THE LIMITS AND PITFALLS OF MULTILATERAL REGIONAL AND NATIONAL RESPONSES TO THE PEACE AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE SAHEL AND CÔTE D’IVOIRE
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Acronyms

ACEACN  Association for More Cohesion between North Central livestock and Farmers
ACLED   Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
ADDR    Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Authority
AFD     Agence Française de Développement
AIDB    African Development Bank
AFISMA  African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AU      African Union
CAFO    Coordination of Women's Associations
CCDO    Coordinating Centre for Operational Decisions
CDVR    Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission
CECI    Centre for International Study and Cooperation
CILSS   Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
CMA     Coordination of Azawad Movements
CONARIV National Commission for Reconciliation and Compensation of PNCS
CREDD   Strategic Framework for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development
CSOs    Civil Society Organisations
DDR     Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DoD     Department of Defence
ECOMICI ECOWAS Mission in Côte d'Ivoire
ECOWAS  Economic Community of West African States
EU      European Union
EUCAP   European Union Capacity Building Mission
EUTM    European Union Training Mission in Mali
FAN     Nigerien Armed Forces
FAO     Food and Agriculture Organisation
FC-G5S  G5 Sahel Joint Force
FSI     Fragile State Index
GATIA   Tuareg Self-Defence Group Imghad and Allies
GBV     Gender Based Violence
IOM     International Organization for Migration
ISGS    Islamic State Group in the Greater Sahara
JNIM    Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin
LGA     Liptako-Gourma Authority
MINUSMA United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali
MISAHEL African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel
MSA     Movement for the Salvation of Azawad
OCHA    United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OCHA    UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid
OIC     Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
PISRC   Integrated Security Plan for Central Regions
PNLEVT  Prevention and Control of Violent Extremism and Terrorism
PNLEVT  Prevention and Control of Violent Extremism and Terrorism
PPU    Presidential Emergency Programme
SDF    Defence and Security Forces
SDGs   Sustainable Development Goals
UEMOA  Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine
UN     United Nations
UNDP   United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA  United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR  United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
UNISS  United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel
UNOCI  United Nations created the United Nations in Côte d'Ivoire
UNOWAS United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
UNSC   United Nations Security Council
UNSP   United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel
USAID  United States Agency for International Development
VDP    Volunteer for Defense of Homeland
WAEMU  West African Monetary Union
WANEP  West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)
WFP    World Food Programme
WPS    Women, Peace and Security
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Introduction

1.1. Background

The Sahel region has long been one of Africa’s most fragile regions, with many complex and multi-layered security challenges, exacerbated by the 2012 Malian crisis. In recent years, the Sahel has been in the global spotlight due to structural and contextual challenges such as poor governance, corruption, terrorism, violent extremism, political crisis, election violence, intercommunal violence, transnational organised crime, climate change, and food insecurity. These challenges are the product of both local and global dynamics. The combined effects of the challenges are derailing the progress and investments made in democratic consolidation and the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). More ominously, the consequences on the lives and wellbeing of women and girls have also been particularly grievous. According to Plan International, adolescent girls in the Sahel are enduring the catastrophic consequences of conflict, food insecurity and mass displacement manifesting in the form of extreme violence, loss of education, health, food and livelihoods. A similar report by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) showed how the humanitarian crisis in the region has left a total of 5.1 million Burkinabe, Nigeriens and Maliens especially women in need.

In response to the security challenges in the Sahel, there have been various interventions by multilateral agencies, regional organisations and bilateral partners including the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), France and the United States. Additionally, there have been diverse responses by Governments and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as part of the broader efforts to address the threats. A classic example is the ongoing G5 Sahel initiative initiated by Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger and Mauritania to address the multiple security and developmental challenges in the Sahel region.

However, despite the diverse responses to the threats in the Sahel, the security situation continues to exacerbate with the recent political crisis in Mali being a case in point. But even before the August 2020 crisis in Mali, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, who is the head of UNOWAS, had in July 2019 notified the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) of the region’s volatile security situation, and how escalating violence and insecurity have sparked an unprecedented humanitarian crisis across the region. Indeed, UNOWAS recorded more than 4,000 deaths in 2019 alone as compared to 770 in 2016 due to the resurgence of attacks and violence in especially Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Worryingly, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its debilitating impact on the economy of countries has
further added another layer to the pre-existing challenges in the Sahel.

The enduring and protracted nature of the security challenges in the Sahel invokes critical questions about the efficacy of existing responses and the value of the huge financial and human investments made by states, regional and international stakeholders in the region. Undoubtedly, to be able to address this dilemma and recommend a lasting panacea to the security challenges in the Sahel, an evaluation of the limits or pitfalls of current interventions is essential. It is for this reason that the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) partnered with ECOWAS and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) as part of the project “Building an Inclusive Post COVID-19 Recovery, Crisis Transitions and Governance Reforms in the Sahel and Côte D'Ivoire” to undertake this comprehensive research.

1.2. Objectives of the Research

The main objective of the research was to assess the gaps in the multilateral, regional and national responses to the peace and security challenges in the Sahel especially as they affect women and young girls and proffer evidence-based policy recommendations to address the threats.

The specific objectives of the research were as follows:

i) Examine the complex and multi-layered peace and security challenges in the Sahel region;

ii) Analyse the specific challenges facing women and girls in the Sahel region;

iii) Interrogate the multilateral and regional responses to the peace and security challenges in the Sahel region;

iv) Interrogate the national responses (both Government and CSOs) to the peace and security challenges in the Sahel region;

v) Identify and discuss the gaps/pitfalls in the multilateral, regional and national response strategies to the peace and security challenges in the Sahel region; and

vi) Provide evidence-based policy recommendations to address the existing gaps in the existing responses to inform appropriate and effective interventions in support of the SDGs in the Sahel.

1.3. Methodology

The research adopted a qualitative approach and a case study design by focusing on three countries in the Sahel region of West Africa namely, Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. An additional target country was Côte d’Ivoire due to its proximity to the selected countries and its strategic political and economic importance to the region. Primary data for the research was generated through series of in-depth interviews and consultations with the relevant stakeholders in the selected countries (see Appendix 1 for list of respondents), while the secondary sources involved the review of extant literature on the subject matter. Due to the COVID 19 restrictions, the interviews were conducted using multiple techniques such as face to face interviews, interviews via telephone, zoom and emails. A team of five researchers (one from WANEP regional office and one each from the four selected countries) conducted the research between November and December 2020. Content analysis and thematic analysis were employed to identify broad themes and patterns within the multilateral, regional and national responses to the peace and security challenges in the Sahel as well as the key gaps or deficiencies. Additionally, quotes, maps, diagrams and other forms of infographic materials are used to explain some of the issues.

However, the study faced some limitations. Due to the timelines for the conduct of the research, COVID-19 restrictions and elections in Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire at the period of the research, not all stakeholders contacted were able to participate in the study. Thus, some of the state actors and
international organisations contacted for the study were unable to grant interviews to the researchers due to their involvement in the electoral processes and COVID-19 related matters. Nevertheless, the researchers were able to collate significant primary data for the analysis of the research objectives.

1.4. Structure of the Report

The report is structured into two sections after the introductory section. The first section focuses on the regional dimension of the multilateral, regional and national responses to the peace and security challenges in the Sahel, while the second section provide a case study discussion of the specific national interventions based on the four selected countries - Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire.

