

# Mali

## MIGRATION PROFILE

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*Study on Migration Routes  
in West and Central Africa*



*October 2017*



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# 1. Introduction

Mali is a West African country with a surface of 1.240 million sq km, and it is bordered with seven nations. Specifically, it shares its southern border with Niger, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea, its western border with Senegal and Mauritania, and its northern border with Algeria. The estimated population of Mali is 17.9 million; the population is considered to be mainly living in the south, along the border with Burkina Faso (CIA, 2017). With a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.442, Mali is ranked 175 out of 188 countries, indicating that it is one of the least developed countries worldwide (UNDP, 2016). Nevertheless, Mali is one of the richest countries



Source: CIA, 2017.

in West Africa; in 2016, Mali had an estimated GDP per capita of 2,177 PPP \$ (World Bank, 2017). In 2015, the unemployment rate was 8.5 per cent, while youth unemployment rate was 10.7 per cent (UNDP, 2016).

**Table 1: Mali Key Demographic and Development Indicators**

Indicator	Mali
Total area, in sq km <sup>a</sup>	1,240,192
Population (2015), in million <sup>a</sup>	17.885
Urban Population (2015), % of total <sup>a</sup>	39.9
Population Growth Rate, annual % <sup>b</sup>	3.0
Ethnic Groups <sup>a</sup>	Bambara 34.1%, Fulani (Peul) 14.7%, Sarakole 10.8%, Senufo 10.5%, Dogon 8.9%, Malinke 8.7%, Other 12.2%
Human Development Index (2015), country rank out of 188 <sup>c</sup>	0.442 175
GDP Based on PPP per Capita (2016), current international dollars per capita <sup>b</sup>	2,177.2
Life Expectancy at Birth (2015), years <sup>b</sup>	58.5
Unemployment (2015), % of labour force <sup>c</sup>	8.5
Youth Unemployment (2015), % ages 15-24 <sup>c</sup>	10.7
Multidimensional Poverty Headcount (2013), % <sup>c</sup>	78.4
Gini Coefficient (2010-2015) <sup>c</sup>	33.0
Foreign Direct Investment (net inflows, 2015), current USD millions <sup>b</sup>	152.941
Net Official Development Assistance Received (2015), current USD millions <sup>b</sup>	1,200.45

<sup>a</sup> CIA, 2017; <sup>b</sup> World Bank, 2017; <sup>c</sup> UNDP, 2016.

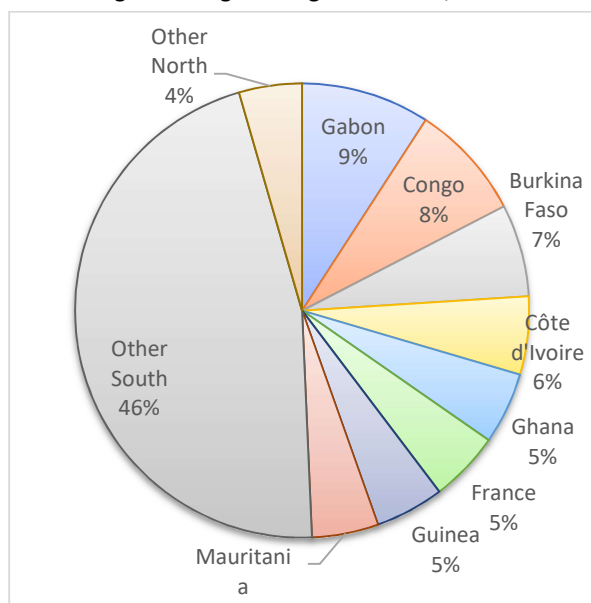
Regarding population movements, Mali has always been a country of emigration and transit; it is also a country of immigration, though to a lesser extent. People emigrate from Mali for a variety of reasons, including a culture of migration that is well rooted in the Malian heritage. Migration is promoted as a rite of passage for young men, but it is also an important livelihood strategy as circular and seasonal migration are very important for Malian nomadic pastoral groups (Merkle, Reinold, & Siegel, 2017; IOM, 2014a; IOM, 2013; CARIM, 2010; ICMPD, 2010). Among other factors of Malian emigration are political instability, lack of economic opportunities, droughts, desertification, and demographic pressures in the form of high population growth (ICMPD, 2010). In 2015, the stock of Malians emigrants was estimated to be slightly higher than one million, with 90 per cent living in Africa and 10 per cent in developed countries (UN DESA, 2015a)<sup>1</sup>. As illustrated in Figure 2, the biggest share of Malian emigrants lives in Cote d'Ivoire (35%), followed by Nigeria (16%), Niger (8%), and France (8%) (UN DESA, 2015a).

Even though the history of Mali has long been characterised by violent conflicts and coups d'état, these circumstances only recently became a major push factor for Malian migration (Merkle, Reinold, & Siegel, 2017; IOM, 2013). Specifically, the armed rebellion in Northern Mali and the coup d'état of 2012 caused major displacement of people both inside and outside Mali (Merkle, Reinold, & Siegel, 2017; IOM, 2013). Currently, the number of Malian refugees is around 140 thousand, while the estimated number of IDPs is 55 thousand (UNHCR, 2017a). Since 2000, Mali has also become an important transit country for migrants trying to reach North Africa and, to a lesser extent, Europe (IOM, 2015; IOM, 2013; CARIM, 2010; ICMPD, 2010). In this regard, the city of Gao has become an important centre for irregular migration and a prominent hub for smuggling and trafficking activities (Merkle, Reinold, & Siegel, 2017; IOM, 2013). It is estimated that each month around 900 irregular migrants pass through the city on their way north (Merkle, Reinold, & Siegel, 2017). However, it is important to consider that Mali is an ECOWAS member; therefore, much of the irregular migration that takes place in Mali is actually regular, only becoming irregular when migrants cross the border with Algeria or Libya (Merkle, Reinold, & Siegel, 2017; IOM, 2013).

