STATE SERVICES IN AN INSECURE ENVIRONMENT: PERCEPTIONS AMONG CIVIL SOCIETY IN MALI

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I. Introduction

Mali was once considered to be a leading example of democratic progress and stability in sub-Saharan Africa. However, the crisis in 2012 revealed that the Malian state was much more fragile than commonly thought.[1] Within weeks of the start of the rebellion in January 2012, the public services provided by the state—such as education, healthcare and security—demonstrated their inability to respond to the crisis: the Malian Army retreated from the north in the face of the rebellion and the subsequent jihadist occupation of the main northern towns, and the state administration ceased to function there. In March a military coup deposed the president and gave way to an 18-month transition government, confirming the collapse of a state that was unable to deal with the multiple threats that it faced.

More than six years later, Mali remains deeply affected by the 2012 crisis. Despite the organization of national elections in 2013 and 2018, the signing of a peace agreement in June 2015, and the presence of numerous international and regional actors aiming to stabilize the country and restore the authority and capabilities of the state, the violence is spreading and peace is nowhere in sight for a large part of the population.[2]

In order for international and national responses to be effective in supporting peacebuilding and stabilization, there is a need to consider the perceptions of the population and their definitions of priorities and for state services to be adapted to their needs.[3] Only if Malians see the benefits of governmental and international interventions as being effective and legitimate can they renew their social contract with the state and feel that they can, once again, build a future for themselves while being supported by state services. This is particularly challenging in a context such as Mali where security and development actors have to respond to multiple priorities affecting human security. Moreover, these actors have to take into account the perceptions of a diverse population, spread over a large territory.

SUMMARY

● The 2012 crisis in Mali saw the collapse of the state and disruption of the provision of basic services to the population in large parts of the country. Six years on, the focus of the Malian Government and of its international partners is still firmly on the restoration of state services and the return of state administration to the entire territory of Mali.

In a questionnaire in March 2017, respondents showed that the Malian state is perceived by large parts of the Malian population as being the most legitimate actor to deliver essential services to the population. However, the state is also perceived as not being able to provide these services to a satisfactory level. Non-state actors—foreign organizations and Malian civil society—have partly taken its place. The respondents also demonstrate the capacity of Malians to find resources themselves. When communities realize that the state may not be able to provide the services that they require, they either turn to other service providers or create their own mechanisms to respond to their most pressing demands.

[1] Bergamaschi, I., 'Collapsed, failed, criminalized? Notes on the state in Mali', African Arguments, 15 Aug. 2013.

[2] The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) shows that the number of violent events in Mali has been increasing since June 2015, <https://www.acleddata.com/data/>.

[3] Tobie, A., 'Beyond the peace agreement: How can civil society contribute to peace in Mali?', Commentary, SIPRI, 14 Nov. 2016.

Earlier research has shown that this diversity is exemplified by regional differences in priorities for addressing human security.[4] These regional differences, linked to geographical and cultural diversity, make it extremely difficult for the Malian Government to design policies and programmes that suit communities across the entire territory. Needs, priorities and expectations also vary with gender and age. In this context, that earlier research concluded that Malians were likely to resort to other means, beyond the state, to access basic services.[5]

This paper goes further to present research into the ways in which Malians access these services, and what their expectations are of the role of the state in providing them. The paper continues in section II by outlining state services in Mali and the methodology of the research. Sections III–VII then look in turn at a different aspect of service provision. Conclusions are given in section VIII.

II. Background

State services and state legitimacy in Mali

The recovery of Mali after the 2012 crisis was seen as an important objective for both its neighbours and the broader international community. The collapse of the state and its loss of control of Malian territory raised questions

There was a strong sense that the Malian state had to regain its legitimacy in the eyes of a deeply affected population

over 'ungoverned spaces' and the ability of jihadist groups to gain ground in the region.[6] The lack of capacity to control Mali's borders was also seen by the international community to facilitate trafficking and to be a direct threat to European security.[7] Finally, there was a strong sense that the Malian state had to regain its legitimacy in the eyes of a deeply affected population.[8] Indeed, much of the discourse, as reflected in the 2015 peace agreement, centred on preserving national unity and territorial integrity and on supporting state institutions.[9]

This focus on supporting the state and rebuilding its administration translated into strategies and cooperation agreements between donor agencies (or technical and financial partners, as they are known in Mali) and the Malian Government. The emphasis on the centrality of the state in providing basic services for its citizen and organizing a strong security apparatus able to control the country's territory is supported by a growing literature and corpus of policies guiding stabilization, peacebuilding and state-building interventions.[10]

[4] Tobie, A., 'A fresh perspective on security concerns among Malian civil society', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2017/2, July 2017.

[5] Tobie (note 4).

[6] Raleigh, C. and Dowd, C., 'Governance and conflict in the Sahel's "ungoverned space"', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2013); and Guichaoua, Y., 'The fallacy of ungoverned spaces', Mediapart, 12 Feb. 2013.

[7] Molenaar, F. and van Damme, T., *Irregular Migration and Human Smuggling Networks in Mali*, Clingendael Conflict Research Unit Report (Clingendael Institute: The Hague, Feb. 2017).

[8] OECD DAC Fragile States Group, 'Concepts and dilemmas of state building in fragile situations: From fragility to resilience', *OECD Journal on Development*, vol. 9, no. 3 (2009), pp. 61–148.

[9] Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali Resulting from the Algiers Process, signed 15 May 2015, finalized 20 June 2015, (in French).

[10] OECD DAC Fragile States Group (note 8).

The causes of conflict have become increasingly linked to crises of state legitimacy and weak or quasi-states. Classical political theory defines two key elements of a strong state: being able to provide basic needs and services to its population and being a 'human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence within a given territory'.[11] Driven by the development of international aid and the necessity to conceptualize the interaction of this aid with national sovereignty and the role of states, the concept of 'state-building' was developed to focus on the establishment, re-establishment and strengthening of the central government. It aims to strengthen government institutions and thus create sovereign capacities such as the fundamental claim to monopoly of the legitimate use of force.[12] Beyond the security sector, state-building also focuses on the delivery of basic services, which are seen as essential to strengthening the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the population.[13]

Methodology

The analysis presented here draws on the project 'Building a sustainable peace in Mali: Civil society contributions to security policies', conducted by SIPRI and the National Civil Society Coalition for Peace and the Fight against the Proliferation of Light Weapons (Coalition Nationale de la Société Civile pour la Paix et la Lutte contre la Prolifération des Armes Légères, CONASCIPAL). As part of this project, a questionnaire about civil society perceptions of security issues, designed by SIPRI and Malian academics, was distributed in March 2017.[14] This questionnaire built on and used the same data-collection methodology as an earlier one, distributed in October 2016.