For each of the sections, the themes or indicators for the analysis and discussions were grouped as follows:

1. Overview of the Multi-layered Peace and Security Challenges
2. Specific Challenges facing Women and Girls
3. Responses to Peace and Security Challenges
4. Limits and Pitfalls of Responses to Peace and Security Challenges
5. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations
Regional Report

2.1. Brief Description of the Sahel Region

Geographic definitions of the Sahel region vary among scholars and practitioners. But generally, the Sahel is a 5,000-kilometre belt of land below the Sahara Desert and stretches from Africa’s Atlantic coast to the Red Sea as shown on the Map 2.1. The region marks the physical and cultural transition between the Sahara Desert to the north and tropical savannas to the south with a population of over 300 million.

*Figure 2.1. Map of the Sahel region*

The Sahel is also culturally and historically, a shoreline between the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, making it a site of interaction between Arabic, Islamic and nomadic cultures from the north, and indigenous and traditional cultures from the south. The core Sahel countries includes four countries bordering Lake Chad – Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria as well as Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal. As a largely semi-arid belt of barren, sandy and rock-strewn land, the Sahel has abundant human (demographic and cultural assets) and natural resources, offering enormous potential for rapid growth.

For example, the Sahel is one of the richest regions in the world with abundant oil, natural gas, gold, phosphates, diamonds, copper, iron ore, bauxite, biological diversity and precious woods, among many other assets. It is also endowed with more potential for renewable energy such as solar and wind than other regions of the world. However, there are deep-rooted challenges that affect the prosperity and peace of the region. As described by the UNDP, it is a “land of opportunities as it is of challenges.”

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10 Ibid, pp.6-7
11 UNDP (2019), op. cit.
2.2. Multi-layered Peace and Security Challenges

This section provides a thematic analysis of the regional security threats in the Sahel. It takes a multi-dimensional analytical framework by examining the major security challenges that have negative impacts on the stability of states in the region using the human security lens. The human security approach is a comprehensive methodology that allows for a broad perspective on the complex and multi-dimensional challenges that people and governments face to help realize a world free from fear, want and indignity.

There are seven types of human insecurities which are:¹²

- Economic insecurity (persistent poverty, unemployment, lack of access to credit and other economic opportunities).
- Food insecurity (hunger, famine, sudden rise in food prices).
- Health insecurity (epidemics, malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of access to basic health care).
- Environmental insecurity (land degradation, resource depletion, natural disasters).
- Personal insecurity (physical violence in all its forms, human trafficking, child labour).
- Community insecurity (inter-ethnic, religious and other identity-based tensions, crime, terrorism).
- Political insecurity (political repression, human rights violations, lack of rule of law and justice).

The analysis focuses on these different types of human insecurities in the Sahel. Practically, adopting the human security approach provides a synergistic framework to understand the broad range of challenges the Sahel faces. As argued by Jebb, Hummel, Rios, and Abb, the human security paradigm provides a holistic and empathetic approach to understanding the security situation in the Sahel. Its application will also enhance people-centred and integrated responses by stakeholders that address the multidimensional causes and consequences of the complex challenges to fully realize the transformative promise of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

• Political Insecurity

The political realities in the Sahel partly account for the chronic nature of the threats in the region. From the field study, it was quite clear that the genesis of the crisis in the Sahel emanates from years of poor governance, weak state institutions, endemic corruption, lack of state presence in significant parts of countries' territories, political repression, lack of rule of law, injustice, unlawful killings and alarming human rights violations by members of the defence and security forces, armed groups and self-defence militias, who sometimes operate with rampant impunity.

¹³Interview with key stakeholders in Bamako, Mali, 24 November 2020.
Boubacar Keita could potentially lead to opportunistic in Figure 2.2 that overthrew President Ibrahim caused by the recent military coup d’état as depicted for the destabilisation of the entire Sahel region. There created in the North of the country is partially blamed coup d’état and the subsequent power vacuum instability caused by the Tuareg rebellion, the military by the recurrent political crisis. The 2012 political to advance peace and stability has been undermined public discontent, lack of confidence and mistrust of challenges in the Sahel have caused widespread The cumulative effects of the governance and political in the Sahel have caused widespread public discontent, lack of confidence and mistrust of state’s authority, weakened state legitimacy, and worsened the security situation across the region. In Mali, which is the epicentre of the Sahel crisis, efforts to advance peace and stability has been undermined by the recurrent political crisis. The 2012 political instability caused by the Tuareg rebellion, the military coup d’état and the subsequent power vacuum created in the North of the country is partially blamed for the destabilisation of the entire Sahel region. There are growing fears that the fragile political situation caused by the recent military coup d’état as depicted in figure 2.2 that overthrew President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita could potentially lead to opportunistic expansion and consolidation of violent extremism beyond the North and Central regions of the country due to the political insecurity in neighboring countries. In a similar vein, the leadership vacuum in Burkina Faso after the fall of President Compaoré and the dissolution of the Presidential Guards contributed to the escalation of insecurity within the administrative provinces of Soum and Oudalan as well as the Boucle du Mouhoun and Nord regions. The current President, Christian Roch Kabore, has been widely criticized for his poor handling of the political and security situation in the country which is threatening border areas with Benin and Côte d’Ivoire.

- **Community and Personal Insecurities**

The Sahel region has been a frontline in the war against terrorism and insurgency over the past decade. In recent years, as represented on figure 2.3., the region has witnessed an increasing proliferation of non-state armed groups, violent

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17 Similarly, for the 2019 Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International, Mali ranked 130 out of 198 countries, Niger ranked 120, Chad ranked 162 and Mauritania ranked 137 out of 198 countries. 18

The cumulative effects of the governance and political challenges in the Sahel have caused widespread public discontent, lack of confidence and mistrust of state’s authority, weakened state legitimacy, and worsened the security situation across the region. In Mali, which is the epicentre of the Sahel crisis, efforts to advance peace and stability has been undermined by the recurrent political crisis. The 2012 political instability caused by the Tuareg rebellion, the military coup d’état and the subsequent power vacuum created in the North of the country is partially blamed for the destabilisation of the entire Sahel region. There are growing fears that the fragile political situation caused by the recent military coup d’état as depicted in figure 2.2 that overthrew President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita could potentially lead to opportunistic expansion and consolidation of violent extremism beyond the North and Central regions of the country due to the political insecurity in neighboring countries. In a similar vein, the leadership vacuum in Burkina Faso after the fall of President Compaoré and the dissolution of the Presidential Guards contributed to the escalation of insecurity within the administrative provinces of Soum and Oudalan as well as the Boucle du Mouhoun and Nord regions. The current President, Christian Roch Kabore, has been widely criticized for his poor handling of the political and security situation in the country which is threatening border areas with Benin and Côte d’Ivoire.

- **Community and Personal Insecurities**

The Sahel region has been a frontline in the war against terrorism and insurgency over the past decade. In recent years, as represented on figure 2.3., the region has witnessed an increasing proliferation of non-state armed groups, violent
extremist/terrorist/Jihadist groups, armed self-defence groups, as well as counterinsurgency/counterterrorism operations by state security forces and international partners. Armed groups linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State such as Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), Islamic State Group in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Ansarul Islam are gradually expanding their presence and capabilities. Indeed, due to the porous borders and the absence of the state in large stretch of lands in the Sahel, some of these groups have established lucrative criminal ventures such as the imposition of taxes on the rural population, trafficking of drugs, weapons and people to raise funds to sustain their activities. Pre-existing ethnic tensions and inter-communal violence over land disputes, chieftaincy successions, and customary rites have become mixed up with terrorism and insurgency, further aggravating the community and personal insecurities in the region.