The stock of immigrant population in Mali is 363,145, with 90 per cent coming from developing regions and 9 per cent from developed countries. Interestingly, 5% of the immigrant population in Mali comes from France (UNDESA, 2015a). There are strong colonial ties between the two countries, and the official language in Mali is French (Merkle, Reinold, & Siegel, 2017). Nonetheless, Mali is not an immigration country, where immigration is a small phenomenon when compared to emigration and transit, where it has never been an attractive destination for migrants (CARIM, 2010; Merkle, Reinold, & Siegel, 2017).

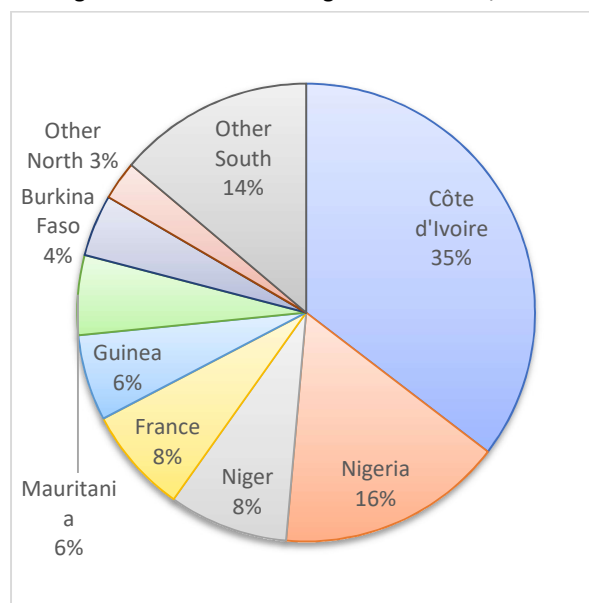
<sup>1</sup> Note that migration statistics from UN DESA (2015a) illustrate mixed migration stocks and may include some, but not all, of refugees in/from a given country. For further information visit: <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml>

**Figure 1: Origin of Migrants in Mali, 2015**



Source: UN DESA, 2015a.

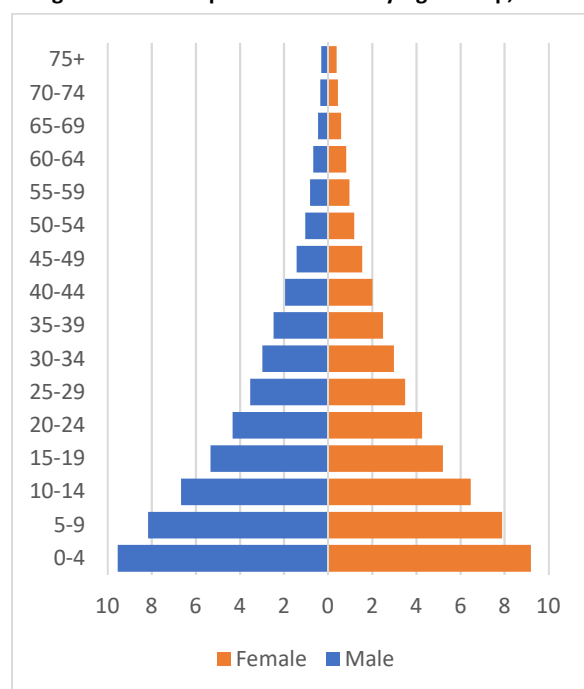
**Figure 2: Destination of Migrants from Mali, 2015**



Source: UN DESA, 2015a.

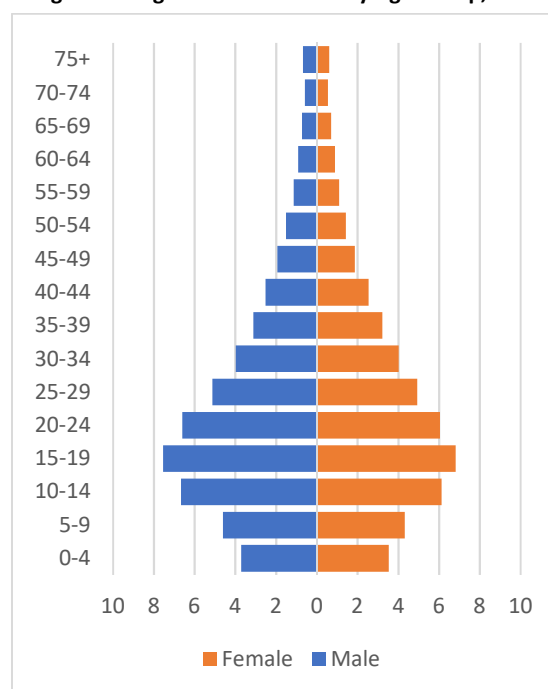
Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the population pyramids of both the total population and migrant population in Mali. Accordingly, the latter has a rather usual distribution, mainly gravitating around young and working age groups; this is justified since immigration to Mali is often for purposes of labour. On the other hand, the population pyramid for the total Malian population is highly concentrated in young age categories. This clustering among young age groups is justified by various demographic indicators; accordingly, Mali has one of the highest total fertility rates and one of the lowest life expectancies in the world (World Bank, 2017).

**Figure 3: Total Population in Mali by Age Group, 2015**



Source: UN DESA, 2015a.

**Figure 4: Migrant Stock in Mali by Age Group, 2015**



Source: UN DESA, 2015a.