The new questionnaire looked in more depth at some specific aspects highlighted by the analysis of the first questionnaire.[15] A first section of the questionnaire covered perceptions of security among the respondents, in order to evaluate changes since the previous questionnaire. Other sections investigated the respondents' satisfaction with provision of public services. These services, collectively, had been identified by SIPRI and CONASCIPAL as contributing to the human security of Malians on the basis of previous interactions with the same respondents. The analysis of the earlier questionnaire had indicated that access to water, justice, education, food security, healthcare and the ability to move freely were all considered by Malians to be part of a broader concept of security.

The questionnaires were distributed to 110 respondents who were part of a network of civil society actors established by SIPRI and CONASCIPAL

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[11] Weber, M., 'Politics as a vocation', eds H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1970), p. 78.

[12] Von Bogdandy, A. et al., 'State-building, nation-building, and constitutional politics in post-conflict situations: Conceptual clarifications and an appraisal of different approaches', *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law*, vol. 9 (Martinus Nijhoff: Leiden, 2005), p. 584.

[13] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Service Delivery in Fragile States: Key Concepts, Findings, and Lessons*, OECD Development Assistance Committee Discussion Paper (OECD: Paris, 2008).

[14] For an overview of the project see <https://www.sipri.org/research/conflict-and-peace/africa/mali>.

[15] Tobie (note 4).
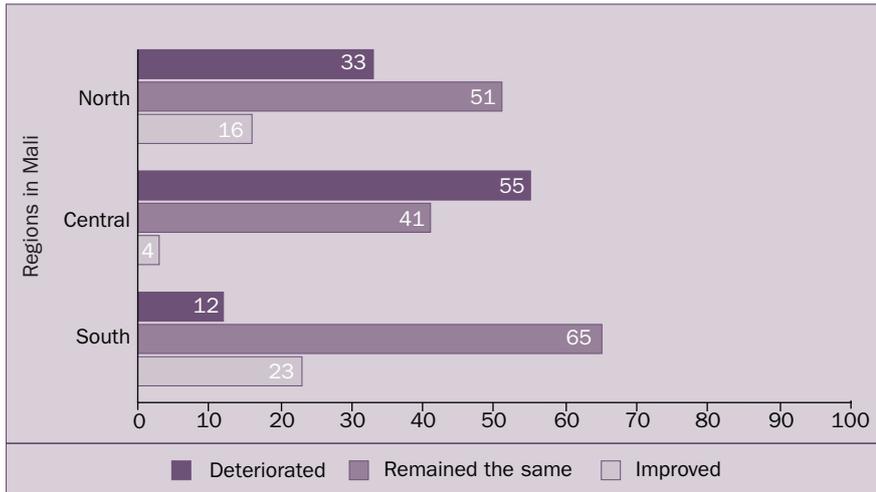
Figure 1. Perceptions of the security situation in Mali, by zone, March 2017

The graph shows responses to the question 'Since the previous survey, in October 2016, would you say that the security situation in your commune has (*a*) deteriorated, (*b*) remained the same, (*c*) improved?'

in October 2016. This network has 108 members who work in 36 Monitoring Groups for Peace and Security (MGPSs). Each MGPS is composed of a youth representative, a women's representative and a local community leader. Each member of an MGPS had been designated by his or her own community. Collectively, they cover the 10 regions of Mali and represent the diversity of Malian civil society in terms of age, gender and locality. An additional two respondents were regional facilitators of the MGPSs.

The sample for this study included 40 women and 36 youths (defined as people under 35 years of age). Regionally, 50 of the respondents came from the North zone (the regions of Gao, Kidal, Ménaka, Taoudeni and Timbuktu), 30 from the Central zone (the regions of Mopti and Ségou) and 30 from the South zone (the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro and Sikasso and the district of Bamako).

As well as analysing the questionnaire responses, reports from additional focus groups held by each MGPS were taken into consideration. These focus groups brought together residents of the area covered by the MGPS and provided insights through discussion of open-ended questions related to this study. In mid November 2017 at a conference organized by SIPRI and CONASCIPAL in Bamako, the main conclusions were presented to, and validated by, a selection of MGPS members and regional facilitators.

While the sample size is not large enough to allow for thorough quantitative analysis, the results give an insight into civil society perceptions of security in Mali. In addition to presenting a national picture of security perceptions, the methodology employed allows the results to be disaggregated using a number of factors. By carefully selecting the participants of this study to reflect the diversity of Malian civil society, its analysis can highlight differences between men and women, youths and non-youths, and the different zones.

Drawing on the results of the questionnaire and the interactions with respondents at the subsequent meetings, this paper presents four main areas of analysis. First, perceptions of the civil society actors about the evolution and impact of the levels of violence in Mali are described in sections III and IV. While direct violence is not the only factor of insecurity, it remains the most prevalent threat to stability. Section V then studies the role of the state in responding to basic needs of the population—in terms of security, but also in terms of social services essential to ensure a decent life for most of the population. Section VI compares this demand for services with respondents' satisfaction with their delivery, and the type of service provider considered legitimate and reliable. Finally, section VII describes

how, in many cases, individuals and communities have had to adapt and find strategies to ensure basic levels of security themselves.

III. Perceptions of insecurity

Respondents were asked to give their assessment of the general security situation in their locality (see figure 1). Majorities in both the North and the South felt that the level of insecurity remained the same. The South has been the area least affected by insecurity, as it is, in practice, the only zone that is effectively controlled by the central government in Bamako, while the North has been the focus of most violence. In Central Mali, however, a majority indicated that the security situation had deteriorated since October 2016. This confirmed earlier analysis of a geographical shift in the crisis zone, which was previously thought to be confined to the North.[16] The Central regions of Mopti and Segou are increasingly affected by the violence.

