and sisters.*

*When will those decision makers take care of us? We have projects, but they are never funded. There is too much harassment in funding by the ANPE [the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment] and the APEJ or even with funding by credit unions. We, the single women, are not taken seriously anyway and are thought to be condemned to live like this.*

*I pray that one of the outcomes of this study will be another study to identify the causes of prostitution and a programme to support a real conversion of the single women into dignified women.*

Of course, young men experience the same sense of exclusion and vulnerability, particularly when, from their perspective, they have met their end of the bargain by achieving in the educational field and learning a profession, and have adopted all the right attitudes that their difficult environment requires. Zanke is another example.

*My name is Zanke Diarra [not his real name]. This request for personal testimony affords me the opportunity to narrate my painful experience, past and present. I would like to stress that my experience is by no means atypical or out of the ordinary. It pretty much reflects that of the majority of university graduates and professionally trained youth in my country. I hold a master's degree in law from the Ecole Nationale d'Administration. When I graduated, I was full of hope and ambition and dreamt of a brilliant legal career. I was astonished to discover how big the gap between obtaining the degree and getting a job was for a certain category of citizens. The scarcity of jobs and the absence of initiative on the part of decision makers impose on young graduate an absolute nightmare. I first interned (without pay) with a prestigious law office, before I had to quit under the duress of hardship and the need to survive. Then I decided to teach law in some professional schools. That lasted only two years because the owners of these schools managed to hold on to my salaries for months, exposing us to unprecedented hardship. In my desperation to find a job, I was hired by a commercial enterprise that produced pre-paid phone cards that they sold in turn through a well-functioning network that I was in charge of. After 18 months under the pressure of the competition, and for survival reasons, the owner decided to quit the business. After a few months of suffering, I was co-opted by an uncle of mine who was a consultant to a local venture. For the last few years we have been jointly carrying out consultancies as opportunities arise. I must say that this is a very precarious activity that offers no guarantee whatsoever of stability.*

*I have therefore decided to set up a real estate agency and to try my luck in land property speculation. I was able to collect enough funds to create a GIE [groupement d'intérêt économique]. However, I was never able to create real conditions for making it run because of lack of adequate funding.*

*In sum, one cannot avoid the reality that the youth have been forsaken. The meagre resources have been grabbed by a segment of the population. Unless they have an influential acquaintance in high places, the likelihood that youth will get a stable job is one in a hundred.*

Young Malians who did not obtain a higher education degree, but acquired professional skills also struggle and experience similar frustrations at the lack of a level playing field. Ngolo Traore is among them, and his frustration is palpable. He certainly seems to be among the rare exceptions who considered joining a 'rebel group'. The extent to which this is a serious consideration or the expression of extreme frustration is anyone's guess.

*My name is Ngolo Traore [not his real name]. I hold a CAP [Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle], electricity and commercial clerk option, which crowned the end of my studies. When I graduated, I had relatives who were in a position to help me. Hence, I was able to set up a public works company. At the beginning, things were great, and I had plenty of contracts. But, over the last 10 years I haven't had a single contract because of the politicization and the lack of transparency in the contracts-granting process. One has to be an active militant of the political parties that are in power to hope for a contract. But I have been disappointed by the behaviour of politicians, even disgusted by politics altogether. I am in a situation where my documents are no longer up to date and I am so indebted that I can't even meet the basic needs of my family. Imagine that from being a CEO [chief executive officer] of a company I am now reduced to being a mere team leader in a sub-contracting company, and then a supervisor of a work site. As I write this personal testimony, I have been out of work for two years running. I am even reduced to frankly dishonest behaviour since, sometimes, for a fee of CFA francs 150,000–200,000, I rearrange the wiring for some customers to drastically reduce their paid electricity consumption. Of course, this is dangerous, but I too have to survive. I do this only very rarely, because I have to know who I am dealing with to minimize the risk of being caught.*

*I have also thought about and initiated an aviculture project, which I financed with the hope that after this initial step the APEJ or ANPE or some other programme or NGO would lend me a hand, but none of that happened, and I failed in this endeavour too.*

*I consulted with traditional healers, people knowledgeable in esoteric sciences and secret societies to try and find out what the future holds for me, but their predictions did not come true. I no longer have hope and am now looking to join a rebel group if possible so that I can engage in any illicit activity that will help me to get out of my current situation. I too have the right to live and, like others, take advantage of life and pursue happiness on this earth. I hope that this personal testimony will help you in this study. Be aware that there are worse cases than mine. Our future has been very much compromised. Thank you.*

The same difficulties lead to identical frustrations for females who, after successful studies abroad, came home only to face the scarcity of jobs and of viable internships leading to gainful employment. This is the case of Cecilia, who is 30.

