



CLIMATE-FRAGILITY RISK FACTSHEET

MALI

The majority of Mali's regions are currently **affected by violent conflict**. While attention is currently focused on violent conflict in Mali's north and centre, the south of the country also sees worrying levels of tension, which sometimes flares up into violence. At the same time, Mali's climate is changing. It is already experiencing increasing temperatures and significant inter-annual and decadal rainfall variability, leading to **repeated droughts, floods, strong winds, and bush fires**. **Conflict and climate change are combining to affect livelihoods and put resilience under strain.**

5 CLIMATE FRAGILITY RISKS

Five critical pathways that link climate change to fragility in Mali are:

1 Risk 1: Rent-seeking behaviour negatively affects environmental degradation and conflict dynamics.

Rent-seeking and corrupt behaviour negatively affects livelihoods, environmental degradation and conflict. **Nepotism and corruption**, along with the unequal generational and gendered distribution of power, have eroded state institutions and reduced the legitimacy and influence of local leaders and justice mechanisms. This behaviour has meant **land-use conflicts remain unresolved and adjudicated**.

2 Risk 2: Conflict-insensitive climate and environmental action increases grievances.

Established to enforce conservation of natural resources and stop desertification, the paramilitary Forest Service takes **heavy-handed and rent seeking approaches** that threaten people's livelihoods and reduce their capacity to cope with external shocks. **Militarised conservation efforts create new conflict dynamics and can inflame violence**. Indeed, if not designed in conflict-sensitive ways, development policies aimed at making resources available and alleviating climate change impacts can actually create or exacerbate conflict dynamics.

3 Risk 3: Migration is both a resilience strategy and source of tension

Migration is a way of life for many and a **key factor in individual, family and community resilience**. Historical migration patterns are being replaced by a more permanent southward and urban shift, a trend that may intensify if extreme climate events increase in frequency. These migrations **have a major impact on societal structures**, transforming local economies, leading to more women heading households, and changing historical receptiveness to migrants.

4 Risk 4 Conflicts over natural resources are likely to increase.

Climate change and conflict reduce the availability of safe and productive land and water resources. Population growth, migration, and climate change increase pressure on and **competition over natural resources**. Related **conflicts** take place **within and between communities** that follow the same livelihoods and **between groups engaged predominantly in farming, fishing and pastoralism**. Government policy and practice has reduced pastoralists' access to land and water by privileging agricultural development and has played a significant role in these conflict dynamics.

5 Risk 5: Climate change and conflict both undermine livelihoods and social cohesion

Climate change and extreme weather events can undermine livelihoods by reducing agricultural yields and the suitability of grazing land, affecting ground and surface water, and destroying crops, livestock and homes, e.g. due to flooding. At the same time, **conflict reduces climate change resilience** by disrupting markets, limiting livelihood options, reducing financial savings, restricting movement, and affecting food security. Climate security affects women - who are denied access to land, equitable participation in markets, accumulation of assets, and the opportunity to build social networks - differently from men. **Reduced livelihoods and social cohesion drive cycles of conflict and environmental degradation further.**

CLIMATE CONTEXT

Mali is climactically diverse, from the arid Sahara of the north to the semi-arid Sahel and seasonally flooded Niger delta of the centre and the southern humid savannahs. It is already experiencing the impacts of climate change. Northern Mali sees the greatest temperature variation, while average rainfall increases as one moves south.

Climate change is projected to affect the region in a number of ways, including:



Temperate increase ranging from 1.2 °C to 3.6 °C by 2060



Significant and increasing inter-annual rainfall variability



Increased evapo-transpiration, reducing total water available



Drought, heavy rainfall, and floods becoming more frequent and intense



Average annual temperatures in Mali increased by 1.2°C between 1960 and 2015. Significant inter-annual and decadal rainfall variability means Mali regularly experiences droughts and floods, sometimes within the same year.

5 ENTRY POINTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE FRAGILITY RISKS

Climate change and conflict in Mali further compound each other and impact communities in a **self-reinforcing feedback loop**. Other factors such as the high poverty rate, slow economic development, dependence on rain-fed agriculture, and environmental degradation exacerbate climate-security risks. Other aspects include unequal gender power relations, intra- and inter-group inequality, reduced social cohesion, a history of violence, weak governance, and ineffective and unjust conflict and natural resource management.

Those with resources and power can better respond, adapt and prepare for future climate events and variability. Yet inequality within households and communities, between communities, and across the nation means **resources are unevenly distributed**. **Gender inequalities** in particular reduce the resilience of women and girls. Resulting rising inequality may, in itself, become a source of grievance. There is already a **high degree of vertical and horizontal inequality**, with some having accumulated immense wealth while millions are affected by structural malnutrition. People increasingly perceive that their poverty is the result of social injustice rather than natural disaster.

Given the climate variability predicted for Mali, the emphasis needs to be on policies and programmes that address climate security risks in a way that works for the future as well as the present:

- 1 **Conduct an integrated climate security assessment** to build understanding of climate change and conflict dynamics in the whole country and how they vary between regions.
- 2 **Build inclusiveness, accountability and responsiveness of state institutions** including the defence and security forces, particularly in northern and central Mali.
- 3 **Reduce gender and other inequalities** among populations vulnerable to climate change to ensure equity and mitigate conflict risk.
- 4 **Build climate security resilience in southern Mali** to mitigate the spread of violence.
- 5 **Build climate security more thoroughly into the UN's mandate** in Mali for increased effectiveness.

Yet **climate change does not drive violence in and of itself**. It should not be used to evade responsibility for other conflict drivers, to justify increased securitisation in anticipation of rising climate-related insecurity, or to criminalise a generation of young people believed to be more vulnerable to criminality, violence and AOG recruitment due to climate change's impact on their livelihoods.

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SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTS

- Major livelihoods include farming, fishing, pastoralism and trade.
- Populations have adapted to variability, including through migration, livelihood diversification and involvement in the illicit trade.
- Resilience is uneven, with those subjected to political and economic marginalisation, including women and girls, less able to adapt to, recover from and prepare for environmental and climate shocks.

POLITICS & SECURITY

Conflict dynamics overlay weak governance, corruption and extortion, vertical and horizontal inequalities, gendered power relations, social exclusion and marginalisation, entrenched poverty, food insecurity, human rights violations, inadequate basic services, and underdevelopment. These realities exacerbate pre-existing tensions within and between communities, between generations, and between the citizen and state. They have led to a normalisation of violence, increase in criminality and heightened insecurity, with differential impacts depending on age, gender, disability, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.

FURTHER READING

- Nagarajan, Chitra (2020). Climate-Fragility Risk Brief: Mali (full version).

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