At the time of the questionnaire, the country had indeed seen an increase in attacks, and March 2017 was the most violent month since early 2013.[17] A key factor was the merging in that month of the armed groups Ansar Dine, al-Murabitoun, the Macina Liberation Front and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb to form Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (Group to Support Islam and Muslims). This merger widened the former groups' spheres of influence, so the new group both retained strong positions in Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu and was able to carry out more frequent attacks in Mopti and Segou. Furthermore, it was reported in March 2017 that 10 000 people had been displaced in Segou and Mopti following inter-community conflict in February.[18]

The lack of an effective state presence in Central Mali in the 12 months before the distribution of the questionnaire had allowed armed groups to fill the security vacuum and inter-community tensions had reached a dangerous peak. According to a Senegalese general who served with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), 'The main risk is the complete collapse of the administration and public services. In all the "liberated zones" from which the French troops chased the jihadists, the state has not come back'.[19] While insecurity in the Central zone is directly linked to the conflict in the North, it is also a result of the long history of tensions between communities over the control of natural resources, ethnic tensions between pastoralists and farmers, and frustrations with the Malian Government.[20] The creation of proxy militias in response to repeated uprisings throughout

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[16] Tobie (note 4), p. 6.

[17] Wigmore-Shepherd, D., 'Mali–March 2017 update', Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 11 Apr. 2017.

[18] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Mali: Population movements related to armed conflict and intercommunity violence', Mar. 2017.

[19] Werly, R., 'Au Mali, l'écroulement de l'Etat inquiète' [In Mali, the collapse of the state causes concern], *Le Temps* (Geneva), 14 Nov. 2017 (author's translation from French); and International Crisis Group (ICG), 'The Sahel: Mali's crumbling peace process and the spreading jihadist threat', 1 Mar. 2017.

[20] Tobie, A., 'Central Mali: Violence, local perspectives and diverging narratives', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2017/5, Dec. 2017; and Diallo, O. A., 'Ethnic clashes, jihad, and insecurity in central Mali', *Peace Review*, vol. 29, no. 3 (2017), pp. 299–306.

Box 1. International interventions in Mali

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)
As an integrated mission, one of MINUSMA's four objectives is 'assisting the reestablishment of State authority, the rebuilding of the security sector, and the promotion and protection of human rights in that country'. MINUSMA was launched on 1 July 2013.

European Union Training Mission Mali (EUTM Mali)
EUTM is the European Union's support to the training of the Malian armed forces to improve their capabilities under the control of the political authorities. It was created in January 2013.

European Union Common Security and Defence Policy Mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali)
EUCAP Sahel Mali is a civilian mission of the European Union, launched on 15 January 2015, to assist the internal security forces to reassert the government's authority over the whole of the country.

G5 Sahel
The G5 Sahel was established in February 2014 by Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger to, among other things, 'provide a strategic intervention framework to improve the living conditions of the population'. The focus of the G5 has been, so far, on operationalizing a G5 joint force that brings together the defence forces of the member states to conduct joint operations across borders.

Operation Barkhane
Operation Barkhane was launched in August 2014 as the military component of France's strategy for the Sahel.

Sources: MINUSMA, 'About MINUSMA'; EUTM Mali; EUCAP Sahel Mali; G5 Sahel, and French Ministry of the Armed Forces, 'Opération Barkhane'.

Mali's history and the discourse around community identity to promote self-defence groups led to an increased militarization of communities in Central and Northern Mali, which has been even more pronounced since the 2012 crisis.[21]

IV. Responses to insecurity

The increase in insecurity in the Central and North zones and the difference in perceptions in the South imply that differentiated approaches are needed to respond to the needs of each zone. A number of international interventions focus on the building of strong public institutions, the rule of law and the demilitarization of society, such as the European Union (EU) Mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali), the EU Training Mission Mali (EUTM Mali) and MINUSMA (see box 1). Others have also opted to intervene directly, either in coordinating regional forces (the G5 Sahel, with joint operations between Sahelian armed forces) or in support of the Malian armed forces (France's Operation Barkhane). Yet, to date, large portions of the territory and population in the North and Central zones remain under the volatile control of different armed groups. For example, in December 2017 the Malian Government had to reschedule local elections for the second time, citing security risks.[22]

[21] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Central Mali: An Uprising in the Making?*, Africa Report no. 238 (ICG: Brussels, 6 July 2016).
[22] Kestler-D'Amours, J., 'Election delay sends "bad signal" for Mali stability', Al Jazeera, 3 Dec. 2017.

While the Central and North zones were experiencing high levels of violence in March 2017, the population in the South might have had a different perception of the conflict and be likely to express different opinions on the urgency of the situation or the need to resort to specific measures to stabilize the country. The first survey, in October 2016, had suggested that the opinions of Malians were diverging on the need for and relevance of the presence of external security actors on Malian territory.[23] Indeed, as the second survey shows, while there has been an almost unanimous demand for the presence of more security actors on the ground, there are substantial regional differences in the types of actor required.

Figure 2. Perceptions of the security provision of international forces, by zone, March 2017

The graph shows responses to the question 'Would you say that international forces such as MINUSMA or Operation Barkhane are a source of security for you?'

Respondents were asked to give their assessment of the security provision of international forces (see figure 2). Respondents in the Central and South indicated that they do not wish to see more troops from external interventions deployed in their regions. According to two-fifths of respondents in Central Mali, the presence of international forces such as MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane has not increased security for them, which implies that there is potential for these operations to improve. These respondents asked for the presence of state security actors to be reinforced, including by the Malian armed forces, National Guard and police. In contrast, a large majority of respondents in the North were positive about the contribution of forces such as MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane, and there was high demand for more troops to be deployed in these operations.

This is consistent with the findings from the October 2016 questionnaire. The respondents had indicated then that, while Malians directly in contact with MINUSMA could see the benefits of its presence in terms of economic or social services provided to the population, others more removed from the UN bases held a more political (and often critical) view of its very presence on Malian soil.