*My name is Cecilia Touré [not her real name]. I am a sociologist by training and graduated in 2005 from the University of the Orient in Santiago, Cuba. I hold a DEA [equivalent to a master's degree] in sociology since July 2005 and returned home in August 2005, and have been unemployed ever since. Since October 2005 to this day I have been an intern. This means that between October and December 2005 I spent three months as an intern at the National Direction for Social Development, then a one-year internship at the Administrative and Financial Direction of the Ministry of Social Development and Solidarity with Senior Citizens. I had a year of internship also at a venture to support rural communities at the Direction of Capacity Building. I have also been teaching social science research methods as an assistant to the sociology professor at the Institute of Economic and Social Development. In short, this has been my itinerary just for the period after I graduated from the university. Even after all these years of internship, research and experience, it is not easy to land a job. Youth in Mali are confronted with these problems after they have finished studying. And internships are not paid.*

*Of course, there are state agencies that are supposed to contribute to the promotion of youth employment, but I would say that these are simply political instruments that only exploit the youth, namely the APEJ, which gives one-year internships with a measly stipend. In addition, that internship year does not result in a hiring, which is entirely illegal since the law stipulates that the internship is for six months, renewable once, thus the obligation is to hire the intern. I personally never applied for anything with these agencies. I always volunteered on my own. With perseverance, things will work out for me.*

While many youth do experience the difficulties and frustration expressed in the personal stories recounted above and confirmed in focus groups and personal in-depth interviews, there are example of young Malian who have somehow managed to succeed in finding a niche. An example is Vakhoury Koné (not his real name). Vakhoury's story is that of a successful effort to overcome exclusion and vulnerability through perseverance and by getting an education while carrying out every necessary task and activity in order to 'arrive'.

*My name is Vakhoury Koné; I am 34. Without the connections needed to succeed, I stuck it out enough to carry on through difficult times. I took on menial jobs and managed to position myself as an intermediary in business transactions that were not altogether 'orthodox'. I just did what I had to do. I knew that I could not count on anybody out there. In the end, I managed to be hired by a local NGO with external connections located in the business district of Bamako. This was an entry-level, back-breaking position. I suffered, but persevered, always knowing that this is only a means to an end, i.e. succeeding in life so that I can help my parents. While working there, I also pursued a university degree and got it. I did it through self-sacrifice and*

*with the acute knowledge that I could count only on God and myself, since I do not have the connections that others have. In fact, I have seen some of the people I was struggling with get ahead because of their connections. In some cases, they were given funding for schemes that they did not even initiate, while the real authors of the projects were not only cheated out of their projects, but continued to struggle while someone else was making money on the ideas that they conceived.*

Vakhoury's is clearly the success story of an intelligent, self-confident and entrepreneurial young man. He is now poised to obtain another university degree and aspires some day to head a rural development agency. It is evident that he is among the large number of youths who start in the informal sector of the economy and are lucky enough to transition into the formal sector and earn a living still only dreamt about by the more typical category of Mali's youth.

In between, finally, are youth like Mboulou Chizla (not his real name). Mboulou, 37, is stereotypical of young, illiterate Malians who have to resort to commerce to earn a living:

*After struggling for many years, I set up a small shop to serve tea and coffee to the busy market dwellers, and slowly, with the financial help of relatives (mostly my brother), put grocery items on the shelves to have a combination of a tea/coffee shop and grocery store.*

Mboulou is the embodiment of the thrift that is also a cultural value for youth who want to succeed. He has an optimistic outlook on life and is more or less satisfied that things are going to work out for him, although he has received no help from the government. Mboulou expressed the sentiment of many young Malians when he stated, 'while the government has no obligation to help those who do not initiate or do anything, it should definitely help those who like me are striving to accomplish something. The government has not done anything for me.' However, Mboulou may not be very typical of young Malians when he asserts that he has no intention of migrating at all, for any reason, but is clearly sincere when he says that he is determined to remain where he is and continue to struggle. His optimistic outlook on where he and his country will be in five to ten years' time is more reflective of where most Malians seem to be, just as is his determination to continue to vote, although he admits to not being particularly politically inclined. While a certain optimism can be discerned even among the youth who were born in the northern part of Mali, but who, in large numbers now live in cities like Bamako, their level of frustration and even bitterness is unmistakable. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