## 2. Forced Migration/ Displacement

### 2.1. Refugees in Mali

In 2016, the stock of the refugee population in Mali was 17,923, while the stock of asylum seekers during the same period was 283 (UNHCR, 2017b). Looking at Table 2, it stands out that both the refugee and the asylum seeker populations in Mali are mainly from West African countries. Specifically, the overwhelming majority of the refugee population in Mali in 2016 came from Mauritania (15,333), followed by the Central African Republic (1,164) and Côte d'Ivoire (974). In 2017, the number of refugees in Mali slightly decreased in comparison to 2016, indicating higher returns as opposed to new arrivals (UNHCR, 2017c). Importantly, Mali has ratified both the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1969 UN Protocol for refugee status determination. However, refugees are not recognised on a *prima facie* basis and must present an application to Mali's Ministry of Territorial Administration. Such applications can be made by the UNHCR on behalf of asylum seekers (CARIM, 2010).

In spite of the country of origin, the reasons behind displacement of the refugee population in Mali are similar, and they are related to the presence of violent conflicts in the origin societies (UNHCR, n.d.; UNHCR, 2017c; IOM, 2014b). However, the situation of Mauritanian refugees is slightly different from that of other refugees. Mauritanian refugees arrived in Mali in 1989, hence they are in a protracted refugee situation which puts them at high risk of statelessness. On the contrary, refugees from other countries do not yet face the same risk as they arrived in Mali few years ago (UNHCR, 2017c).

**Table 2: Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Mali, mid-2016**

Country of Origin	Refugees	Asylum seekers
Mauritania	15,333	0
Central African Republic	1,164	66
Côte d'Ivoire	974	164
Democratic Republic of Congo	252	38
Syria	84	12
Other	116	3
Total	17,923	283

Source: UNHCR, 2017b.

### 2.2. Refugees from Mali

The causes for displacement of the Malian population are related to the situation of civil war experienced by the country since 2012, with the main actors involved in the conflict being the government, the affiliated militias, and the rebel coalition lead by the ethnic group Tuareg (Dobbs & Gaynor, 2015). In fact, before the coupe d'état and the conflicts of 2012, the stock of Malian refugees was around 11,000; in 2013, as direct result of the ongoing violence, this figure skyrocketed to almost 150,000. In total, the conflict displaced more than 450,000 people, mainly from the cities of Timbuktu and Gao, both internally and externally (UNHCR, 2017a; UNHCR, 2016; IOM, 2013). By the end of 2016, due to a peace deal made in 2015 and the consequent increase in personal security, a

large population of refugees (56,729) and IDPs (474,231) was able to return to live in their place of usual residence (UNHCR, 2016). However, as of July 2017, the stock of Malian refugees is still high and has increased as compared to 2016. Indeed, at present, the refugee population in Mali is estimated to be 145,895, the highest figure recorded since 2013 (UNHCR, 2017a). In the future, the refugee population is expected to increase even further for mainly two reasons. Firstly, the 2015 peace deal between the Malian government and the rebel groups is very fragile; the two coalitions have clashed numerous times since then, and a re-escalation of the conflict is very possible. Secondly, the number of attacks conducted by Islamists armed groups are increasing in the northern and central regions of Mali; in fact, they more than doubled from 2015 to 2016. Hence, as a result of these two situations, Mali is expected to experience high food and personal insecurity, and the displaced population both internally and externally is extremely likely to increase (ACAPS, 2016).

UNHCR (2017b) estimates indicate that the stock of Malian asylum seekers was 10,631 in 2016, and they were mainly hosted in Italy (4,600), Spain (1,500), France (1,351), and Germany (1,292). Currently, Malian refugees are mainly hosted in neighbouring countries to Mali (see Table 3). While Malian refugees were mainly living in urban settlements or spontaneous sites in 2013, they are now mostly living in refugee camps (UNHCR, 2016; IOM, 2013). The choice of fleeing into neighbour countries is not surprising, as geographical proximity is considered one of the main reasons for the establishment of Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger. Additionally, the choice of fleeing toward Mauritania can be justified by the similar ethnic background of Malian and Mauritanian pastoralists groups (IOM, 2013). As shall be explained below, the vulnerabilities of Malian refugees differ depending on the host country.

Most of the Malian refugees residing in Niger are considered to be living in the Intikane hosting area (UNHCR, 2017d). This solution was implemented since 2013 to adapt the concept of refugee camps to the lifestyle of Malian nomadic groups. Indeed, refugees in the Intikane hosting area are free to settle in a vast land with their livestock, and they are not forced to reside in a specific place (UNHCR, 2013). The main protection issues found in the Intikane area are considered to be related to the underrepresentation of women in community structures, lack of birth certificates for new-borns, low enrolment rate of girls in school, forced and early marriages, incidences of sexual violence, ethnic tension, and conflict over resources with hosting communities (UNHCR, 2013).

The overwhelming majority of the Malian refugees in Mauritania are living in the Mbera camp (52,000), which is located in the southeast of the country near the border with Mali. UNHCR is able to reach almost all of these refugees with its aid operations. In fact, there are no major risks faced by this population as UNHCR, in collaboration with its partners, is able to provide decent food, water, sanitation, education, and health services to those who need them. In the future five years, there are some risks related to the possible lack of resources, and efforts will be put toward enhancing the self-resilience of refugee communities (UNHCR, 2017e).

Most Malian refugees hosted in Burkina Faso are considered to be living both inside and outside of two refugee camps in the Sahel Region, close to the border with Mali (UNHCR, 2017f). In 2016, they faced major risks related to food insecurity; the World Food Program (WFP) had to stop its interventions due to lack of funding, resulting in a fourth of the refugee population not having enough food to consume (WFP, 2016). Additionally, other problems of this population arise from the situation of protracted asylum, and refugees risk being stigmatized by the host community. For these

reasons, the main humanitarian efforts in the coming years will be put into integration and self-resilience but also into the protection of vulnerable population, education, health, and sanitation (UNHCR, 2017e; WFP, 2016).

