

MALI

Fragile transition begins amid rising conflict



KEY FACTS

Population: **20.3 million**

7.1 million people in need of humanitarian aid

757,000 facing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+)

287,500 people internally displaced

140,000 Malian refugees in Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso

147th (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

159th (of 167 countries) for women's equality

169th (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

4/5 score for severity of access constraints

45% of funding received for 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan

Above: Families at a compound in Sirakoro, southwest Mali share their experiences of surviving displacement and disaster.

PROBABILITY

6 HUMAN THREAT

5 NATURAL THREAT

IMPACT

7 CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

8 EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

Rising violence in central and northern Mali is the key reason Mali features on Watchlist since it is driving up needs and all too frequently affecting humanitarian action.

Mali has faced persistent insecurity since 2011. Conflict activity has grown rapidly in the north from 2012, in central areas since 2015/2016, and over the last two years increasingly in the south. Adding to the unstable situation, members of the armed forces ousted President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in August 2020. Mali may see uncertainty and risk of instability over the coming year as 2021 represents a critical transitional period for the country until elections due in early 2022. This transition will be further strained by COVID-19 and its wider economic harm.

“In Mali, the IRC is operating in an increasingly complex security and humanitarian environment. With many areas under the control of armed groups and militias, the international community must prioritize long-term humanitarian and emergency programming in line with international humanitarian principles. The most vulnerable within displaced communities including women and children must be protected from violence, harm and malnutrition. We must also focus on strengthening the resilience of affected communities by implementing livelihood programs and ensure unfettered humanitarian access to education, water, sanitation and hygiene.”

- Amadou Guindo
Field Coordinator, IRC Mali



HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **Conflict continues to escalate rapidly across the country.** Key players in the violence include both militant groups and militias formed along communal lines. 12.9 million people - nearly 70% of the population - are affected by the crisis ([OCHA](#)). The escalating conflict has left nearly 290,000 people displaced within Mali, double the figure recorded in early 2019, and food insecurity is steadily rising ([OCHA](#)). Nearly all of the border zone with Burkina Faso and Niger is now experiencing Crisis (IPC 3) levels of food insecurity ([ECHO](#)). Violence has also spread to the center of the country and increasingly the south as well. The central Mopti region is the worst affected, seeing high levels of both militant and communal violence, which have left the area with the most significant humanitarian needs in the country ([OCHA](#)).
- ▶ **Humanitarians' ability to meet rising needs is increasingly hampered by access constraints, particularly threats to their safety.** Since the start of 2019, more aid workers have been reported kidnapped in Mali (37) than any other country in the world ([Aid Worker Security Database](#)). Violence against aid workers is one of the key factors that has led [ACAPS](#) to rank humanitarian access constraints in Mali as "very high." The existence of multiple armed forces in Mali - the Malian Armed Forces, France's Operation Barkhane, the UN's Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the G5 Sahel cross-border joint force (made up of troops from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) - further complicates already weak civil-military coordination. Moreover, some of these armed forces engage in "quick impact projects" in health, education and/or water and sanitary health. The focus on military-led initiatives can lead to confusion between humanitarian and military actors and exacerbate suspicion of humanitarian activities on all sides.
- ▶ **The political situation is highly uncertain.** The ousting of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta in August 2020 by members of the military means that 2021 will likely be dominated by campaigning and positioning by different political factions ahead of promised elections in early 2022. This could be a factor that compounds insecurity and hampers the government's ability to address Mali's long-standing economic challenges, which have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. The new government will also be challenged to make any progress on reinvigorating or expanding political agreements given the strains of rising conflict and COVID-19. Even before these new pressures, a 2015 localized peace deal between the government and armed groups in the North stalled early on and was never fully implemented.
- ▶ **COVID-19 and climate crises are compounding needs.** Mali is highly vulnerable to climate change, as evidenced by regular flooding and droughts, which has strained natural resources, damaged crops and increased the risks of diseases. 1.2 million people are at risk of water-borne epidemic diseases. COVID-19's wider impacts on livelihoods, protection, food insecurity and nutrition are now pushing already vulnerable households and communities to the brink. Limited social services make it difficult for Malians to recover from each crisis. This is particularly true for those displaced or living in conflict-affected areas, where nearly a quarter of health facilities are offline and basic services are even more limited.

THE IRC IN MALI

The IRC supports vulnerable households and people displaced by conflict by providing emergency relief, clean drinking water, healthcare services and other life-saving assistance. The IRC also supports local communities through village savings and loan associations and income-generating activities, particularly for women. We support children and parents with psychosocial support to help them heal from trauma. Learn more about the [IRC's Mali response](#).