### The issue of youth from northern Mali

During the research, a focus group was devoted to youth from northern Mali and their perceptions. Before examining some of the issues these youth are particularly concerned about, it is important to recall that northern Mali is home to Touareg, Moors (also called Arabs) and Songhai ethnic groups. The once nomadic, light-skinned Touareg and Moors are estimated to comprise 10 per cent of the population, while the more sedentary Songhai are estimated to make up 6 per cent of the population.<sup>18</sup> As already mentioned, in 1990 feelings of exclusion and marginalization exacerbated by recurrent droughts that severely affected their lifestyle and livelihood led to a rebellion by the Touareg and Moors. It must be noted that the Songhai did not take part in the rebellion, although they were affected and felt victimized by, and resented, rebel attacks. During the conflict, a vigilante militia named Ganda Koi carried out reprisal raids against the Moors and Touareg, and therefore became an actor in the conflict, although on the side of the Malian state. The conflict was resolved by a comprehensive peace agreement, which seems to have broken down in late 2007. So far, attacks on government installations are carried out mainly by disgruntled Touareg (some of whom were integrated into the Malian armed forces) who feel that the Malian government reneged on its obligations in the peace agreement.

The perspectives expressed by youth from the north should be understood in this context. There seems to be a consensus among them that the government does not do enough, if anything at all, for them. They highlighted that youth in the north have not benefitted from the same efforts that the government makes in other parts of Mali. One example they gave is the funding of small businesses set up by youth, or even the implementation of government-insured micro-finance schemes that are found in large numbers in cities like Bamako. The statement that 'the government simply refuses to give youth in the north any employment options' was repeated

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18 CIA (2007).

several times. Youth from the north were also quick to point out that this is really the source of the revolt of many of them against the state, which they consider to be completely insensitive to their peculiar situation. Several respondents took the same line as the one who stated,

*we are left to fend for ourselves. In the absence of training schools and because of the educational system that is completely broken, just about everyone in the north who is between 18 and 30 is either a mechanic or a driver. There are no other professions or skills that can be used there.*

This, they said, was illustrated by the fact that when a road was being built in the north between Gao and the state of Niger, local youth had to resort to violence and threats and disturb the road works before the state intervened to give priority for employment to local youth, as opposed to youth from other regions in Mali, who were brought to the north and given employment first. Northern youth also estimated that 20 per cent of youth who migrate to Bamako succeed in making it there, compared to 5 per cent of those who stay in Gao, for example. They pointed out, however, that what prevents any progress is that those 20 per cent have to take care of the 80 per cent who have no prospects. They also insisted, nevertheless, that the natural solidarity that exists among youth from the north helps them a great deal, as they are very quick to build a network to help those who are newly arrived or to share useful information with all 'northerners'. They insisted on the difficulties that they encounter in Bamako, particularly the discrimination that they feel victims of (particularly those who do not speak Bambara, the lingua of the capital) in the provision of state services. The sense of efficacy displayed by the youth who were interviewed is remarkable. They were optimistic and believed that things would work out for them in the end. All had voted in the previous elections and intended to vote in the next polls.

With regard to the ongoing rebellion, many of the northern youth dissociated themselves from it and felt angry about those who were part of it. They considered that its leaders and those who joined it were a bunch of 'lazy' people who were quick to take up arms because they refused to work and preferred handouts, and when these were not forthcoming, they put pressure on the state by disturbing the peace.

# Chapter 5

## Conclusions and recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

Despite commendable GDP per capita growth since the mid-1990s and a substantial reduction of poverty in recent years,<sup>19</sup> Mali remains a poor country with a fast-growing youth population, which is estimated to be 70 per cent of its 14 million people and is projected to peak in the next three to four decades. For cultural, political and historical reasons, the rhetoric of the importance of youth and its centrality in economic development efforts has always been part of the mobilizing language and agendas of Mali's successive (civilian and military) governments. The creation in 2003 of the APEJ and subsequent youth-focused programmes was another indication of how seriously President Touré took issues of youth employment, with youth being defined as people aged 15–40. Mali is also a democratizing country much touted for the progress it has made since it first engaged in democracy building in 1992.