**Table 3: Mali's Refugees in Country of Asylum**

<b>Country of Destination</b>	<b>Refugees (2017)</b>
Burkina Faso	33,501
Mauritania	51,502
Niger	55,892
Other	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>145,895</b>

Source: UNHCR, 2017b.

### 2.3. Internal Displacement in Mali

The causes for internal displacement in Mali are strictly linked to the situation of civil war experienced in the country since 2012 (Dobbs & Gaynor, 2015). In fact, as direct result of the 2012 conflict, 227,000 people migrated internally, resulting in an IDP stock of 230,000 people (IDMC, 2017). This population was equally distributed between genders, and half of it was composed of by minors. Moreover, 57% of the population displaced in 2012 was originally from the city of Timbuktu, 38% from the city of Gao, and the remaining 6% from the cities of Kidal, Mpoty, and Sikasso (IOM, 2013). Importantly, all of these cities are located in the northern part of Mali; therefore, it can be said that north-south migration characterized Malian IDP movements. Specifically, after the violent clashes, most IDPs fled toward the cities of Bamako (22%), Mopti (18%), Koulikoro (7%), Sikasso (6%), and Kayes (1%), where they were mainly living in host families. This situation explains why there are no camps for IDPs in Mali (IDMC, 2014; IOM, 2013). An interesting feature of Malian IDPs pertains to the fluidity of their movements. Indeed, one out of five IDPs was engaged in circular migration between their area of origin and place of displacement to take care of livestock and property. IDPs in Mali experienced increased vulnerabilities compared to the rest of the population, including lack of access to and limited availability of food, water, and health care services (IOM, 2013).

Overall, the IDP stock in Mali has decreased significantly since 2012 and 2013. Specifically, already in 2014, it was estimated that 60% of IDPs were able to come back to live in their place of origin (IDMC, 2014). Moreover, the latest figures of 2016 indicate that almost 453,059 IDPs in total have returned to their homes since the conflict begun (IOM, 2016). In 2016, the estimated stock of IDPs was 37,000, a sizable reduction compared to the 220,000 IDPs registered in 2013 (IDMC, 2017). This trend can be mostly attributed to the increased security situation in northern Mali and to the peace agreement signed in 2015. Furthermore, according to IOM (2016), internal displacement in Mali could have come to an end in an ideal 'no conflict scenario' by December 2016. Instead, between the end of 2016 and the beginning of 2017, there has been an increase in the stock of IDPs (IDMC, 2017), and there are now around 55,000 IDPs in Mali (UNHCR, 2017a). This trend can be attributed to a re-escalation of violence in northern Mali. The peace agreement of 2015 was broken many times during 2016, and the numbers of attacks from terrorist groups to civilians more than doubled in 2016 when compared to 2015. Hence, there are good reasons to believe that the presence of IDPs in Mali will



not come to an end in the coming years; on the contrary, their number will probably increase (ACAPS, 2016).

## **3. Regular/ Labour Migration**

### **3.1. Immigration**

Even though a small number of foreigners reside in Mali, it is not generally considered an immigration country (Merkle, Reinold, Siegel, 2017; IOM, 2015; IOM, 2013). In 2009, the stock of immigrants was 160,000 and represented 1.1% of the total population. This stock slightly decreased over the years, with the immigration population being 147,043 in 2013 (UN DESA, 2013). This declining trend could be attributed to the conflicts of 2012, which pushed some immigrants to return to their countries of origin. However, the immigrant stock in Mali increased again in 2015 and was estimated to be around 363,000, representing 2% of the total population (UN DESA, 2015b). What has been constant over the years is the fact that the overwhelming majority of foreign residents in Mali is originally from other West African countries (IOM, 2015; IOM, 2013; UN DESA, 2013). Specifically, the main countries of origin of foreign residents in Mali are Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal, Mauritania, Nigeria, and Niger (IOM, 2015; IOM, 2013; UN DESA, 2013). This is not surprising since the freedom of movement and residence granted in the ECOWAS surely enhances long-term, regional migration.

The most precise data regarding the immigrant population in Mali are probably those from 2009, which is the year of the most recent Malian population census (IOM, 2015; ICMPD, 2010). According to the 2009 census, most of the foreign population was male (52.5%), did not have any formal education (60%), and was mainly living in the capital Bamako (27.9%), Sikasso (22.1%), Kayes (12.6%), and Koulikoro (11.3%) (IOM, 2015). However, their impact on the Malian economy as well as their occupational sectors are almost impossible to determine. In this regard, it is estimated that 70% of the Malian labour market is in the informal economy, and most migrants are considered to be working within it (CARIM, 2010).

### **3.2. Emigration**

Mali has always been a country of emigration, and it can be said that this phenomenon is a vital component of Malian society. According to the Malian national statistics, the stock of Malians residing abroad is 4 million, of which 3.5 million are living in Africa and 2 million in Cote d'Ivoire alone. This would imply that almost one of every four Malians is an international migrant. However, these numbers do not seem reliable (IOM, 2015). In fact, according to UN DESA (2015b), the stock of Malian emigrants in 2015 was estimated to be slightly higher than 1 million, representing 6% of the total population. Moreover, 90 per cent of them were living in Africa, while 10 per cent were resident in developed countries (UN DESA, 2015a). Indeed, the most popular destinations for Malian emigrants, despite France, are other ECOWAS countries (see Figure 2). This relatively big diaspora originates mainly in rural Mali, and poverty, unemployment, harsh climate, and demographic pressures are considered the main push factors for their emigration (IOM, 2013). Nevertheless, people emigrate from Mali for a variety of reasons, including a cultural heritage that sees migration as rite of passage for young men before they are allowed to marry. Moreover, migration is a

livelihood strategy for nomadic pastoral groups that migrate seasonally with their livestock (Merkle, Reinold, & Siegel, 2017; IOM, 2014a; IOM, 2013; CARIM, 2010; ICMPD, 2010). Study purposes are also a reason for Malian emigration; in 2006, 10% of Malians enrolled in universities were studying abroad (Merkle, Reinold, & Siegel, 2017).