It has also led to conflict spirals within the region, with the tri-border area between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger being at the centre of violence.

The rising violence has increased the number of civilian victims dramatically. Civilians are being targeted, intimidated, abducted, harassed and killed, with increasing regularity by conflict actors who accuse them of supporting their opponents.

There have been killings and attacks against state officials, churches and Imams who are deemed less radical by terrorist groups to cause community tensions and also to project the image of a weak government that is unable to provide security for its citizens. In 2019, data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) showed that casualties from attacks targeting especially civilians in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger increased fivefold since 2016, with over 4,000 deaths. Majority of the civilians killed came from the Fulani, Bellah, Tuaregs, and Dogon ethnic groups. While the bulk of the civilian related attacks are orchestrated by the terrorist and jihadist groups, the community-based militias such as the Volunteer for Defence of Homeland (VDP) militiamen, local Dozo and Dogon ethnic militias and government forces have equally been perpetrators. These actors routinely commit atrocities across the region with impunity. The attacks against civilians especially by government forces has in most instances alienated the local population from government and undermined the short-term gains of counterterrorism operations. The human rights violations have also enabled armed groups to sometimes pose as as ‘community protectors’ to further consolidate their control of communities.

- Environmental and Food Insecurities

Climate change and its impact has dominated national and international discourse on environmental insecurity in the Sahel. The Sahel has
been considered as one of the world’s most vulnerable regions to climate change due to extreme temperatures, fluctuating rainfall, and droughts, resulting in land degradation, changes in grazing patterns, and reduction of water supply for both humans and animals.

Specifically, rainy seasons are becoming shorter, more intense, and less predictable as precipitation increases 7% for every degree Celsius in temperature rise. Droughts and floods due to more intense rainfall are growing longer and more frequent, triggering new conflicts, disrupting livelihoods of the most vulnerable and leading to forced migration. The UN estimates that roughly 80% of the Sahel’s farmland is degraded and temperatures are rising 1.5 times faster than the global average. Figure 2.4, shows the impacts of climate change in the region, covering the hazard, vulnerability and people’s capacity to cope. It is clear that the vulnerability of climate change threatens food security, water security and health issues. The outcome or coping mechanism has usually been forced migration, competition over natural resources, and increased risk of domestic conflict.

Commenting on the situation, Niger’s former President Mahamadou Issoufou during his remarks at the UN General Assembly summit on climate change in the Sahel in September 2019, emphasised the perceptible effects of climate change on agricultural land, pastures and water availability as well as how it is jeopardising food security with negative impact on security and migration. President Issoufou further indicated that Niger loses “100,000 hectares of arable land every year…the degradation of our land is unheard of and affects people in rural areas, young people, and many women.” The situation in Niger is not different from the other Sahelian countries where land available for pastoralists and farmers is shrinking and leading to competition between farmers and herders over scare resources. Hundreds of civilians are killed every year in inter-communal violence between herders and farmers in countries such as Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria.

Closely linked to the environmental insecurity is food insecurity which has become a key humanitarian issue especially for subsistence farmers who lack alternative source of livelihoods. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that 29.2 million people in Sahel region are food insecure, including 9.4 million suffering from severe food insecurity who are likely to experience extreme food deficits. 

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26Ibid
29Ibid
Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the number of food-insecure people in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger has risen from 1 million to 4.8 million and this is expected to increase in 2021 as the virus continues to spread.\(^{30}\) Already, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (OCHA) estimates that 12 million people in the region, of whom 5 million in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger alone are facing a serious lack of food. Figure 2.5 shows the food insecurity classifications in the region under three categories of risk—minimal, under pressure and crisis.

- **Health Insecurity**

Health issues are a major concern in the Sahel. Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, diseases such as malaria, meningitis, poliomyelitis and HIV-AIDS were prevalent in the region. Other health problems include the high rate of malnutrition, poor sanitation conditions, poor water and lack of access to healthcare due to weak health systems.\(^{33}\) Malnutrition in particular has been a major threat to children’s health and development. According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 15 per cent of children in Niger were acutely malnourished as of 2018 (unchanged since 2006). In Chad, UNICEF pointed out that almost 1.8 million children under 5 years were suffering from global acute malnutrition, including 500,000 who are severely malnourished.\(^{34}\) The drivers of malnutrition in the region can be attributed to insufficient high-quality and diverse foods due to shocks, climate change, challenging agroecological conditions, population growth, and underdeveloped food systems as well as insufficient purchasing power to access food due to poverty.\(^{35}\)
The region is now facing the additional challenge of COVID-19 which is putting pressure on the already fragile health situation and worsening humanitarian emergency. As of 20 February 2020, the West African Health Organisation (WAHO) had recorded 369,244 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in West Africa, out of which 321,154 have recovered and 467,6 have died. Some of the COVID-19 details of countries in the region are captured in figure 2.6. It is quite clear from figure 2.6. that the rate of COVID-19 infection continues to increase. Although the implementation of measures by governments in central Sahel is slowing the spread of the virus, the situation is made worse by decades of underinvestment in the region’s health sector as well as the enduring security crisis which has displaced 1.2 million people as of May 2020. Bøås and Rupesinghe posit that “significant disruptions to education due to COVID-19, have also left children and youth in destitute and frustrating situations, sharpening the sentiments of marginalisation.” There is also no doubt that Sahel countries will suffer directly and indirectly from the economic recession caused by the pandemic in the coming years. Most of the countries may be affected by fewer resources from the international community for development purposes and remittances from diaspora populations in Europe and elsewhere may also drop.

Figure 2.6. Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 in West Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CUMMULATIVE CONFIRMED CASES OF COVID-19 BY COUNTRY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: WAHO.

36For more information see https://data.wahooas.org/outbreaks/#/, accessed 20 February 2021.
• Economic Insecurity

Generally, the economic outlook of the region is not encouraging due to the lack of economic growth and development. Creating viable economic opportunities, creating jobs for the youth and meeting the basic needs of the population has been a very daunting task for countries in the Sahel. According to the World Bank, “the COVID-19 crisis, coupled with the impact of conflicts and violence, the effects of climate change, and the many vulnerabilities in the region, is expected to push almost 1.3 million more people into extreme poverty.”³⁹ Women are expected to be the worst affected due to their limited participation in the economies of countries.

Already, the fallout from international lockdown measures, border closures and the global economic crisis are proving challenging for most Sahelian countries. In Mali, Niger, Chad, and Burkina Faso, the economic fallout has wreaked havoc on fragile food supply chains and cross-border trading networks. Governments have relaxed lockdown measures due to growing poverty, hunger, and anger among the population. Poverty in Burkina Faso for example remains high with the country ranking 182 out of 189 countries in the UNDP Human Development index.⁴⁰ The case of Niger is not good either as the country ranked 161 out of the 189 countries. Niger’s economy has progressively become informalised and criminalised, especially in peripheral areas due to the increasing cross border trafficking activities along the northeast region close to the Libyan Border. Longstanding economic fragility has made the Sahel susceptible to persistent crisis and cultivated a fertile ground for instability. Promoting economic growth and development is critical to putting the Sahel on a path to stability. Investment in entrepreneurship, with a focus on youth and women to foster job creation is particularly crucial to make the livelihoods of the poor more resilient to natural and man-made crises.