YOVEX II-Mali provides indications that a poor country that is besieged by daunting economic development challenges and has a fast-growing youth population is not condemned to unrest and violence. The evidence gathered during YOVEX II, which consisted of a survey, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and personal stories in two regions of Mali, suggests that Mali's youth have a conception of youth that goes well beyond the age-based definition of youth used by international institutions, although chronological age does matter in their own perceptions of youth. The evidence also suggests that, as expected, Malian youth indeed find themselves in a situation that results in what the study has conceptualized as youth exclusion and vulnerability. This is due in part to the low capacity of the Malian state, but also because of poor management and policy decisions, both overall, and those pertaining to the APEJ in particular. Consequently, Mali's youth have very little faith in state policies and programmes targeting young

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19 World Bank (2009).

people to meet their needs. Personal testimonies and focus group discussion abundantly substantiated this assessment. This is particularly true for young Malians from the north of the country, where socio-economic conditions and a rekindled rebellion intensify the level of frustration against the Malian state, which is accused of ignoring the plight of people from the north, particularly the youth. However, the evidence also suggests that this alienation does not translate into an 'exit' strategy on the part of young people. In fact, Mali's youth seem to have tapped into their cultural resources and a sense of loyalty to the Malian society and state, as well as the relevant social structures and networks, to cope with this situation. They seem to have embraced the democratic process, and certainly its proxy in this study, voting, as a matter of civil and patriotic duty.

As coping mechanisms, Mali's youth have engaged in a variety of activities to sustain themselves, ranging from studying to engaging in agriculture and commerce in the informal sector, to any activity that will ensure that they will overcome hardship: a systematized '*systeme D*', in short. One of the conclusions that YOVEX II-Mali reaches is that, while Mali's youth are quite frustrated by their exclusion and vulnerability in the face of what they perceive as their government's ineffectiveness and corruption in addressing youth unemployment and other social ills, they have deliberately chosen a strategy of loyalty and voice rather than exit. To be sure, they do engage in a form of 'exit', in the sense that Mali continues to have a very high emigration rate, but the 'exit' strategy some have predicted in the form of violence and anti-social behaviour does not seem to have been adopted at all. Yet another conclusion of YOVEX II-Mali is that youth in Mali are in a situation that requires that a number of measures be taken to diffuse the extreme frustration that, nevertheless, exists, which has the potential of resulting in less benign forms of 'exit'. These, in some cases, are simple commonsense recommendation for action that may help in strengthening the options that Mali's youth seem already to favour.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The socio-economic challenges that face Mali's youth are not that different from those facing youth throughout West Africa and elsewhere on the continent. They are both structural and a matter of policy (formulation and implementation). The means to help the state and youth themselves face these challenges must, of necessity, address these two dimensions. To reduce youth vulnerability and exclusion and their potential hazards, structural changes to the economy in order to optimize the state's capacity must be combined with sound youth-targeted policies that are transparent, equally accessible to all eligible youth, and marked by the effective utilization of the scarce resources of the country. The need for a profound structural reorientation of Mali's



economy has been highlighted recently by the dramatic increase in food prices, particularly of food that is imported. For an essentially agrarian country, Mali still imports a large portion of the food needed by its population.

To develop a winning youth development strategy, youth in Mali must be conceptualized in two broad categories. There are rural youth, mostly uneducated, still tied to the primary sector of the economy, on the one hand, and a more urbanized, more or less educated, and more or less skilled group, on the other. It can be estimated that nearly 80 per cent of Mali's youth are still tied to the primary sector of the economy, yet agriculture, particularly food production, has never been a real priority, apart from the production of cotton for export. For urbanized youth, there seems also to be an unstated acceptance of the belief that the only growth sector in the economy must be the urban non-formal sector, where more youth vegetate in underemployment and low- to no-skill income-earning occupations. This simply has to change. Tackling youth unemployment and underemployment can be done firstly by creating jobs in all sectors of the economy, particularly agriculture and, more specifically, food production.

Secondly, Mali's government must be engaged in the direct creation of massive employment for youth through labour-intensive programmes and schemes. Of course, given the state's already limited capabilities, substantial external funding will have to be mobilized for this purpose. Given Mali's standing in the donor community, however, this should not be very difficult, if its government can demonstrate that it is ready for a dramatic improvement in the implementation of its youth policies. To target urban youth, Mali's authorities must most certainly put in place fiscal and other incentive-based policies to help in the training and employment of the untrained and unemployed youth. After all, this is possibly the most threatening segment of youth who feel excluded and vulnerable. Certainly, the APEJ and comparable initiatives have been doing some of this, although in a non-transparent manner and in ways that favour only the children of the elite and well-connected individuals. This must come to an end. Mechanisms of control selected and approved by youth themselves must be set up to oversee and monitor the implementation of policies that in themselves may be very good, but are corrupted during their application. However, arguably the most far-reaching reform that the Malian government must carry out has to be the radical reform of the country's educational system, which has proven to be ineffective in training the type of labour force that Mali really needs. Professional training must be connected to the needs of Mali's economy, but also to a rational projection of what skills the economy will need, and must no longer be a haphazard training of young people who will be unable to use their skills now, and will end up never using them in the future either.