Malian emigration is mostly a regional phenomenon with important ethnic and spatial considerations. For example, Fulani Diawambe traders mostly migrate toward Cote d'Ivoire, Tuareg to Algeria and Libya, and Soninke labourers to France (IOM, 2015). Most emigrants (60%) come from rural areas and are employed in low-skilled jobs in the informal economy of ECOWAS states (IOM, 2015). As consequence of emigration, Mali is experiencing a loss of skilled citizens as well as of the male population. In fact, it is considered that high-skilled emigrants represent between 11.5 per cent and 15 per cent of the total number of emigrants. Specifically, 23 per cent of physicians, 13 per cent of doctors, and 4 per cent of nurses have left the country (IOM, 2015; ICMPD, 2010). Another side-effect of this situation is the creation of a high-skilled Malian emigrant community (ICMPD, 2010).

Personal remittances are a crucial component of the Malian economy; in 2015, they represented 7% of the Malian GDP (World bank, 2017). The biggest share of remittances is considered to be sent from France, while just a small portion is sent by African countries. However, these estimates are surely underestimating the phenomenon, since three quarters of the total remittances are sent through informal channels (IOM, 2015). Importantly, most of these remittances are used for consumption: to buy foods and goods or to fulfil other essential needs. However, in some instances, they are used for community projects, such as water supplies and education (ICMPD, 2010). Additionally, in 2013, it was estimated that as much as 14% of remittances were invested into business activities (IOM, 2015). Additionally, the Malian government, and specifically the Malian Ministry of Economy and Finance, play an important role in engaging the skilled Malian diaspora (ICMPD, 2010). Moreover, local authorities in migrant-sending regions play an important role in incentivizing the financing of community projects through remittances. Indeed, Mali was one of the first African countries where the EU aimed to realize migration-development initiatives through diaspora engagement (Trauner & Deimel, 2013; Newland & Patrick, 2004).

## **4. Internal Migration**

Voluntary internal migration in Mali has long been characterized by rural-urban movements (IOM, 2013). In 1960, the urban population as a percentage of the total population was just 11 per cent, though it is now more than 40 per cent (World Bank, 2017); by 2024, this percentage is expected to increase to over 60 per cent (World Bank, 2007). The main reasons behind Malian rural-urban migration are related to increased professional and educational opportunities in cities but also to a desire to live closer to family members. Instead, the migration of pastoralist and farmer groups of the Sahel is attributed mostly to the acute famine experienced in Northern Mali since 2011 (IOM, 2013). The many droughts that took place in the Sahel region severely impacted the pastoralist and farmer population, also fostering permanent rural-to-urban migration trends. The capital Bamako has been the main destination of internal migration in Mali. The direct consequence of internal migration has been an overpopulation of cities, aggravating the already poor situation of infrastructures and basic services in urban centres (IOM, 2013).

Importantly, another feature of Malian internal migration is seasonal rural-to-rural migration. The herders of the Sahel used to move with their livestock toward northern Mali during the rainy season and toward the south during the dry season (Jones-Casey & Knox, 2011). However, the violent conflicts of 2013 and the great insecurity of Northern Mali completely reshaped internal migration patterns of herders and pastoralists of the Sahel. Many of them have now moved to Mauritania and Burkina Faso (IRIN, 2013).

## 5. Irregular Migration

Since 2000, Mali has become an important transit country for irregular migrants trying to reach North Africa, mainly Algeria, Libya, Morocco, or Tunisia and to a lesser extent Europe (Urso, 2017; IOM, 2015; IOM, 2013; CARIM, 2010; ICMPD, 2010). Subsequently, human smuggling and trafficking in Mali are becoming increasingly prominent phenomena. However, the difficulties related to data collection restrict a systemic assessment of irregular migration in Mali (IOM, 2013). Between July and September 2016, around 7,640 migrants transited through Mali. They were originally from Guinea (40%), Senegal (15%), and Gambia (12%). Moreover, they were almost all men, and one third of them declared the intention to reach Europe (Urso, 2017). However, it is important to recognize that Mali is an ECOWAS member; since it happens under the free movement of the ECOWAS community, much of the migration that takes place to and from Mali is regular (Carling, 2016; IOM, 2013). This migration becomes irregular only when the migrant crosses the border with Algeria, Tunisia, or Libya without the necessary documents. Note, however, that Malians are able to travel in Algeria without a visa; therefore, their migration can be considered irregular only once they cross the border with Libya or Tunisia (Carling, 2016).

### 5.1. Human Smuggling

Human smuggling and human trafficking are crimes against international law and involve the irregular movement of people from one country to another. The main two differences between these phenomena lie in the presence or absence of consent and in the exploitation of the migrant upon destination. Indeed, smuggling, as opposed to trafficking, is a service that migrants consensually use to get from A to B and that finishes upon arrival. In contrast, trafficking victims are forced to migrate against their will (absence of consent), and trafficking continues upon arrival at the destination with the exploitation of the trafficked person. Nevertheless, the lines between trafficking and smuggling are thin and very often smuggling becomes trafficking due to the increased vulnerability of migrants on the move (UNODC, 2017a).