2.3. Specific Challenges facing Women and Girls

Women and girls are ordinarily affected by the diverse security challenges in the Sahel discussed in the preceding section. However, there are peculiar challenges that threaten their lives and futures.

Figure 2.7. Displaced Women in Southern Niger

Source: CARE International (https://www.careinternational.org.uk/stories)

From the field findings, the main challenges identified are economic exclusion, poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, gender-based violence, limited participation in political and public life, harmful cultural practices, negative impacts of climate change, displacements, COVID-19 related problems and exclusion from the peace talks despite being the worst affected by most conflicts. In particular, Women formed majority of most displaced populations as a result of conflict in the Sahel. Figure 2.7. shows a section of displaced women with their children in Southern Niger near the border with Nigeria.

The challenges mentioned above are interwoven and cut across the Sahel countries. They are also enduring challenges that have defied years of responses by governments, international organisations, development partners and civil society organisations. For example, despite efforts to improve women’s economic potentials, contextual and domestic factors continue to limit the outcomes of interventions. Contextual factors such as laws, regulations and policies that regulate formal institutions and gender related socio-cultural norms in the informal sector continue to limit women’s power of self-determination in the economic and political scene.

For girls in particular, forced marriages, child pregnancy and child labour exacerbated by poverty are major issues of concern in the region. In most communities, girls who get pregnant face strong stigma and discrimination. The stigma associated with teenage pregnancies is further compounded by unequal gender norms that often lead to school dropout. Equally, girls who marry as young as 12 and 13 years also sometimes drop out of school and become exposed to violence perpetrated by their older partners. According to the World Bank, Niger has the world’s highest prevalence of child marriage (75%), followed by Chad as the world’s third highest (68%), and Mali as the fifth highest (55%). These statistics show the alarming rate of child marriage in the Sahel. In the long run, it is not only their education that suffers but their health, development and opportunities for economic empowerment. For most women, the lack of formal education caused by poverty, harmful cultural norms and practices, poor infrastructure, and conflicts limits their full engagement in society. Thus, without education, women find it difficult to take active part in local governance and economic empowerment opportunities.

Beyond being a health crisis, COVID-19 has also exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities and led to profound economic, social and security challenges for girls and women. Findings from the field research showed the increased risk of gender-based violence, with some reported cases of domestic violence against women, exacerbated by the fall in income due to confinement, curfew and job loss. Lockdowns and other COVID-19 prevention measures have also pushed millions of people into extreme poverty including women. Terrorism, violent extremism, conflict and displacements aggravated by the effects of the pandemic are also driving escalating levels of sexual violence, exploitation and human right abuses towards girls and women. Additionally, COVID-19 is having a negative impact on girls’ health and well-being. From the field interviews, it was noted that many girls risk dropping out of school either because of teenage pregnancy, early marriages, COVID-19-related illness/death or helping out at home particularly for parents who put

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41 Interviews with stakeholders in Bamako, Mali, 23 November 2020.
lower value on girls’ education. A report by UNOWAS indicated that school closures during the lockdown period have wiped out efforts to keep girls in school.\textsuperscript{46} The lack of education, forced marriages, and other harmful traditional practices are preventing girls from fully engaging in society.

Climate hazards are also having a negative impact on the livelihood of women. Repeated shocks, including droughts and floods, have led to disruption of livelihoods of women who account for about 80% of the Sahel’s workforce in agriculture.\textsuperscript{47} In Burkina Faso and Mali for instance, majority of the women population work in agriculture. Their livelihood is dependent on agricultural products and natural resources. Climate variability, environmental degradation and natural disasters have made such livelihoods difficult to sustain.\textsuperscript{48} The degradation of land and natural resources has disproportionately made women economically and nutritionally vulnerable, leading to forced migration, social unrest and instability. Indeed, the effects of climate change and insecurity remained the key drivers of growing humanitarian needs in the Sahel.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure_2.8.png}
\caption{Regional Security Responses in the Sahel}
\end{figure}


2.4. Responses to the Peace and Security Challenges

As shown on figure 2.8, the cross border and transnational nature of the threats in the Sahel has elicited some regional responses by multilateral and regional organisations, development partners and states in the region. This section succinctly analyses some of these responses focusing on the UN, EU, AU, ECOWAS, G5 Sahel Force and France Operation Barkhane. Other responses by CSOs and external actors are captured in the country case studies.

- **United Nations**

At the centre of the multilateral responses is the implementation of the 2013 United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), targeting 10 countries - Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.49 UNISS aims to address the root causes of the Sahel crisis with a special focus on Women and Youth. In accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2391 (2017) to foster coherence and coordination for greater efficiency and results delivery, UNISS was given a renewed impetus through the operationalisation of United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel (UNSP). The UNSP covers the period 2018-2030, with a focus on six priority areas: cross border cooperation, climate action, crisis prevention, women and youth empowerment, economic revitalisation and renewable energy.50 The overarching goal is to scale up efforts to accelerate shared prosperity and lasting peace in the region to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063. UNOWAS plays a key role in the implementation process in close partnership with other UN entities, Sahel countries, and other bodies including the European Union (EU), African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the G5 Sahel as well as financial institutions such as the African Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, and World Bank.51

The progress report of UNISS implementation from 2018-2019 shows some positive outcomes. For example, the Youth for National Peace and Reconciliation programme in Mali under UNISS is helping to inspire the commitment of over 2,500 youth and women as agents of peace to strengthen social harmony, communal dialogue, coexistence, and the development of youth potential across 25 municipalities in the Mopti and Segou regions.52 Furthermore, support to the Liptako-Gourma Authority (LGA), which is located at the confluence of the border provinces of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso is helping to build its administrative and human capacity to respond to numerous governance and development challenges in the area.53 The UNDP Country Offices in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, have also supported the governments of the three countries, to promote community security and social cohesion in the Liptako-Gourma region with funding from the Peacebuilding Funds (PBF).54 This support has resulted in the provision of equipment to 300 young people to enable them improve on their capacities in diverse occupational fields and jumpstarted income generating activities. In the area of security, UN assistance to the G5 Sahel Joint Force to combat terrorism and transnational organised crimes has led to the adoption of a code of conduct and procedures manual on the imprisonment and custody of detainees to promote human rights.55 It has also led to internal mechanisms

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55 Ibid, p. 23
to investigate alleged violations, establishment of specialised investigative units in Chad and Mauritania, creation of a specialised anti-terrorism investigations brigade in Burkina Faso, and deployment of counter-terrorism investigators embedded alongside military operations in Niger.\(^{56}\)

### European Union

Apart from the UN, the EU also provides support to Sahel countries in areas of development, good governance and internal conflict resolution; politics and diplomacy; security and the rule of law; the fight against extremist violence and radicalisation\(^{57}\). It provides financial and technical support to governments through the European Strategy for security and development in the Sahel which was adopted in 2011 and subsequently reviewed in 2015 as part of the Sahel Regional action plan (2015-2020). The EU has already provided about €147 million to support the G5 Sahel Joint Force to improve regional security and fight terrorist and criminal groups. The EU, together with its Member States, is also the biggest provider of development cooperation to the region with €8 billion over the period 2014 to 2020.\(^{58}\)