A reformed educational system must create solid and meaningful linkages between schools and the workplace so as to first of all provide the appropriate training for those who continue their education as far as they are able to. But also, critically, such an educational system must be geared toward creating opportunities for those who leave school early to acquire the skills that they need for employment in the appropriate areas of the economy best suited to their interests, aptitudes and abilities. Of course, given the sheer numbers of rural youth, the government of Mali must put in place programmes that orient investments toward food production, environmental protection activities and ventures that aim, among other things, to keep youth in rural areas occupied and gainfully employed. Possibly most important of all the measures that the government must take is to make a commitment to cultivating and implementing faithfully and firmly a sense of fairness and transparency in the implementation of youth employment policies. This will be indispensable to building confidence in its activities and lessening the widespread feeling of youth exclusion. This will be essential to ensuring that potential donors are confident that the government is serious about addressing the overwhelmingly negative perception of its actions by Mali's youth.

Finally, Mali's youth problems are not extraordinary; indeed, they are widely shared with other countries of the sub-region in both their structural and policy dimensions. Furthermore, the mobility of youth across the ECOWAS space requires that these states recognize not only the socio-economic implication of this mobility, but, critically, acknowledge its security implications as well. While youth policies must grow out of the realities of a given country, it is necessary that there is concerted co-ordination of youth policies and that youth issues are taken seriously at the level of the ECOWAS Commission and other ECOWAS organs. Since different documents define youth differently even in Mali, one place to start is to co-ordinate regional definitions of youth and to strengthen youth-focused forums so that youth issues can be put on the front burner of the regional organization. Such issues are inextricably linked to the security issues that so alarm the ECOWAS community.

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# Appendix 1

## Country data: Mali

Independent since 22 September 1960 after decades of French colonial domination, the Republic of Mali is heir to rich and powerful kingdoms and empires (i.e. Mali and its successor, Songhai), and a nation of ancient traditions and rich cultural heritage. Indeed, at the height of its power in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Mali empire was possibly one of the richest at the time, if the pomp and holdings in gold of the emperor were any indication. Today, while still culturally rich and eminently proud of this heritage, Mali is considered to be one of the poorest countries in the world. It has consistently been among the four or five lowest ranking countries on the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) scale. In 2005 Mali was 173<sup>rd</sup> out of the 177 countries ranked, with an HDI value of 0.380 (the lowest being Sierra Leone's 0.336).<sup>20</sup> This extreme poverty certainly did not prevent it from sustaining one of the most promising democratic experiments in West Africa. The following quantitative data provides disquieting evidence of Mali's predicament and is meant to present the background needed to better understand the socio-economic context of youth exclusion, vulnerability and resilience in the country. It must be noted that, as for many sub-Saharan African countries, reliable and authoritative statistical data for Mali is scarce, and may not be very accurate when available. This is particularly true for youth-related data.

From independence until 1968, when the military led by Lieutenant Moussa Traoré took power, a one-party regime, US-RDA, led by Modibo Keita pursued resolutely socialist domestic economic and social policies and Eastern bloc-friendly foreign policies. The collectivist economic policies started to slowly alienate vast segments of the embryonic commercial and bureaucratic petty bourgeois class, amid increasingly authoritarian and repressive politics. At the same time, an ideologically mobilized, newly urbanized youth wing of the party, the *milice populaire*, became increasingly intrusive and omnipotent. As in other African countries under military rule,

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20 UNDP (2008).

the socio-economic situation went from bad to worse, with corruption and mismanagement rapidly becoming the rule. The recurring droughts in the 1970s only exacerbated the harsh living conditions of the population, nearly 90 per cent of which still lived in rural areas. Nomadic northern populations facing a rapidly expanding desert that led to the loss of their lifestyle suffered the most. The military regime became increasingly repressive in response to protest movements led by students and underground urban middle-class intellectuals. Meanwhile, hoping to legitimize its rule, the US-RDA created another single party, the Union Démocratique du Peuple Malien, in 1979. This was merely another all-too-familiar attempt to channel and control youth protest and radicalism in the face of worsening economic conditions that led to a massive emigration movement of young Malians. They first flocked to the cities. There they saw no prospects other than swelling the ranks of the unemployed or the underemployed in the informal sector, and many of them resolved to emigrate to France, Spain or Libya or to other sub-Saharan African countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Angola or the Congos. In 2007 Mali had a net migration rate of -6.8 migrants for each one thousand people.<sup>21</sup>