As mentioned in the previous section, human smuggling is rampant in Mali, which has become an important transit country for West African migrants (RMMS, 2017; Urso, 2017; Carling, 2016; Frontex, 2016; IOM, 2013). The capital Bamako is probably the most important centre for human smuggling of the country (Carling, 2016). From there, depending on the chosen smuggling service, people either head north or east toward Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, and then to Niamey, the capital of Niger (RMMS, 2017; Frontex, 2016; Carling, 2016). Instead, if they go north, they likely end up in the city of Gao or Timbuktu. Specifically, Gao has become an important centre for irregular migration and a prominent hub for smuggling and trafficking activities (Merkle, Reinold, & Siegel, 2017; RMMS, 2017; IOM, 2013). It is estimated that each month around 900 irregular

migrants pass through this city on their way north (Merkle, Reinold, & Siegel, 2017). From Gao, migrants may continue onward toward Algeria and Libya, paying on average 1,500 euros for this leg of the journey. Alternatively, they will go through Alrit and Agadez, both cities in Niger. Those migrants that do not go to Gao from Bamako will instead go to Timbuktu; from there, they will continue their journey on the ancient salt route through Algeria (Frontex, 2016). However, this route has been detected only recently, and information about it is limited (Urso, 2017). Importantly, as mentioned previously, almost all the movements prior to Timbuktu, Gao, and the Nigerian city of Agadez are lawful and regulated by the free movement protocol of the ECOWAS community (Carling, 2016). Hence, the main means of transport for migrants that move toward Gao and Timbuktu includes public buses or cars; here, smuggling services are not yet needed. It is from Timbuktu and Gao onward, though, that smuggling services are required in order to continue the journey (Molenaar & El Kamouni-Janssen, 2017).

The Malian human smuggling network is fluid and includes a variety of actors and individuals linked by business relationships. The stakeholders involved in this business vary from individual entrepreneurs, to ethnic groups, extremist and terrorist groups, and members of political parties (Molenaar & El Kamouni-Janssen, 2017; Frontex, 2016). Furthermore, Malian networks are transnational, and their influence extends beyond Malian borders to ensure the highest possible success rate of the network. People from this human smuggling network contact migrants in focal points, such as markets or bus stops, predominantly in the city of Gao; they then offer their services to migrants. However, the journey across the Sahara Desert from Timbuktu and Gao is very dangerous, and smuggled migrants face high risks of kidnapping and trafficking (Molenaar & El Kamouni-Janssen, 2017; Frontex, 2016; IOM, 2013). Particularly, women on the move have high risks associated with becoming victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. Further, the desert that divides northern Mali from southern Algeria and Libya is mostly controlled by extremist groups that collect their revenues from smuggling- and trafficking-related activities (Frontex, 2016).

## **5.2. Trafficking in Human Beings**

According to the 2017 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, Mali does not engage in significant efforts to fight human trafficking issues and does not meet the minimum standards regarding the elimination of such criminal activities. Moreover, Mali's performance and efforts in combating human trafficking has gotten worse over the years. Indeed, while it was ranked Tier 2 in the TIP Report for the last four years, Mali is now ranked Tier 3, meaning that it is one of the least performing countries worldwide in fighting human trafficking. Nonetheless, the Malian government has taken some steps to address human trafficking, including the conviction of some traffickers, the allocation of in-kind support for victims of human trafficking (VoTs), training on trafficking issues, and the inclusion of anti-trafficking spending in its annual budget (US Department of State, 2017).

Even if there are no data on the stock of VoTs in the country, Mali is source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking victims. Human trafficking appears to be a largely internal phenomenon (US Department of State, 2017) rather than a transnational one, and evidence indicates that 96% of the VoTs identified from 2002 to 2008 were Malian nationals (IOM, 2015). Geographically, most human trafficking in Mali is considered to be happening in the northern cities of Gao, Meaka, and Kindal, while another strategic point was identified in the city of Tessalit close to the Algerian border (Rhpto, 2015). Regarding populations that are particularly vulnerable to

trafficking, it is important to consider the dangers faced by smuggled migrants. For them, the risks of being victims of human trafficking are considerably high compared to the rest of the population (IOM, 2013).

Specifically, young migrants from Guinea and Burkina Faso are in danger of forced labour in gold and artisanal mines, while women and girls, especially from Nigeria, risk being forced into prostitution and sexual exploitation throughout Mali. Particularly, as much as 5,000 Nigerian girls are victims of this latter kind of exploitation in Mali. Malian men and boys are often trafficked internally for forced labour in agriculture and mines, forced begging, or forced servitude as combatants (US Department of Labour, 2015). When they are trafficked internationally, they usually find themselves working in the agricultural sector of Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, or Guinea (US Department of State, 2017). Malian women and girls, on the other hand, have high risks of being trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, and domestic servitude. Moreover, the instances of forced and early marriages are prominent in Mali, especially in rural areas (UNICEF, n.d.; US Department of State, 2017; Research Directorate Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2007).

The crisis of 2012 and the violent conflicts in northern Mali worsened the overall situation of trafficking. In fact, after the crisis of 2012, some families were driven to sell their children into domestic servitude or forced labour due to a lack of resources. Additionally, terrorists and armed groups systematically recruited Malian children to serve as combatants, to carry weapons, or to engage in related activities (US Department of Labour, 2015). Similarly, there is evidence of militias recruiting Mauritanian children to serve as child soldiers in Mali. Moreover, these groups used girls for sexual exploitation, forced marriages, and sex slavery (US Department of State, 2017). To protect and combat trafficking issues, the Malian Government ratified the Palermo Protocol in 2000 and approved a national anti-trafficking law in 2012 (UNODC, 2017b). Additionally, the country's government developed a three-year national anti-trafficking plan in 2015. The main gap in the fight against human trafficking is not in the legal framework but, rather, in its enforcement and implementation (US Department of State, 2017).