Despite the revamping of its strategy in 2015, the implementation has been difficult and insecurity in the region has impeded tangible achievements in preventing radicalisation and fostering inclusive development.\(^{59}\) Although the strategy ended in 2020, it is likely to be revised to take into account West Africa’s new geopolitical interests and effects of COVID-19 pandemic. Under its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the EU also has three missions namely, EU Capacity Building Mission in Niger (EUCAP Sahel Niger), EUCAP Sahel Mali and the EU training mission in Mali (EUTM) helping to strengthen the capacities of law enforcement agencies (Police, Gendarmerie, National Guard) to combat terrorism and organised crime through the provision of advice and training assistance.\(^{60}\)

### African Union

Following the transfer of authority from the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) to United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the AU deployed the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL) to support Mali and countries in the Sahel in their stabilisation and development efforts.\(^{61}\) Since 2014, MISAHEL has been operating around four main pillars. The first pillar which is on policy support focuses on electoral support and assisting Sahel countries in reforming their institutions and governance structures within the framework of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. The second pillar focuses on human rights and humanitarian action. Under this pillar, MISAHEL is working with states and development partners to promote and protect human rights, build the capacity of human rights institutions, law enforcement agencies and civil society organisations and undertaking humanitarian action in the region. The third pillar addressed security issues in the Sahel by assisting in coordinating the AU's efforts to find appropriate solutions to the security challenges facing the region, including armed conflicts, terrorism, drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organised crime. It also contributes to improving coordination between the security and intelligence services as part of the Nouakchott Process, to ensure the mutualisation of regional efforts in the fight against these threats. The last pillar

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\(^{54}\) Ibid, p.24  
\(^{57}\) Interview with EU officials in Bamako, November 2020.  
on development focuses on innovative ways to reduce poverty, food insecurity and desertification, as well as coordinating and facilitating the implementation of the development aspects in the AU Strategy for the Sahel region.¹⁵

• ECOWAS

Based on the Decision of the 43rd Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS in July 2013, ECOWAS is also implementing a Sahel strategy (2016-2020) developed in collaboration with the West African Monetary Union (WAEMU), UEMOA, Commission and the Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). The strategy focuses on major projects such as interconnection of infrastructure, resilience & food security, education and peace and security support measures valued at the cost of $4.75 billion.¹⁶ Unlike the strategies of the UN, EU and AU, the main objectives of the ECOWAS strategy is to consolidate the regional responses to the long-term development and security challenges of the Sahel-Saharan zone and promote strong political dialogue with both North and Central Africa. Consequently, under the aegis of ECOWAS, countries of the Sahel-Saharan countries (Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Libya and Chad) are collaborating with member states of Mali and Niger with support of development partners to collectively tackle insecurity and instability. However, the implementation of the ECOWAS Sahel Strategy has been challenged by duplication of activities due to the multiplicity of Sahel Strategy initiatives and inadequate funding.¹⁷ in the words of an ECOWAS official interviewed “ECOWAS is overshadowed by the powerful actors in the region, making its presence and impact less felt by the people”. Nevertheless, the regional body has played a leading role in the reconciliation, mediation and negotiation of political impasses in the region.

• G5 Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S)

The G5 Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S) is an intergovernmental cooperation framework for coordinating regional response to the development and security challenges in the Sahel. It was established by the Heads of States of the G5 Sahel countries (Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Burkina Faso) in February 2017 and headquartered in Nouakchott, Mauritania.¹⁸ It fills an important gap among national forces by engaging more directly in counter-terrorism operations in hard-to-access areas and border zones that are outside the mandate of the MINUSMA.¹⁹ Since its deployment, the Force has mainly focused on combating the threat of terrorism, cross-border organised crimes and human trafficking in the G5 Sahel zone. It carried out its first operation in November 2017 with the armies of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Since then, the G5 Sahel Joint Force has conducted joint operations against JNIM and other violent extremist groups in the region. Improving border security stands out as the greatest potential asset of the FC-G5S. However, its operations became limited following an attack by JNIM on 29 June 2018 at one of its headquarters in Sévaré, Mopti, Mali. Although the Force increased the tempo of military operations in late 2019, the security situation, particularly in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, has continued to worsen amid a growing humanitarian crisis, political instability and the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the G5 Sahel Joint Force still lacks full operational capacity and has struggled to find its place in the region with many reported cases of human rights abuses. In order to

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make the FC-G5S effective, there have been repeated calls by G5 countries and France since 2017 for the UN Security Council to authorise it with a Chapter VII mandate and a logistical support package with UN assessed contributions through MINUSMA. However, countries like the US have been wary of authorising MINUSMA to support the FC-G5S. As noted by the International Crisis Group, the success or failure of the Force depends on whether it can position itself in the crowded field of armed forces already in the Sahel and gain people’s trust as well as political support and tangible financial support from its donors.

- **France Operation Barkhane**

This operation succeeded Operation Serval which was deployed in January 2013 to push back the terrorist groups in Northern Mali, and to support Malian and AFISMA troops to restore peace and security. The aim of Operation Barkhane is to provide broader support to the countries in the Sahel to combat the jihadist threat in the Sahel. Since its deployment in 2014, Barkhane has undertaken counterterrorist activities in the border areas between Mali and Niger, the Liptako, and between Mali and Burkina Faso, the Gourma which are strategic crossing point of groups such as ISGS, JNIM and Ansarul Islam. Several militants have been killed and injured in these operations. But Barkhane has also encountered casualties due to the guerrilla tactics and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) attacks by jihadist groups. Aside the military operations, Barkhane is also working to address the root causes of the development and security challenges to gain the trust of the local population. However, despite the increased French presence, military gains remain limited. Critics also blame France as the cause of the problems in the Sahel and note that its strategy is rather reinforcing its legitimacy in the region. As the security situation in Mali and the wider Sahel region deteriorates, with waves of anti-French protests, the legitimacy of France in the region has been questioned.

To reshape a faltering security strategy to rebuild trust, France and its European partners launched a new counter-terrorism task force, called Takuba on 15 July 2020 composed of European special forces. Takuba is part of Operation Barkhane, under the French command. Although the Takuba Task Force is yet to achieve its full operational capacity, it is envisaged to make a change amid a faltering security strategy in the Sahel to improve effectiveness in combatting ISGS and other armed groups to bolster France’s reputation in the region.

2.5. **Limits and Pitfalls of the Responses to Peace and Security challenges**

Despite the various interventions to address the peace and security challenges in the Sahel, the problems persist and continue to evolve. In order to design new tailor-made solutions to the challenges, it is important to interrogate the limits or pitfalls in the existing interventions to deepen understanding on why the responses have failed to achieve their intended purposes. From the field study, the following issues were identified as some of the gaps limiting the efficacy of the existing responses:

First, some of the stakeholders interviewed raised
concerns about the top-down (state centric) peacebuilding approaches that have characterised most of the interventions in the Sahel. According to them, despite the discourses on the importance of local ownership, most of the internationally supported peacebuilding programmes continue to ignore the local context, the informal actors and initiatives that could contribute toward sustainable peace. Commenting on this limitation, a respondent noted that

The existing interventions are not taking due consideration of the specific cultural and local context of the problems. Most of the Sahel strategies are developed in the offices of international actors, state institutions and civil society organisations without the explicit inputs of the local population especially the Imams, traditional leaders, women and youth groups. Therefore, the people who are beneficiaries of the programmes do not own the strategies to support their implementation. The Jihadist groups exploit this to provide the needed support to gain the confidence and trust of the communities.  

