

Update on women, peace and security in Mali May 4th 2017

The Informal Expert Group of the Security Council on Women, Peace and Security met on **September 14th 2016** to discuss the situation in Mali, with the participation of the leadership of MINUSMA and the United Nations Country Team. A record of the meeting was issued as [S/2016/1103](#). The group resolved to reconvene once during 2017 to review progress and challenges in the implementation of women, peace and security commitments. As we approach the two-year mark of the signing of the peace agreement, this update summarizes **relevant developments since the IEG's last meeting on Mali, in September 2016**.

No women were included among the interim authorities recently appointed for the northern regions. All 37 individuals proposed by the parties were men. The government designated one woman out of the 32 members of the transitional councils, and two women out of 20 special advisors to state representatives in the North. This was noted with deep regret by the UN Secretary-General in one of its latest quarterly reports to the Security Council on the situation in Mali, which have shown a marked increase in the attention to women, peace and security since last year's meetings of the Informal Experts Group.

In **local elections in November**, women represented 31 percent of all candidates and accounted for 30 percent of the people elected in Bamako and Gao, and 29 percent in Timbuktu, an achievement that was repeatedly celebrated by the UN and quadruples the representation of women in local councils in previous elections. In the latest **cabinet** reshuffle announced by President Keita in April 2017, women head eight out of 36 ministries. 32 percent of participants in the *Conférence d'Entente Nationale* were women.

The participation of women in the **National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission** is minimal, but in December the Government appointed an expert to ensure the protection of women's and children's rights in this Commission. Women's participation in the **Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission** is significantly higher, and this body has already collected statements from more than 1800 individuals, 60 percent of which are women. **Only two out of 31 benchmarks recently adopted by the government to monitor the implementation of the peace agreement relate to gender equality:** the integration of gender as a cross-cutting issue by the Commission on Integration, and the adequate treatment of victims of human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence.

Although several Member States highlighted gender equality issues in the latest meeting of the Security Council on Mali, the **Presidential Statement adopted by the Council in November (S/PRST/2016/16)**, which focused on the implementation of the peace agreement, ceasefire violations, terrorism, security and political developments, humanitarian access, the mission's capacity, and regional cooperation, **did not include any references to women's rights or gender equality**.

Implementation of the **National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security** (2015-2017) was delayed by a year and a half, and the plan has now been extended into 2018. International partners have contributed to a fraction of its 20-million-dollar budget. Projects supported by the **Peacebuilding Fund** have strengthened participation of women in the monitoring and implementation of the peace agreement, enabled thousands of girls to attend school, and improved the access to justice and security for hundreds of women affected by gender-based violence. For example, in Gao and Timbuktu the percentage of cases of sexual violence that are brought to the court has increased from just one percent to almost 14 percent. This year, the National Assembly may adopt a law -tabled by the government in 2015- that would **give women exclusive access to ten percent of government-managed land** in exchange for an annual fee, after failed attempts to reform the inheritance provisions of the Family Code on this matter.

In February, the **humanitarian response plan for 2017** was launched, targeting 1.4 million people out of 3.7 million in need of humanitarian assistance. An alarmingly small percentage of this plan has been financed. Women

and girls are particularly in need of nutritional assistance, and a national survey in February revealed that 37.4 percent of female-headed households are food insecure, compared to 24.7 percent of male-headed households. One third of schools in the areas affected by the conflict remain closed, which disproportionately affects girls. Less than 25 percent of Malians have some secondary education, and only one-third of those are girls. In some conflict-affected areas, women and girls can travel up to 30 kilometers for water.

According to the GBV Information Management System, which collects data provided by nearly 20 NGOs, GBV services are available in only 30 percent of localities in the regions affected by the crisis. In 2016, these partners reported over 2,000 incidents of **gender-based violence**, an increase of nearly 70 percent over 2015. Lack of basic services, limited humanitarian access, stigma, and fear of reprisals continue to impede reporting of conflict-related sexual violence. The latest report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence lists these five parties as credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council: *Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad*, *Ansar Eddine*, *Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'ouest*, *Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb*, and *Groupe d'autodéfense Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés*. In addition :

- MINUSMA reported 23 cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2016. Ten of the victims were members of the Bella community.
- More than 100 cases of conflict-related sexual violence filed since November 2014 in Bamako have yet to be processed, and only 37 victims have been heard by judges. On 23 December, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Malian armed forces agreed to hold regular consultations on pending cases.
- On March 5th, CMA – which include the *Mouvement National de Liberation de l'Azawad* and other armed groups, signed an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence against children.
- The UN has continued training security forces and government representatives on conflict-related sexual violence, sensitizing religious leaders, supporting investigations by the authorities and the economic reintegration of victims, and engaging with the *Plateforme* on the finalization of their action plan against sexual violence,
- As noted by recent visits of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali and last year's review in the CEDAW Committee, Mali continues to lack a law criminalizing gender-based violence, forced marriage, or female genital mutilation, which affects approximately 90 percent of Malian women.
- Humanitarian partners believe that, in 2017, 18,500 women and girls are at risk of sexual violence. Last year, only six percent of the funding needs of the protection cluster were met.

Recommendations for the Security Council

In light of upcoming discussions about MINUSMA's mandate, the next outcome document of the Security Council on the situation in Mali should: a) maintain the language on gender equality, women's rights and leadership, and conflict-related sexual violence in resolution 2295 (2016); b) express regret and concern about the continued exclusion of women in both the bodies tasked with implementing and monitoring the peace agreement, as well as the interim authorities appointed in the conflict-affected regions; c) welcome the gains in representation of women in local councils, and encourage further support for women's participation in upcoming local and national elections and referendums; d) urge the Government to finalize the agreement of a joint communiqué with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to enable a more structured response to conflict-related sexual violence, including the adoption of legislation against all forms of gender-based violence, the timely investigation of cases, the protection of victims, witnesses, and their families, and the vetting of past perpetrators of the armed forces during DDR; and e) call on donors to increase funding for services for survivors and the implementation of the National Action Plan on women, peace and security, including specific interventions to improve women's access to justice and the capacity of rule of law institutions, and adequately address gender issues in DDR.

The IEG co-chairs should consider engaging directly with Malian representatives to inquire about lack of progress on women's participation in the implementation of the peace agreement and lack of accountability for conflict-related sexual violence, and convene the group again in 2018 to discuss progress in the implementation of these recommendations.