## **6. Migrant's Vulnerabilities and Protection Issues**

As pointed out in Section 1, Mali is one of the least developed countries of the world, with high levels of personal and food insecurity, especially in the country's northern regions. Half of the Malian population is in poverty, malaria instances are increasing, and malnutrition levels are critical. Hence, migrant concerns cannot be addressed without an effective national development strategy. This is especially true when considering that all the situations just mentioned are particularly severe in Timbuktu and Gao, the major transit hubs for smuggled and trafficked migrants (Urso, 2017). West African migrants smuggled through Mali face specific vulnerabilities, and they face high risks of trafficking, especially after leaving the cities of Timbuktu and Gao (Frontex, 2016; IOM, 2015). Moreover, during the trip through the Sahara Desert, they face multiple threats; abuses and death instances are also considered quite high. Often, they are threatened by militias, terrorist groups, and soldiers, with instances ranging from bribes, to abuses, violence, kidnaps, and sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV) (Molenaar & El Kamouni-Janssen, 2017; Frontex, 2016). Smuggled Nigerian women are considered the category of migrants most in danger of human trafficking for sexual exploitation (US Department of State, 2017).

Malian refugees are also considered particularly vulnerable. Especially, early marriages and SGBV appear to be endemic in some refugee camps. Moreover, refugees' communities are also vulnerable to forced recruitment by armed groups and to violence due to competition over resources with hosting communities. Specifically, Malian refugees in Mauritania are vulnerable to food insecurity and water scarcity. Instead, refugees in Niger are vulnerable to violence, as refugee camps are increasingly targeted by militias and armed groups (Urso, 2017). IDPs in Mali experience increased vulnerabilities compared to the rest of the population, including lack of access to and limited availability of food, water, and health care (IOM, 2013). Additionally, Mauritanian refugees in Mali are at high risk of statelessness (UNHCR, 2017c). Given the situation of conflict in northern Mali, coupled with the severe droughts recently experienced in those regions, herders and farmers of the Sahel are highly vulnerable to violence, famine, and environmental degradation (Jones-Casey & Knox, 2011). Moreover, early marriages and sex slavery were already predominant in Malian northern rural societies, but they probably worsened due to the situations just mentioned (US Department of State, 2017; Research Directorate Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2007). Evidence illustrates that some families were forced to sell their children to militias and terrorist groups (US, Department of Labor, 2015).

## **7. Relevant National Policies and Stakeholders**

In Mali, the national development plan deals with most migration management related issues. However, there is no formal and overarching migration policy; though a policy draft was initiated in 2006/2007, this is yet to be finalised (IOM, 2015). Emigration is central to the Malian policy circle and is by far the most regulated migration phenomenon. Generally, two priorities concerning emigration management are highlighted: the protections of Malian emigrants and their involvement in the development of the country (IOM, 2015). The National Population Policy is the main regulating framework for Malian emigration. It highlights the importance of the link between emigration and development and defines the strategy to follow to strengthen this link (IOM, 2015; ICMPD, 2010). The most prominent stakeholder involved in emigration management is the Ministry for Malians Abroad and African Integration – Directorate General for Malians Abroad (DGME), along with its different agencies. Specifically, it is responsible for protecting Malian emigrants, enhancing emigrant involvement in development projects, reintegrating returnees and deportees, and facilitating the transmission of social remittances and skills. To effectively achieve this responsibility, the DGME is further divided into four agencies, each endorsed with various yet similar duties (IOM, 2015; ICMPD, 2010). Additionally, an inter-institutional coordination framework headed by the DGME is in place to provide the basis for coordination and dialogue between different stakeholders. Indeed, there are many actors, including UNDP, IOM, and EU representatives, involved in these consultations (ICMPD, 2010). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is also endorsed with some responsibilities regarding emigrant communities. It provides assistance, consultancies, and orientations to Malians abroad as well as all the embassy-related services (ICMPD, 2010).

Mali is a member of the ECOWAS community, and the Protocol relating to Free Movement, Residence, and Establishment is fully implemented in the country. However, as widely supported by the literature, immigration in Mali is less regulated than emigration (IOM, 2015; ICMPD, 2010; CARIM, 2010). The most important stakeholder involved in immigration management is probably the

Ministry of Domestic Security and Civil Protection, which is responsible for border management and immigration. Also, the Ministry of Labour, Public Service and Institutional Relations is responsible for guaranteeing the respect of the labour code (IOM, 2015). The policy framework in place in Mali formally regulates the entrance, stay, and establishment of foreign nationals, and it gives various regulations regarding foreign labour (see Table 4). Specifically, in order to work in Mali, a migrant is required to have a work contract approved by the National Labour Directorate. In practice, this authorization is not really required and foreigners can freely access the Malian labour market (IOM, 2015). This is not surprising, as most of the Malian economy is unregulated and happens in the informal sector (CARIM, 2010). Malian authorities are liberal towards irregular migration and expel or deport foreigners based on their committed offences or when deemed dangerous to public order, rather than based on their irregular status (IOM, 2015). Moreover, despite the relatively small number of refugees hosted in Mali, the Malian government has ratified both the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol (UNHCR, 2015), indicating a good practice in respect to refugees and asylum seekers.

Regarding human trafficking and human smuggling, Mali has ratified the Palermo Protocol and indicates a good practice in this respect (UNODC, 2017b). Moreover, in 2012, the Malian Government adopted Law No. 2012-023, which criminalizes trafficking in persons and similar practices. This law prescribes between ten- and twenty-year imprisonments, which are considered commensurate with those of other serious crimes, for trafficking offenders (IOM, 2015; US Department of State, 2017). Overall, Law No. 2012-023 is considered comprehensive and is able to cover all forms of trafficking in persons (IOM, 2015). Together with the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children, and the Family, the Ministry of Justice is a key actor in combating trafficking in persons; additionally, NGOs play a crucial role in identifying, protecting, and assisting VoTs (IOM, 2015; US Department of State, 2017).

Mali has bilateral agreements with Burkina Faso (1969), Ghana (1977), Guinea (1964), Mauritania (1973), Niger (1964), Cameroon (1964), and Libya (1980) (IOM, 2015). Additionally, agreements for visa free regimes have been concluded with Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. Similarly, agreements have been made with France and Spain, with the latter being more comprehensive (IOM, 2015).