Another respondent also had this to say:

the dominant focus on the formal institutions of state in most of the responses hides the important contributions of the traditional and religious authorities. It also overlooks the development priorities of governments, people’s culture, history, socio-economic context as well as their conception of peace, security, and justice which are necessary to build resilient social institutions for lasting peace.

The abovementioned views are based on the fact that in all the Sahel countries, the authority to exercise legitimate force and the provision of peace, security and justice does not rest exclusively with the institutions of central government, which in most instances have not penetrated local communities and are perceived as an imposition. It is rather the complex and interdependent relationships between the state and local authorities (both traditional and religious), women and youth groups, characterised by a mix of conflict and cooperation that explains the resilience of states. In most communities, traditional and religious authorities who existed before colonialism have continued to play key roles in the provision of welfare services including peace, security and justice due to the weakness or fragility of states. It is therefore important that the interventions by especially the UN, AU, EU, ECOWAS and other development and bilateral partners focus on new ways of generating mutual accommodation of the state and indigenous traditional/religious systems (Imams and Priests) to generate new forms of hybrid governance that better serve the needs of the people.

Second, the inability to sustain the short-term gains or key achievements for greater impact is also seen as a major pitfall of the existing interventions. Thus, although some achievements have been made over the past years, the security condition continues to deteriorate every year. This situation has contributed to the failure of states to sustain or consolidate the gains of local and international peacebuilding interventions. In most cases, it is either states lack the funding to continue peacebuilding projects implemented by local and international partners that has ended or they lack strong institutions and presence in peripheral areas to consolidate the short-term gains. Thus, efforts to stabilise the region has often relied on weak, corrupt and absent state institutions, whose derelictions incite a marketplace of alternative actors attempting to provide the missing links for populations, further delegitimising central governments. Most Sahel countries lack effective presence in large parts of their territories. In some areas, there are no functioning state institutions and

72 Interview with a civil society actor, Bamako, 23 November 2020.
73 Interview with a civil society actor, Bamako, 25 November 2020.
security agencies, forcing the people to fend for themselves in the mix of jihadist invasion and socio-economic challenges. The vacuum created by states are often filled by jihadist/terrorist groups who exploit local grievances to further their goals and gain local support. The consequence is that the state is unable to pursue peacebuilding initiatives for the long-term to build sustainable peace. Furthermore, some respondents noted that protracted inter communal conflicts, political conflicts and terrorism have also contributed to the inability of states to sustain short-term peace gains for lasting peace. This is reminiscent of the maxim that “development cannot take place in the mix of insecurity or conflict.”

Third, the weak or limited functional coordination among the different stakeholders in the Sahel was cited as a major deficiency that militate against the effectiveness of responses. Due to the large geographical area, no single entity has the capacity to address the problems in the Sahel alone. This makes coordination necessary and relevant. However, as noted by some respondents, many of the actors continue to operate in silos without effective coordination despite the transnational and cross border nature of the threats. For example, internal rivalries, regional frictions, limited resources and leadership adjustments have affected the ability of the G5 countries to effectively coordinate among themselves and international stakeholders like MINUSMA and the French Operation Barkhane.

Moreover, competing visions and interests of international partners has also hindered effective coordination and stabilisation efforts from taking a decisive direction. The coordination challenges is not only limited to the international and state actors but also CSOs operating within the region. A lot of respondents lamented on the limited cooperation and coordination between CSOs due to competitions and funding goals, leading to duplication of efforts. A respondent from a CSO interviewed for example stated that “the nature of funding sometimes prevents them from tackling the real problems because it compels them to focus on specific priorities of donors with tight timelines which leaves little time for coordination with other CSOs”.

Nevertheless, while stakeholder coordination is still a general problem in the Sahel, the study also found out that the existence of many coordination frameworks by different entities is further complicating the situation. For example, there is the International Coalition for the Sahel, a group that aims to facilitate coordination and interaction between the various dimensions of international action to support the G5 Sahel countries. The Contact Group of International Partners for the Sahel; the Ministerial Coordination Platform; and the Steering Committee of the UNISS are frameworks used by UNOWAS to enhance coherence and coordination among UN entities and other partners in the Sahel. There is also the Sahel Alliance composed of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Denmark, EU, UNDP, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the World Bank. The Alliance aims at coordinating and delivering aid quicker and more efficiently in the region. These coordination frameworks are not properly harmonised or integrated. According to most respondents, the many coordination frameworks create a complex web of coordination architectures that operate without a common vision and strategic direction. There is therefore the need for an inclusive and well-integrated coordination framework that specifies roles and responsibilities of the different actors based on their comparative advantages, resources and geographical coverage of activities.

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74 Ibid
Fourth, the existing responses have been challenged by duplication of activities due to the multiplicity of different Sahel strategies and initiatives. This limitation is closely related to the challenges of weak functional coordination. A mapping that was done in 2017 by the UN identified around 19 strategies and strategic frameworks in the Sahel. Many of these strategies are also similar in terms of the priority areas of intervention. For example, a study conducted by the Institute for Security Studies in 2015 highlighted the similarities among the various initiatives in the Sahel articulated around key priority objectives to promote peace, stability, governance, security, and resilience, focusing on the G5 Sahel region and neighbouring countries in the Lake Chad Basin and West Africa. However, due to weak coordination and synergies as well institutional competition and different funding goals, there continues to be duplication of efforts among stakeholders. As noted in the previous paragraph, a well integrated coordination mechanism for all actors and a knowledge management platform is not only necessary to improve synergy among stakeholders but also relevant for planning joint programmes to deal with the root causes of the problems systematically and comprehensively.

Fifth, there is lack of effective feedback mechanisms on peacebuilding activities undertaken from beneficiaries to understand whether the interventions are yielding positive results or not to inform subsequent policies and programmes. Thus, as noted by a respondent, there are no follow-ups on projects implemented. As a result, there is often lack of information on what is working and not working on ground in terms of activities carried out by both national and external actors. Admittedly, while some institutions undertake monitoring and evaluation of their programmes, this is often done once and not a longitudinal study or process to understand the outcomes of interventions. This often leads to the design and implementation of programmes that do not meet the needs and expectations of the people especially women and girls affected by conflicts.

Sixth, the field study revealed that while countries in the Sahel have shown commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda through the adoption of policies and programmes, the delivery of such commitments has been inadequate. There is still a wide gap between the array of policies and the implementation of WPS commitments to strengthen the role and leadership of women in peace and political processes. The findings also showed that despite the progress made over the past decades, targets continue to be missed and the prospect of achieving the WPS agenda remains elusive. Women and girls continue to face violence including sexual and gender-based violence and their representation at all levels of decision-making in peace processes, such as conflict prevention, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction remains limited. There are still cultural barriers that prevent women and girls from achieving their full potential. Moreover, there are also fears that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will further erode the gains made over the years in the WPS Agenda and affect the achievement of the SDG Goal 5 by 2030. It is important to prioritise the implementation of the WPS agenda to enable women contribute to the peace, security and development of countries. As shown in figure 2.9, investment in women and girls improve health, benefits families, strengthen economies, increases productivity, create sustainable nations and reduces hunger.