While this clearly shows that there are regional differences, the 2012 crisis affected most people in Mali, directly or indirectly. Although less visible in the South, the crisis has had a deep impact on the population in every region. Reflecting this, most respondents, in all three zones, defined themselves as a direct or indirect victim of conflict (see figure 3). A further illustration of the destabilizing effects on daily life is the fact that almost half of respondents from the North and Central zones reported having to quit their job due to the crisis (see figure 4). Even in the relative stability of the South, this still applied to one-fifth of respondents.
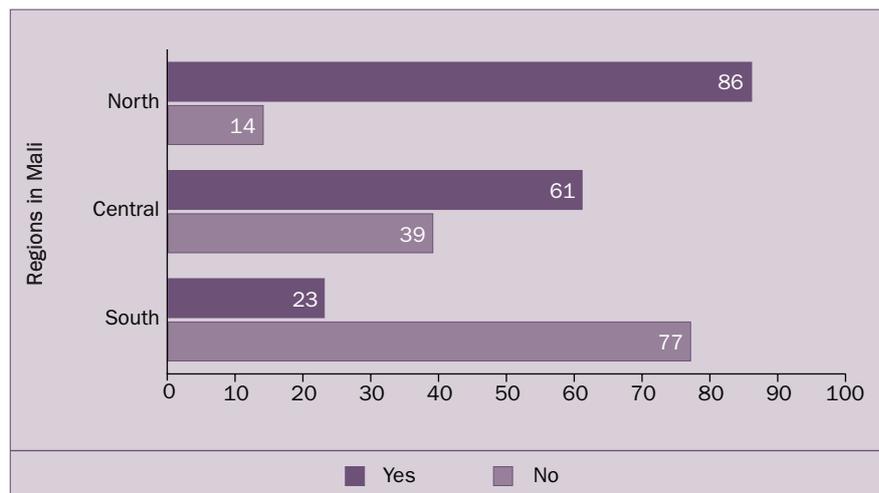
[23] Tobie (note 4).
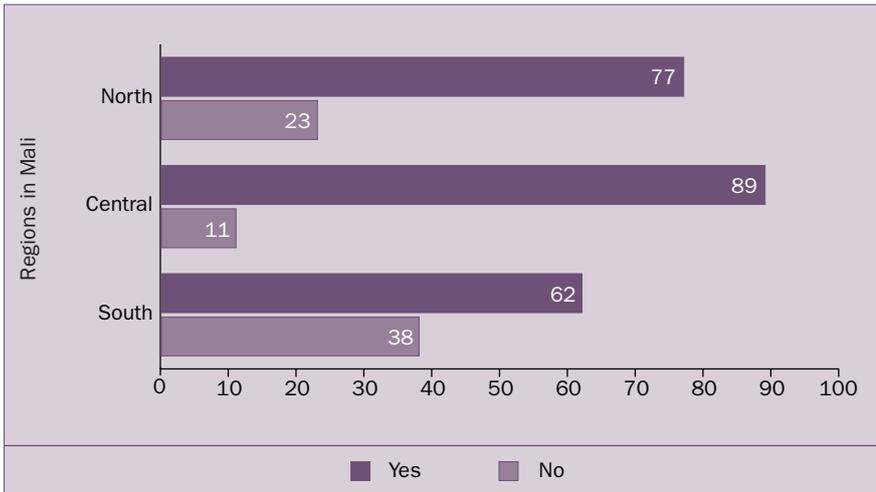
Figure 3. Perceptions of being a victim of the conflict, by zone, March 2017

The graph shows responses to the question 'Would you define yourself as a victim of conflict, whether direct or indirect?'
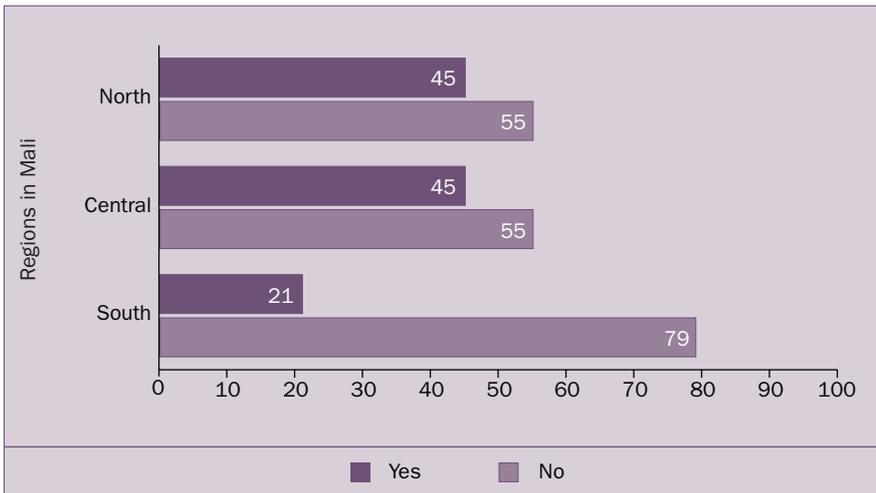
Figure 4. Loss of jobs due to the conflict, by zone, March 2017

The graph shows responses to the question 'Have you had to quit your job since the conflict began?'

The violence has had destabilizing effects on the economic well-being of Malians. Social safety nets have been under duress, and Malians have had to resort to other means to fulfil basic needs. It is therefore not surprising that most respondents from the North and Central zones had received help from non-state actors during the previous year, of which over two-third came from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Respondents in the South received less support and more of it came from the diaspora. Indeed, in West Africa as a whole, remittances from citizens resident abroad have been increasing in recent years, and they play a growing role in the development of the region.[24] Remittances to Mali from migrant workers around the world totalled $806 million in 2016 and it is estimated that they could have reached $1 billion in 2017.[25] This is a significant amount, representing 7 per cent of Mali's gross domestic product.

V. Local demand for state services

Respondents agreed that the Malian state is primarily responsible for the financing of essential public functions, including basic social services such as education, healthcare, water, security and justice. Respondents were asked the question 'Who should finance the following services?' For each service, respondents could choose one or more of four answers: (*a*) the state (including decentralized services), (*b*) Malian civil society organizations (CSOs), (*c*) foreign private organizations (e.g. NGOs) and (*d*) religious organizations. For each service, the state always came in first position, albeit with a wide difference between the sectors considered: for example, 54 per cent for food security and 80 per cent for security and justice.

[24] African Development Bank Group, 'Remittances from West Africa's diaspora: Financial and social transfers for regional development', 31 Aug. 2015.

[25] International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), 'The Malian diaspora invests to offer young people a better future at home', 23 Nov. 2017.

The provision of these services is considered a basic human right. Given the supposed anti-state sentiments in the North and Central zones, it is remarkable that around 80 per cent of respondents in each of the three zones saw the state as the primary, legitimate provider of security and justice. However, increased state presence in the North has often been received with suspicion. For example, the Special Programme for the Peace, Security and Development of Northern Mali (Programme spécial pour la paix, la sécurité et le développement du Nord Mali, PSPSDN), which is supposed to deploy development services alongside an increased presence of state security forces, has largely been perceived as a way for the government to impose its rule, rather than respond to demands.[26] This duality of expectation and suspicion is key to understanding the demand of Malians for state presence. While the return of state services has a prominent place in the expectations of Malians, it is qualified: the state should provide the services required of it in a way that the recipients see as fair and legitimate, rather than imposing them from Bamako onto the regions.