Mali's population is made up of several ethnic groups, the largest being the Bambara (Bamana more properly). Ninety per cent of Malians are Muslim, while Christians make up about 2 per cent, and the rest follow indigenous religions. Nearly 80 per cent of Malians earn a living from agriculture or related activities. While other minerals such as phosphates, gypsum and salt are produced, cotton and gold are Mali's main export products. As in other African countries, the economic hardships of the 1980s and suffocating single-party rule and a militarized regime and society led increasingly to violent clashes between a regime desperate to stay in power and frustrated and radicalized urban dwellers. A major political and social crisis ensued, during which hundreds of protesters were killed by troops. Only a 1991 military coup led by Colonel Amadou Toumany Touré, the commander of the paratrooper company of Kati near Bamako, and supported by civilian opponents of the Traoré regime ended the crisis. Even harsher economic conditions prevailed in the desert north, where elements of the nomadic Touareg populations started an armed rebellion. A coalition of reform-minded military officers and a determined civil society and fledgling political parties steered the country through an orderly transition and a comprehensive peace agreement, ushering in the current, much-touted, democratic system in 1992.

A civilian, Alpha Oumar Konaré, was elected president, and left power after two terms. In 2002 Touré, now a retired general, was elected president, and was re-elected in 2007 for a final term. While a certain political stability has obtained since 1992, Mali's economic predicament, i.e. widespread

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21 CIA (2007).

poverty, unfavourable environmental conditions and limited endowment in natural resources, continued to affect the life chances of its population, the youth in particular, and constrain its economic development options. Malians and other West Africans whose countries use the CFA franc, a currency at the time pegged to the French franc, were hit very hard by a 50 per cent devaluation in 1994, which devastated their economies. However, it is worth mentioning that government policies whose design and implementation was still characterized by poor stewardship of the economy, widespread mismanagement, corruption and nepotism have not helped either. According to World Bank data, however, in recent years a remarkable growth in GDP (a healthy 5 per cent per annum since 1994) enabled an average annual increase of 4 per cent of the per capita GNI from USD 240 in 1994 to USD 380 in 2005,<sup>22</sup> although 72.1 per cent of Malians lived on USD 2 or less a day in 2001.<sup>23</sup> In 2005 Mali benefitted from a very welcome relief of 100 per cent of its multilateral debt.

Mali's population is very young, with a median age of only 15.9 years in 2007; it also has a high population growth rate of 2.68 per cent, and a life expectancy of 49 years.<sup>24</sup> According to certain estimates, about 77 per cent of Malians are less than 35 years of age. Mali defines 'youth' as those aged 15–40. When he came back to power through free and fair elections as an independent candidate, Touré promised to make youth employment the centerpiece of his governmental programme, and by law No. 03-31 AN/RM dated 25 August 2003 set up the APEJ. He also created a fund to help it carry out its mission, the Fond National pour L'Emploi des Jeunes, and endowed it with USD 35 million. The APEJ is mandated with carrying out a variety of activities aimed at preparing youth for employment and finding jobs for them in an increasingly challenging environment where the economic 'dividends of democracy' are yet to materialize. It is also worth mentioning that France, one of the main targets of Malian migration, has entered a variety of partnerships and agreements with Mali's government to offer aid for programmes aimed at keeping young Malians at home or ensuring the reinsertion of those who return (either voluntarily or following their increasingly frequent deportation).

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22 World Bank (2006).

23 World Bank (2008).

24 CIA (2007).

**Table 1: Republic of Mali: Key indicators**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Sources</b>
<b>Demographic indicators</b>	
Estimates are that about 77% of Malians are 35 years old or younger. No statistic for the 15–40 segment of the population could be found. <i>Youth as a proportion of total population:</i> 0–14 years: 48.2% 15–64 years: 48.8% <i>Number of people under 18:</i> 6,528,000	Various secondary sources Web sources World Bank data
<i>Gender divide of population:</i> Males: 5,962,709 Females: 6,032,693	CIA (2007)
<i>Total population:</i> 11,995,402 This and other items of demographic data are estimates for 2007. Statistics do not include people aged 65 and over.	CIA (2007)
<i>Urban/rural population:</i> In 2005, 31% of Malians lived in urban areas and 69% in rural areas. The rate of annual growth of the urban population between 1990 and 2005 was 4.7%.	World Bank (2008)
<b>Economic indicators</b>	
<i>GDP per capita:</i> USD 1,033 (2005)	World Bank (2007) UNDP (2008)
<i>Per capita GNI:</i> USD 380 (2005) USD 440 (2006)	World Bank (2008) UNICEF (n.d.a)
<i>GNI:</i> USD 5.2 billion	World Bank (2008)
<i>Employment, formal and informal:</i> In 2002, the informal sector's proportion of Mali's economy was about 45% and in 1996 it was about 90%.	Verick (2002)
<i>Structure of the secondary economy (2001 est.):</i> Agriculture: 45% Manufacturing: 17% Services: 38%	CIA (2007)
<b>Social indicators</b>	
<i>Literacy:</i> Adult literacy, 15 years of age and over: 76% (2004) Female literacy as % of male literacy: 48.6%	UNDP (2008)
<i>School attendance:</i> Primary school: 39% Secondary school: 12.9%	UNICEF (n.d.b)
<i>Health:</i> HIV prevalence rates: 1.7%	UNDP (2008)
<i>Religion and the state:</i> Mali is a secular republic that insists on the secular nature of the state.	Constitution, art. 25