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Seventh, the study identified the lack of effective leadership and crisis management skills among the political leaders in the Sahel as part of the pitfalls of existing responses. According to some respondents, in an environment like the Sahel where the threats continue to evolve almost every time, effective leadership is critical to the successful outcomes of crisis response strategies. However, most of the political leaders especially in central Sahel lack strong leadership and crisis management skills to deal with the complex challenges. One of the respondents for instance stated that:

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**Source:** [https://www.pinterest.com/pin](https://www.pinterest.com/pin)
Leadership and crisis management are very key in proactively responding to crisis. However, leaders both at the political and military levels are not being trained. They have the impression that taking decision in normal times is the same as in crisis period but there are differences. Political leaders, military leaders and public servants often think that the strategies that worked 40 years ago are still relevant in our current context but that is false. The fact is that we are not in normal times and therefore, the crisis response approaches should be extraordinary. This requires strong leadership with excellent crisis management to proactively respond to crisis. ³³

From the above statement, it is quite clear that while leadership in normal situation involves routine decisions made in an environment where the consequences of actions may be well understood, crisis situations often involve complex decisions made with limited time and information, with wide ranging implications, under the pressures of increased scrutiny. Being unprepared as a leader and failure to take the right decisions could ultimately make the situation even worse. Unfortunately, that is the situation in the Sahel according to the respondents. Weak leadership and over reliance on military approaches to deal with the intricate security, political, socio-economic, ecological, development and humanitarian challenges in the Sahel is seen as part of the problem which has received little attention. To address the situation, a respondent recommended that political and military leaders should not just open conferences and workshops and leave but should be trained to understand the dynamics of the crisis in the Sahel and be equipped with crisis prevention and management skills to think outside the box in responding to threats. Thus, the most effective way to succeed in a crisis where the stakes are high, and the pressure is on like the Sahel, is for leaders at all levels to be prepared for one. The complex environment in the Sahel make it almost unfathomable to think that a leader could effectively tackle the threats without a high level of preparation and understanding.

2.6. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Despite its enormous potential and abundant resources, the Sahel still faces multiple security challenges that hinder its progress. Some of these challenges identified from the field study include among others, issues related to poor governance, weak state institutions, corruption, lack of state presence in significant territories, terrorism, violent extremism, political repression, human rights violations, injustice, election related violence, intercommunal violence, transnational organised crimes, climate change, poverty, food insecurity and COVID-19 related problems. Furthermore, the study identified some peculiar challenges that affect the progress of women and girls in the Sahel such as economic exclusion, poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, gender-based violence, limited political participation, harmful cultural practices, negative impacts of climate change and COVID-19 pandemic. There have been different interventions by governments, international organisations, development partners and Civil Society Organisations to respond to these threats, with varying degrees of successes and pitfalls that continue to limit the efficacy of interventions. The following recommendations are therefore made based on the gaps identified in the existing responses for the consideration of national and international partners:

Governments

- Enhance the utility and relevance of the state to the people by improving governance, access to basic
welfare services, guaranteeing people's safety and security and making the state present in all regions.

- Strengthen the social contract between the state and the people (i.e., between the ruled and their rulers) by addressing the political, institutional and socio-economic governance challenges and corruption to build the trust and confidence of the population and government.

- Governments should involve the people and community leaders in the conceptualisation, design, and development of peacebuilding and development programmes to foster local ownership to aid the implementation process.

- Countries should budget for peace or peacebuilding and develop a robust, innovative, and resilient resource mobilisation strategy to support the implementation of initiatives.

- Strengthen the social cohesion between communities especially in areas of inter-ethnic conflicts and terrorism to promote peaceful co-existence.

- Provide access to justice to victims of human rights violations or abuses by ensuring public accountability of perpetrators to fight impunity and violence. Continued human rights abuses risk undermining the government's credibility with citizens, may serve as a recruiting tool for terrorists, and undermine efforts for regional stability.

- Promote economic empowerment programmes or income generating activities to sustain the livelihood of the people especially women and the youth.

- Counter-terrorism measures should be carefully designed to ensure that they are human rights compliant and do not undermine the global human rights and rule of law framework to jeopardise the legitimacy and effectiveness of operations.

- Governments should consider creating an inclusive national integrated coordination mechanism to ensure that all the external and internal actors operate with a common vision and objectives to avoid the duplication of efforts.

- Governments should develop effective feedback mechanisms to assess the gaps and outcome of interventions to inform future strategies and enhance transparency and accountability.

- Governments should effectively implement the commitments under the Women, Peace and Security agenda through policy and institutional reforms in all sectors, address the peculiar challenges of women and monitor the changes made.

**G5 Sahel Forces & Defence and Security Forces**

- Integrate the local population into the provision of security by educating them about their roles, addressing their concerns, requesting for their support and protecting them against attacks by armed groups when they share valuable security information.

- Significantly improve security sector governance and anti-corruption measures in counterterrorism and other security operations by reinforcing parliamentary oversight, transparency and accountability.

- Promote the implementation of effective monitoring and independent investigation mechanisms that track, verify and establish responsibility for allegations of human rights violations or abuses in order to hold perpetrators accountable.
Address the human rights violations and abuses by security personnel through periodic capacity development trainings and orientation for them to adhere to the rule of law and human rights principles.

Enhance effective media communication on human rights allegations, investigations, and punishment meted out to perpetrators to gain public trust and confidence.

Develop a robust communication strategy targeting both the traditional and new media outlets to publicize the results of interventions to gain public support.

Regional and International Actors

- Support the collective curtailment of the widening ravages of terrorism and violent extremism to ensure that terrorists and their sympathisers do not find safe heavens in any Sahel countries and their neighbours.

- Align your response strategies to national development policies and action plans to ensure context and culturally specific interventions to address the exact needs of the population.

- Promote a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding in the Sahel by investing more in the indigenous actors and initiatives to promote peace, security and justice. This will help adapt interventions to the realities on ground.

- Encourage and ensure the involvement of CSOs and local authorities such as Imams, Priests, Mayors and Traditional Leaders in the conceptualisation, design, development and implementation of programmes to address the specific needs of the people.

- Prioritise the needs and rights of the most vulnerable people especially women and girls in respective post-COVID-19 recovery interventions.

- Emphasise on human rights and rule of law in your engagements with the G5 Sahel Force and the National Defence and Security Forces.

- Increasing funding for research into the long-term effects of COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls and the implications for the attainment of SDG Goal 5 in West Africa to support policy design on recovery efforts.

- Support research on resilience, peace generating factors and social cohesion in both the Sahel communities and relatively peaceful context in West Africa amid COVID-19 and Conflicts to capture useful lessons and good practices for programming.

- Increase funding support to CSOs with a regional and community reach to implement programmes that support the implementation of the WPS agenda as well as strengthen the social contract between the local population and governments in the governance process.

- The UN as the lead multilateral institution should consider developing a knowledge management platform to improve synergy among international partners.

Civil Society Organisations

- Increase education and awareness creation at the community level on the need to empower women in all sectors of society - political, social, economic, religious and the private sector to promote the WPS agenda for sustainable development.

- Strengthen existing regional platform on the WPS agenda to enhance coordination of actions among CSOs, sharing of best practices and lessons learned.
• Increase advocacy on the implementation of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments by countries in the Sahel region.

• Provide capacity building and sensitisation programmes to strengthen the role and leadership of women in the security sector and peace processes.

• Design and implement capacity building and orientation programmes on Leadership, Peacebuilding and Crisis Management for the political and security actors at the highest level of decision-making to adequately prepare them to respond effectively to the evolving conflict situation in the Sahel.

• Advocate for the adoption and implementation of hybrid governance systems in the Sahel that promotes the active participation of indigenous/traditional authorities and structures in the governance process to address the limitations of the state.