While there is a common understanding that the Malian state should be the primary supplier of these strategic services, the perceived level of state responsibility differs by gender: in general, men tend to rate state responsibility slightly higher than women (see table 1). This difference is even bigger between the answers of youths and non-youths: the latter deem the state's responsibility higher than the former.

The questionnaire also included questions on the best level for decision making, as the issue of decentralization is important in Mali. Initiated in the 1990s, the process of decentralization is regularly debated in the context of the recurring crises. Closer proximity to the decision-making process is sometimes seen as a way to adapt services to local needs and demands. Since the reaffirmation of the democratic nature of the Malian state in the 1990s, numerous attempts have been made to enhance decentralization. The transfer of competencies to local administrative units—the regions, *cercles* and communes—has not been followed by the transfer of resources, leading to a mismatch between the official responsibilities of the administrative units and their ability to deliver services.[27] Nonetheless, decentralization has remained a central concept for reform in Mali for successive governments.

However, respondents' preferences for national or decentralized service provision seem to depend on the sector considered: while most respondents were in favour of a nationalized justice system, most preferred transport,

Table 1. The state as the preferred provider of services, by gender and age group, March 2017

Service	Females	Males	Youths	Non-youths	Total
Education	75	76	66	79	75
Food security	47	58	47	58	54
Healthcare	65	67	60	70	66
Justice	79	81	66	87	80
Security	73	85	69	87	80
Transport	63	72	67	79	69
Water	63	67	62	66	65

Note: Figures are shares (%) of respondents who chose the state in response to the question 'Who should finance the following services?'

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[26] Ag Youssef, I. et al., Etude sur les stratégies de développement économique et social des régions nord du Mali (Tombouctou, Gao, Kidal) [Study on the economic and social development strategies for Northern Mali], Report by the Presidency of the Malian Republic, Mar. 2012 (in French).

[27] Baudais, V., *Les trajectoires de l'Etat au Mali* [Trajectories of the state in Mali] (L'Harmattan: Paris, 2016).

Table 2. Preferences for decentralization of services, by region, March 2017

Service	Region			National total
	North	Central	South	
Education	45	50	56	49
Food security	66	66	66	66
Healthcare	66	55	56	60
Justice	40	43	25	37
Security	52	54	46	49
Transport	61	66	54	60
Water	72	71	62	69

Note: Figures are shares (%) of respondents who chose decentralization in response to the questions 'Should the proposed public policy be national or decentralized?'

water, healthcare and food security to be decentralized (see table 2). Preferences for education and security were less clear-cut and varied by region, with the South often standing out: respondents in the South tended to favour the nationalization of security policies, whereas those in the North and Central zones wanted them to be decentralized. On the question of education, the opposite pattern appeared: most of the respondents in the South wanted this to be decentralized, whereas those in the North and Central zones wanted a national policy. This may be due to the fact that education is considered a strong vector of integration in Mali and is seen as one of the main instruments for fostering national cohesion. The lack of educational infrastructure in the North, including the absence of a university, has been seen as an obstacle to the development of the regions there.[28]

VI. Perceptions of the state's ability to deliver basic services

Although the state remained the primary actor responsible for the provision of essential services in the eyes of the questionnaire respondents, the detailed responses highlight the fact that state services may not meet expectations. Consequently, Malians resort to other ways of meeting these needs.

The respondents made it clear that they were suffering from poor service provision: when asked to rate their satisfaction with healthcare, education, water and transport, they rated the sectors as 'unsatisfactory' (with a median score of around 2 on a scale from 1 to 4; see figure 5). The security sector received the lowest average score (1.79 nationally).

There were not wide differences in perceptions across zones regarding satisfaction with the various service sectors. The overall level of satisfaction across the country was low. The biggest regional differences were for transport and security: in both cases, respondents from the South reported being more satisfied than those from the North and Central zones. The overall satisfaction with services in the North and Central zones is surprising as it is usually assumed that these regions are more deprived of basic services than the South.[29]

When asked who should provide services such as education, healthcare, water, food security and transport, respondents agreed that the Malian state is in need of substantial (foreign) financial support in this regard. Even if the state was seen as being primarily responsible for these services, foreign

[28] Institut Malien de Recherche Action Pour la Paix (IMRAP) and Interpeace, *Autoportrait du Mali: Les obstacles à la paix* [A self portrait of Mali: Obstacles to peace] (IMRAP: Bamako, Mar. 2015).

[29] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 'Mali: Access to health care remains challenging in the north', Operational Update no. 10/2013, 28 Nov. 2013; and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Humanitarian bulletin: Mali', Apr.–May 2016.

actors also ranked relatively high: 29 per cent for education, 34 per cent for healthcare, 34 per cent for water and 40 per cent for food security. This is not unusual—programmes financed and run by international organizations are common in fragile settings—but it does illustrate that the Malian state lacks the financial capacity or willingness to ensure the availability of essential security and welfare services. Moreover, external aid can have the effect of diluting the state's accountability for essential services and even weakening the governance framework over the long term. Indeed, such external support and funding has not just contributed to strengthening state services but has, in many instances, contributed to the maintenance of systems of patronage.[30]

Looking at each sector in turn also demonstrates the inability of the state to be the sole source of finance. Only 54 per cent of respondents believed that food security is the financial responsibility of the state (multiple actors could be selected). Instead, they believed that foreign organizations (40 per cent) and Malian CSOs (24 per cent) played an important role in ensuring food security for Mali's population. Similar patterns are visible in respondents' reactions to water and healthcare. Religious organizations were seen as playing a relatively small role: they were chosen by only 2–5 per cent of respondents.