**Table 4: Mali's Key Migration Policy Response**

Policy	Content
<b>Investment Code</b>	Grants a series of benefits and incentives to encourage emigrants and foreigners to invest in Mali. This includes tax exemption of companies and corporations, fiscal advantages for implementing projects, and exemption of taxes for the importation of material used for investment projects.
<b>Law No. 62-18 of 1962 &amp; Law No. 95-75 of 1995</b>	Define the procedure for the naturalization of foreigners and prescribe the right to hold dual citizenship to Malians residing abroad.
<b>Decree No. 00-046/P-RM of 2000</b>	This decree created the DGME, which was then elevated to become a full ministry. Moreover, it elaborates the organisational and operational structure of the DGME, by dividing it in different agencies with various duties. This includes an office for migration statistics and forecasting, a department for consular affairs to coordinate diplomatic and consular Malian missions, and a department for the promotion and reintegration of Malians abroad which in charge of designing return programmes.

<p><b>Law No. 04-058 relating to the Conditions of Entry, Stay and Establishment of Foreigners in the Republic of Mali, 2004</b></p> <p><b>Decree No. 05-322/P-RM, 2005</b></p>	<p>Defines the conditions of entry, stay, and establishment of foreigners in Mali. Moreover, it regulates some of the matters related to irregular migration.</p> <p>Entry in Mali happens after the delivery of an entry visa, which includes purpose and conditions of the stay. The maximum duration of the visa is 90 days, and it can be renewed once. To obtain the visa, a guarantee of return is necessary, which may take the form of a deposit, a guarantee from a bank, or a return ticket to the country of origin.</p> <p>Mali distinguishes foreigners into immigrants and non-immigrants. The first are those people that enter Mali to establish themselves in the country permanently, while the latter are visitors, tourists, students, or temporary workers. The difference between immigrants and non-immigrants also reflects the difference between residence (or establishment) and stay.</p> <p>Stay in Mali is possible only through a temporary stay authorization, which lasts maximum of one year and is renewable. This authorization will be made after the entry of the foreigner in Mali. The visa for temporary stay can also be delivered to other family members of the applicant.</p> <p>To reside in Mali, foreigners must request a resident card within 15 days of entry. Once obtained, the resident card will last for five years, with possibility for renewal. The conditions necessary to apply for the resident card are the same as those to apply for a temporary stay authorization. In addition, to obtain a resident card, a work authorization is required, though this authorization is never requested in practice.</p> <p>Illegal entry and irregular stay in Mali are punishable by deportation. Any violation to immigration legislations can be punished by the withdrawal of the visa. Expulsion and deportation are also prescribed, in case the immigrant is a considered a threat to public order. Additionally, people involved with facilitating irregular migration can be punished with 3 months to 3 years imprisonment.</p>
<p><b>Labour Code, 1992</b></p> <p><b>Regulation No. 1566/MEFPT-SG, 7 October 1996</b></p>	<p>Regulates all instances related to labour immigration. In principle, benefits and obligations of the Labour Code are the same for foreigners (regardless of their status) and national workers. Foreign workers enjoy the freedom of association and the possibility of joining trade unions. They can also cover administrative and executive roles within them. The Labour Code also prescribes that the costs related to the transportation to Mali, as well as the cost of return to the place of origin, should be covered by the employer of the foreign worker.</p>
<p><b>Law n°98-040 of 20 July 1998 on refugee status.</b></p>	<p>This is the main regulatory framework for asylum seekers and refugees. Accordingly, they must present an application to the Ministry of Territorial Administration. This application can also be presented by the UNHCR on behalf of the petitioner.</p>
<p><b>Law No. 62-18 of 1962 (FR), amended by Law No. 95-70 of 1995 (FR)</b></p>	<p>This defines the right of double citizenships for Malian emigrants. Moreover, it illustrates the procedures for non-Malians to be naturalized.</p>
<p><b>The Malian Custom Regulations on the Conditions to Import and Export Goods into Malian Territory (FR)</b></p>	<p>It prescribes a series of incentives for Malian emigrants to return permanently in Mali, including tax exemption on the importation of household goods and on the importation of selected goods for Malian students.</p>



<b>Law No. 2012-023</b>	Criminalizes trafficking and similar practices. It prescribes between 10 and 20 years of imprisonment for trafficking offenders, which are considered commensurate with those of other serious crimes. Overall, this law is considered comprehensive and able to cover all forms of trafficking in persons.
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Sources: US Department of State, 2017; IOM, 2015; CARIM, 2010; ICMPD, 2010

## Gaps

One of the main obstacles to the successful implementation of Malian migration policies is related to data collection (IOM, 2015). Specifically, the lack of data on emigration limits the possibilities for evidence based policy making, and Malian national statistics in this regard are far from reality, as shown in Section 3.2. Moreover, the DGME lack funds and resources to develop and implement its policies (IOM, 2015). Hence, the opportunities to enhance Malian remittances spending in development projects are constrained. Other gaps appear from the inability of the Malian government to efficiently control its borders. This situation is especially true in the northern territories of Mali, where most smuggling and trafficking activities happen. Borders are oftentimes controlled by armed ethnic groups, militias, and terrorists, creating a situation which actively fosters irregular migration into and out of Mali (Molenaar & El Kamouni-Janssen, 2017; Frontex, 2016). A third and last gap arises from the non-implementation of the existing framework to fight human trafficking. Indeed, even though Mali has ratified the most important international conventions and has a comprehensive law to combat trafficking, its efforts in implementation are very low. This situation partially explains why Mali is ranked Tier 3 in the 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report, after being ranked Tier 2 for four years in a row (US Department of State, 2017).

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