Indicators	Sources
<p><i>Religious affiliation:</i> Muslim: 90% Christian: 1% Indigenous religions: 9%</p>	CIA (2007)
<b>Political indicators</b>	
<p><i>Regime type:</i> Mali has been a pluralist democracy since 1992. It has managed to remain open and tolerant.</p>	
<p><i>Political rights and civil liberties:</i> Mali is categorized as free by Freedom House.</p>	Freedom House (2007)
<p><i>Number of political parties:</i> The political system is open in Mali and the country has numerous political parties (more than 20). These operate freely.</p>	Personal observation; secondary sources
<p><i>Voting age:</i> 18</p>	
<b>Security indicators</b>	
<p><i>State fragility levels:</i> The state has low capacity, but because of its authoritarian past has been able to impose itself on the collective consciousness of Malians. It is not fragile or threatened with collapse, although is currently challenged by the rebellion in the north.</p>	
<p><i>Child soldiers and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR):</i> There are no reports of child soldiers in the rebellion in the north. The first rebellion ended with an agreement that had DDR provisions.</p>	
<p><i>Conflict levels:</i> There is currently (May 2008) an ongoing rebellion in the north that seems to have intensified.</p>	
<p><i>Number of wars and peace agreements signed:</i> Since 1990 Mali has experience two rebellions. A comprehensive peace agreement was signed in 1992. Since then, 2–3 ceasefire accords have been signed, the latest in 2008.</p>	
<p><i>Number of identifiable active armed groups:</i> There is currently one identifiable armed group, the Eg Bahanga group.</p>	
<b>Media indicators</b>	
<p><i>Major national daily newspapers:</i> <i>Les Échos,</i> <i>l'Éssor,</i> <i>Info Matin,</i> <i>Le Républicain</i></p>	Engelbert (2008) CIA (2007)
<p><i>Press freedom:</i> Freedom House considers that Mali's press enjoys full freedom.</p>	Freedom House (2007)

# Appendix 2

## Programme Emploi – Jeunes (PEJ) policy document

MINISTERE DU TRAVAIL ET DE  
LA FONCTION PUBLIQUE

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MINISTERE DELEGUE CHARGE DE L'EMPLOI  
ET DE LA FORMATION PROFESSIONNELLE  
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REPUBLIQUE DU MALI  
Un Peuple – Un But – Une Foi  
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# PROGRAMME EMPLOI – JEUNES (PEJ)

## DOCUMENT - CADRE

Mai 2003

## 11. INDICATEURS DU PEJ

Des indicateurs ont été identifiés pour pouvoir évaluer le PEJ à mi-parcours et au terme de son exécution. Ces indicateurs seront désagrégés par sexe.