According to respondents from across the country, justice and security were the sectors in which the state has the largest responsibility (both 80 per cent), but they believed that foreign organizations and Malian CSOs should offer financial support. Youths, in particular, indicated that Malian CSOs and foreign actors should financially support the justice sector (20 and 14 per cent, respectively) and in the security sector (20 and 17 per cent, respectively). These two sectors are the only ones in which respondents wanted Malian CSOs to play a bigger role than foreign organizations—in all other sectors, respondents allocated more importance to support by foreign organizations than to support local civil society.
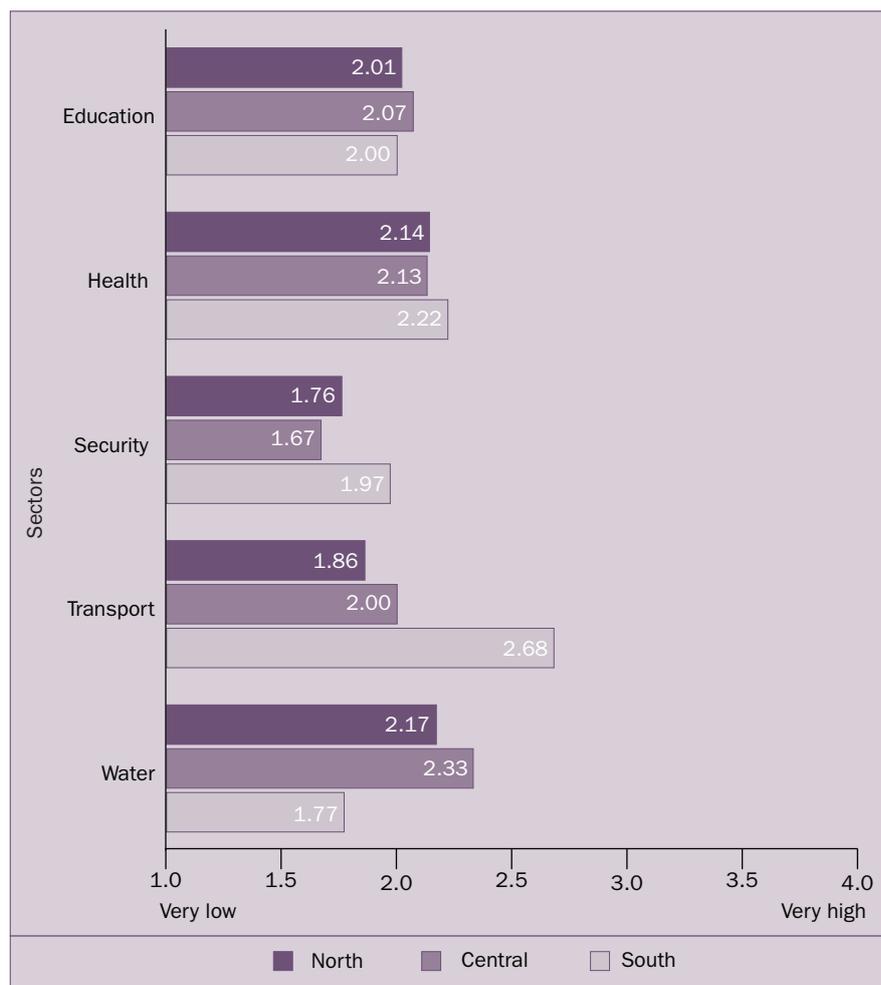
Figure 5. Satisfaction with state services, by sector and zone, March 2017

The graph shows responses to the question 'How would you assess your satisfaction with the following sectors?' Satisfaction is rated on a scale of 1 (very low) to 4 (very high).

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[30] Dollar, D. and Pritchett, L., *Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*, World Bank Policy Research Report (Oxford University Press: New York, Nov. 1998).
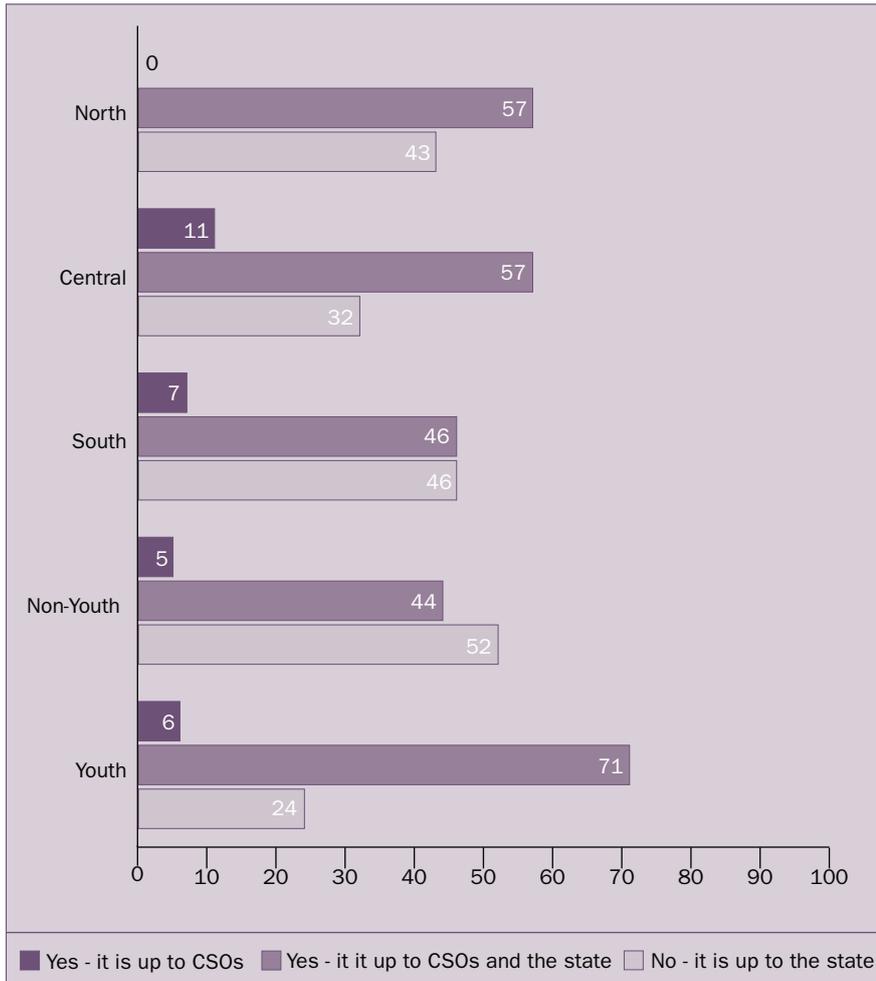
Figure 6. Perceptions of civil society intervention in the security sector, by age group and zone, March 2017

The graph shows responses to the question 'Do you think it is normal that Malian civil society organizations intervene in the security sector?'

For the justice sector, this could be due to a belief that internationally financed justice efforts might influence judicial decisions and contribute to a top-down approach, which ultimately makes mistakes and fails to account for what local communities feel should happen. In contrast, local civil society actors are believed to often communicate directly with communities and to incorporate local customs in order to reach a consensus in the creation of peace and justice projects that come from Malians for Malians.[31] The justice sector is also considered to be core to the identity of the state and where it exercises its sovereignty—a traditional view that is in line with the French state model.

A similar explanation could apply to the security sector. There is a common perception that foreign actors misunderstand or misinterpret the local conflict dynamics in Mali. Due to this, Malian CSOs offer a more local and adequately informed approach to influencing security in the country. Malian CSOs are arguably better equipped than foreign organizations to facilitate continuous communication between the local populations and security institutions and are key to bringing the security issues of minority groups onto the public agenda.[32] The recognition of the crucial role that CSOs play in the security sector has even led many foreign organizations to fund capacity building and reinforcement of CSOs.[33]

With justice and security being the most politically sensitive sectors, it might be the case that transport, water, food security and healthcare are perceived as less susceptible to foreign influence. Foreign organizations often have more funding and resources than local CSOs, and foreign aid and foreign intervention have arguably been highly successful when related to humanitarian-type issues that focus on the most basic needs.

[31] International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), 'Internationally-led justice efforts in Mali must consider national context, adapt to local needs', 10 June 2014.

[32] Loada, A. and Moderan, O., *Civil Society Involvement in Security Sector Reform and Governance*, Tool no. 6 of the Toolkit for Security Sector Reform and Governance in West Africa (Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces: Geneva, 2015).

[33] Caparini, M., 'Civil society and democratic oversight of the security sector: A preliminary investigation', Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) Working Paper no. 132, Jan. 2004, p. 4.

There was a solid consensus among the respondents that Malian CSOs should intervene in the provision of security and justice (54 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively). More non-youths wanted a bigger role for the state than youths, with the latter giving more importance to CSOs across all sectors. The North showed a relatively high demand for state-organized security and less CSO intervention than the Central zone (see figure 6).

In other sectors, including education, the demand for financial support by foreign organizations is more substantial. Education lies at the heart of a functioning state and is of the most strategic importance.[34] In this light, it is noteworthy that almost one-third of respondents demand foreign organisations to fund education in Malian schools (see figure 7). The lack of confidence in the willingness and capability of the Malian state is highest in the North and Central zones. In Central Mali, none of the respondents saw the state as capable of being the only provider of education, while 97 per cent said education should be provided by the state in collaboration with Malian civil society. There was also a significant difference in the perceptions of youths and non-youths: about one in four youths (24 per cent) saw education as the responsibility of Malian CSOs only, without state involvement, compared with one in seventeen non-youths (6 per cent).

Across the country, respondents identified a crucial role for Malian CSOs in the delivery of basic social services (the fact that respondents are civil society actors probably contributes to this). Across all the sectors, youths tended to allocate more importance to civil society than non-youths, and non-youths indicated a bigger role for the state than youths.

Figure 7. Perceptions of education provision, by age group and zone, March 2017

The graph shows responses to the question 'Who should finance education?'

VII. Local initiatives to fill the security gap: Security from below

Insecurity and the absence of adequate state security provision remained key concerns for all respondents. In the absence of state security providers considered able and legitimate, initiatives have flourished on an individual or collective level to offer protection from violence.
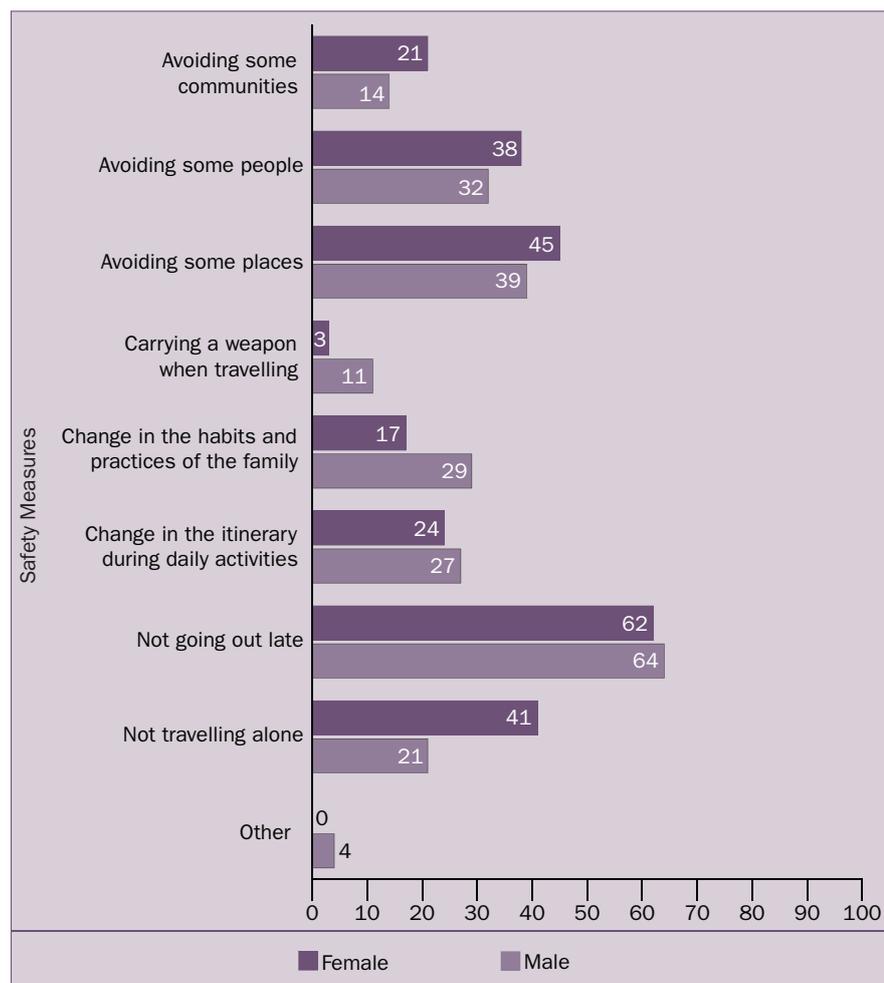
On an individual level, respondents had tried to protect themselves and their families by taking specific security measures related to location and gender (see figure 8), such as not going out late (particularly in the Central zone), avoiding certain communities (particularly women) or not travelling alone (particularly women).

[34] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (note 13), p. 21.