Objectifs	Indicateurs
<p><b>Objectif global:</b> Contribuer au développement économique du Mali en offrant aux jeunes (hommes et femmes) le maximum de possibilités d'emploi, tant dans le domaine de l'emploi salarié que de l'emploi indépendant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nombre de candidats inscrits au PEJ;</li> <li>▪ Nombre de jeunes formés;</li> <li>▪ Nombres d'emplois créés.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objectif spécifique 1:</b> Renforcer l'employabilité des jeunes par l'apprentissage et les stages de qualification.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nombre de demandes reçues.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de jeunes ayant reçu des formations en apprentissage.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de jeunes admis en stages de qualification professionnelle.</li> <li>▪ Nombre d'entreprises impliquées.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de centres de formation impliqués.</li> <li>▪ Nombre d'actions de formation.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de domaines de formation identifiés.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de jeunes ayant obtenu un emploi temporaire.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de jeunes ayant obtenu un emploi permanent.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de jeunes femmes bénéficiaires.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objectif spécifique 2:</b> Développer l'entrepreneuriat des jeunes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nombre de jeunes formés en création d'entreprise.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de jeunes formés en gestion d'entreprise.</li> <li>▪ Nombre d'études de faisabilité réalisées.</li> <li>▪ Nombre d'actions de formation.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de réseaux de jeunes créateurs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objectif spécifique 3:</b> Faciliter l'accès des jeunes ruraux au marché du travail à travers les travaux à haute intensité de main-d'oeuvre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nombre d'hectares de périmètres irrigués à l'ON et à l'ORS.</li> <li>▪ Nombre d'hectares de périmètres irrigués par micro-barrages ou aménagement de bas-fonds.</li> <li>▪ Nombre d'hectares reboisés, de forêts classées et villageoises aménagées.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de kilomètres de brise-vent aménagés.</li> <li>▪ Nombre d'hectares reboisés pour la protection.</li> <li>▪ Nombre d'ouvrages de lutte contre l'érosion construits.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de kilomètres de pistes communales réhabilitées.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de kilomètres de pistes de production réhabilitées.</li> <li>▪ Taux de financement de l'entretien courant par les communes et les usagers.</li> <li>▪ Nombre d'ingénieurs et de techniciens supérieurs de génie rural formés.</li> </ul>

Objectifs	Indicateurs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nombre de cadres techniques (ingénieurs et techniciens supérieurs) des bureaux d'études et des agences de maîtrise d'ouvrage délégué formés.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de cadres gérants et de chefs de chantier/chefs d'équipe des PME formés.</li> <li>▪ Nombre d'associations dont les membres ont été formé</li> <li>▪ Nombre d'élus et agents communaux formés.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de chefs cantonniers/tâcherons formés.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de femmes et de jeunes ruraux et d'agents de la DNCN formés.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objectif spécifique 4:</b> Faciliter l'accès des jeunes au crédit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nombre de projets soumis au financement</li> <li>▪ Nombre de projets financés.</li> <li>▪ Nombre d'entreprises créées.</li> <li>▪ Nombre d'emplois générés par les entreprises créées.</li> <li>▪ Montant du crédit accordé.</li> <li>▪ Montant de l'apport des jeunes.</li> <li>▪ Taux de remboursement du crédit.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de crédits en souffrance.</li> <li>▪ Nombre de projets garantis.</li> <li>▪ Montant de la garantie accordée.</li> <li>▪ Montant de la garantie mobilisée.</li> </ul>

## 12. SOURCES ET MOYENS DE VERIFICATION

- Les rapports d'activités des agences d'exécution des structures d'accueil privées et gouvernementales ou de la société civile;
- Le nombre de contrats de prestation avec les structures d'accueil;
- Les protocoles signés avec les différents partenaires;
- Les rapports gouvernementaux;
- Les rapports de suivi trimestriels semestriels et à mi-parcours;
- Les Statistiques sur les populations;
- Le rapport d'évaluation de la première phase.

## 13. CONDITIONS DE REUSSITE DU PEJ

Les conditions de réussite se situent à plusieurs niveaux:

- **Etat/Gouvernement:**
  - Information Education et Sensibilisation;
  - Plaidoyer pour la mobilisation de ressources;
  - Bonne coordination des actions;
  - Suivi rapproché et rigoureux des activités;
  - Adoption de mesures incitatives (fiscales, appui institutionnel);

- Relecture de l'Ordonnance n°92-022/P-CTSP du 13 avril 1992 et de son Décret d'application portant sur les stages de qualification professionnelle;
- Bonne gouvernance.
- **Agences d'exécution:**
  - Disponibilité des fonds;
  - Collaboration avec les partenaires;
  - Signature des protocoles et conventions d'exécution;
  - Respect des engagements par les acteurs.
- **Structures d'accueil:**
  - Adhésion au PEJ;
  - Disponibilité à fournir l'assistance nécessaire;
  - Signature des contrats;
  - Respect des engagements par les acteurs.
- **Bénéficiaires:**
  - Adhésion au PEJ;
  - Respect des engagements par les acteurs.

#### 14. MESURES D'ACCOMPAGNEMENT

Des mesures d'accompagnement sont nécessaires pour la réussite du PEJ:

- Allègement des charges fiscales des entreprises ou structures d'accueil des jeunes stagiaires;
- Appui aux jeunes pour la création de réseaux d'entreprises afin de faciliter l'écoulement des produits et minimiser certaines charges liées à l'activité;
- Elaboration et mise en œuvre d'un plan de communication efficace.