On a community level, respondents across all three zones indicated that their communities have coped with poor services by establishing their own local security initiatives (see figure 9). The nature of these initiatives differed across the zones. In the North and Central zones, communities had mostly organized patrolling local militias (72 per cent in the North, 63 per cent in the Central zone). In the South, 50 per cent of communities had taken 'other' measures to guarantee security. Of those, 38 per cent had established night-time patrols and 25 per cent had set up armed self-defence groups.

The presence of these local militias is not new in Mali. Hunter societies have traditionally existed to support customary authorities in establishing law and order and protecting the community.[35] With repeated rebellions and armed insurgencies in Mali since independence, in some regions the local self-protection groups have evolved and proliferated. Some of these groups have been supported by the state to act as proxies and have acted alongside, or in place of, official security forces.

Figure 8. Safety measures taken, by type and gender, March 2017

The graph shows responses to the question 'If you have taken specific measures to ensure the safety of your family, what do they consist of?'

This continued presence of local militias, and their growth, means that the state does not have a monopoly on the use of force. According to respondents, these armed local militias were not only a consequence but a driver of insecurity and violence (see figure 10). In the North, two-thirds of respondents reported that security groups had caused trouble—thereby exacerbating existing security problems. Given the fact that non-youths had heard about trouble linked to these groups more often than youths, it is surprising that they nevertheless felt more protected by the presence of these groups and wanted their presence to increase. In contrast, respondents from the Central zone reported that these groups caused relatively little trouble and their deployment increased the sense of security. These respondents wanted more informal local security groups to be deployed.

[35] Hagberg, S., 'Beyond regional radars: Security from below and the rule of law in the Sahel', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2018), pp. 21–37.

VIII. Conclusions

Respondents' answers to the questionnaire show that in Mali (particularly North and Central) the state is not perceived as having the capacity to deliver essential services to the population. In such a situation, non-state actors gain more importance and other initiatives emerge to meet the population's demand for basic services. While this does not, in theory, undermine the legitimacy of the state (respondents still saw it as the actor with the most legitimacy to provide these services), it does create parallel, and possibly competing, systems of service provision.

The respondents' answers also demonstrate the capacity of Malians to find resources and organize themselves in times of duress. This gives cause for hope and indicates a new and novel way for the Malian state to harness the resilience of its population: it may be possible for state services to regulate and support communities that have found innovative and entrepreneurial methods for getting the services they need.

In this sense, there are no 'ungoverned spaces' in Mali. When communities realize that the state may not be able to provide the services that they require, they either turn to other service providers or create their own mechanisms. However, this situation is at odds with the image—still very much in the minds of Malians—of the state as the primary provider of services. It also undermines Mali's sovereignty, as more and more actors can claim to be legitimately intervening inside its borders to provide these services.

These issues are of critical importance today: the current crisis started six years ago and a peace agreement was signed three years ago that aimed to reinstate the authority (and legitimacy) of the state over the entire Malian territory. Following the presidential elections in July–August 2018, crucial parliamentary elections are due to take place in 2019. In these turbulent times, the state needs to demonstrate its ability to deliver change and progress in the lives of the Malian population.
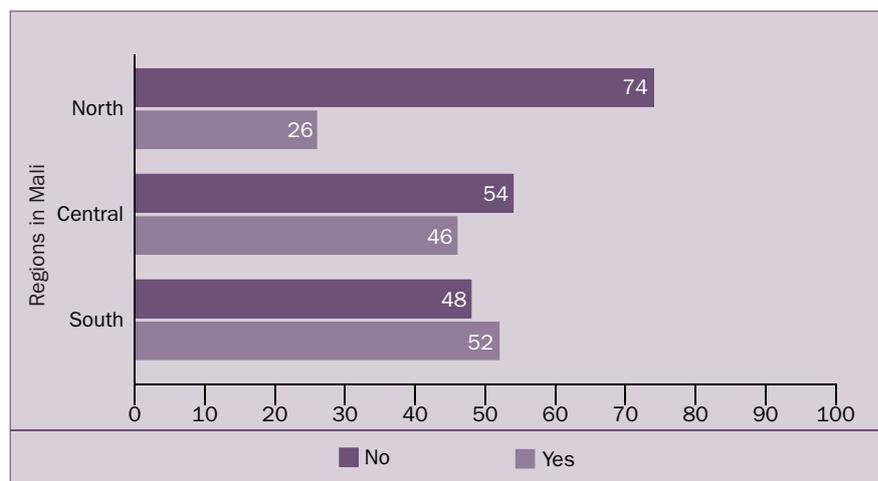
Figure 9. Local security initiatives, by age group, zone and gender, March 2017

The graph shows responses to the question 'Has your community launched a local security initiative?'
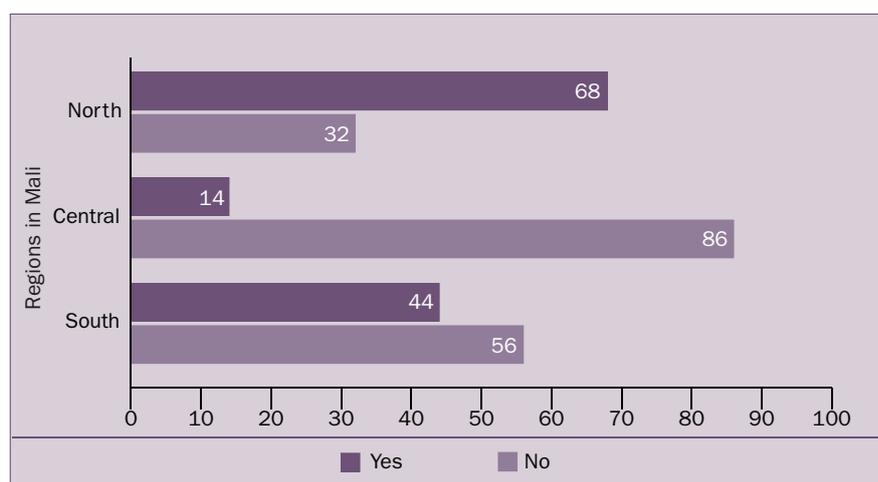
Figure 10. Perceptions of trouble associated with local armed security groups, by age group, zone and gender, March 2017

The graph shows responses to the question 'Have you heard about any trouble linked to the presence of local armed security groups?'

STATE SERVICES IN AN INSECURE ENVIRONMENT: PERCEPTIONS AMONG CIVIL SOCIETY IN MALI

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CONTENTS

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