• Research into the long-term effects of COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls and its implications for the attainment of SDG Goal 5 in West Africa to support Government recovery efforts.

• Leverage the use of digital technologies in the light of COVID-19 to strengthen data collection and reporting on violence against women to influence government responses.
References


Country Reports

3.1. Brief Introduction

To understand the limits and pitfalls of the existing interventions from the country level perspectives, four countries were selected as case studies. These countries are Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire. This section provides the findings of the research in each of the four countries based on the following themes:

- Overview of the Multi-layered Peace and Security Challenges
- Specific Challenges facing Women and Girls
- Responses to the Peace and Security Challenges
- Gaps/Pitfalls of Responses to Peace and Security Challenges
- Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Figure 3.1. Map of the Sahel and Surrounding Area
### Mali

#### 3.2.1 Overview of the Multi-layered Peace and Security Challenges

The security environment in Mali, like the other countries of Liptako-Gourma, the epicentre of the Sahel crisis, has deteriorated considerably, from 2012 to present day. The situation was initially induced by the irredentist Tuareg movement that wanted the establishment of a "federal state that would unite Azawad: Timbuktu, Kidal, Gao, and a southern state made up of other regions of Mali."

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**Figure 3.2.1. Map of Mali**

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**Source:** United Nations - Department of Field Support.

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The country is currently affected by three subversive phenomena that are intertwined: violent extremism, local conflicts and transnational organised crime.\textsuperscript{56} The latter is defined in the history of the G5 Sahel space where "illicit activities of traffickers and armed groups operate through networks located in different countries within and outside the region. Arms trafficking, migrant trafficking, ivory trafficking and money laundering are among the main activities carried out by regional criminal networks.\textsuperscript{66} The words of some respondents are perfect illustrations of these challenges.

"The security challenges are enormous and lie at all levels: [...] the circulation of arms in the country, the unprecedented rise in increasing crime and terrorism, inter-communal clashes, [...] physical restriction, targeted killings and abductions of persons and property, armed robbery with violence, robberies and the use of IED explosive devices on highways [...]\textsuperscript{67}

The presence of the three phenomenon is causing enormous problems, in many ways. On one hand, we are witnessing all kinds of human rights violations. This includes looting of the livelihoods of communities that materialises through the destruction of agricultural fields, pastoral routes, water points, community habitat, as well as the theft of animals; lethal attacks, summary and extra-judicial executions committed by armed groups and sometimes certain elements of Defence and Security Forces, unjust arrest and imprisonment. On the other hand, the challenges weakened the presence and authority of the State as well as the fundamental pillars of the local economy focused mainly on inter- and intra-community relationships.

It should be recalled that military responses have been made in the wake of terrorist and armed groups attacks in some circumstances. However, beyond the complexity and porosity of the security environment, some interventions of the Defence and Security Force interventions have exacerbated tensions and conflicts between communities and spread feelings among some communities that they are being harmed by the central government.

For example, in the Mopti region of central Mali, where conflicts between communities permeate the daily lives of the populations, the Malian army has often been accused by Human Right Watch of helping certain militias including the "dozo" (traditional brotherhood of hunters) or "Dan na ambassagou" and being behind several massacres of civilians in central Mali.\textsuperscript{69} However, these accusations, are sometimes difficult to verify. The G5 Sahel Force has also been criticised for its supposed or real collusion with one community, in this case the Bambara community at the expense of others. This has led to increased local tensions as well as arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial executions. In the Mopti region, human rights organisations and some community-based associations have documented numerous abuses of civilians, mostly people suspected of collaborating with violent extremist groups. The dozo (traditional hunters) initially targeted individuals belonging to the Peulh community suspected of providing material and/or financial assistance to violent radical groups in the commission of crimes.

On the Nigerian-Malian border, the Malian and Nigerien armies and their partners Operation Barkhane are regularly accused by

\textsuperscript{56}SS. (2018). Report on people’s perceptions of Operation Pagnal (Unpublished report)
\textsuperscript{56}Interview with AS, coordinator of the APF (Support for Women’s Projects and Initiatives) of Gao, November 2020.
\textsuperscript{56}Ambassagou is a self-defense group that claims to be from the Dogon community. It was born around the last quarter of 2016 after the assassination of Theodore Somboro who was the leader of the hunter community of the ‘dogon country’. Active in the circles of Douentza, Bandiagara, Bankass and Koro, the group is positioning itself as a legitimate defender of the Dogon country against attacks/attacks, including by extremist groups. It is suspected of being the source of more attacks on The Peoples Communities Central Mali, the most emblematic of which are those of Koulougan (January 1, 2019) and Ogossiagou (March 23, 2019) which, in all, killed more than 180 people.
representatives/members of the Peulh community in particular of acting on behalf of two armed groups defending the interests of the Daoussahaq and Imghad. They are the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA) and the Tuareg Self-Defence Group Imghad and Allies (GATIA) which are also stakeholders in the agreement for peace and reconciliation resulting from the Algiers process in 2015. However, the French Barkhane force and the Malian army categorically deny these allegations against them. Undoubtedly, these allegations and accusations on both sides are real challenges that must be addressed in order to achieve lasting peace and stability in the Sahel. The multitude of unconventional armed groups operating in the northern and central regions of Mali and the volatility of the security situation make the analysis of conflict dynamics more complex and even blurred.

3.2.2. Specific challenges facing Women and Girls in Mali

Insecurity in northern and central Mali affects all social strata. However, women and children remain the most affected by insecurity. For example, the situation in Mali described in the Secretary-General’s Report (2020:15) revealed that among the 239,484 displaced persons in March 2020, 54% were women. The same report looks at the serious violations of human rights in Mali and in particular the Central Region (Mopti and Ségou regions) where women and children are the first victims.

The Centre for International Study and Cooperation (CECI-Mali) conducted a study on barriers to gender equality; challenges and solutions in 2020 and identified some of the various forms of discrimination against women as name-calling, sexual and gender-based violence, forced or early marriages, rape, female circumcision, exclusion, sexual harassment, and kidnapping of women. Others include discrimination in inheritance and succession, discrimination in access to administrative or political positions of responsibility, difficult to access to land, prohibitions on the conduct of economic activities, harmful widowhood rites, confinement in the name of religious factors just to mention a few.

Commenting on these challenges, a respondent stated that:

*Despite the fact that women are increasingly getting into school, social and cultural burdens are preventing many of them from being politically and economically self-sufficient.*

Indeed, 89% of the opinions expressed during the field interviews confirmed these challenges against women. The CECI-Mali reports also showed that 20% of women are in a marriage before the age of 15 and concluded that at least every Malian woman is a victim of one of the identified forms of violence.

A respondent noted that

*In my opinion, Malian women still face several challenges, for example the persistence of socio-cultural, religious burdens, the managerial deficit of women’s organisations, the issue of governance and legitimacy at the level of women’s leadership.*

It should be noted that social and cultural burdens remain, largely unfavorable to the development of females. However, women’s organisations fighting for equal opportunities and rights between the sexes face organisational barriers and lack of democratic governance within them. For example, since 2017, the Coordination of Women’s Associations and NGOs (CAFO) has been facing leadership crisis between the outgoing and the new leadership over the legitimacy of the presidency. This deleterious

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90 Interview with a member known Capacity Building Project of Women’s Organisations in Mali (RECOFEM), Bamako, November 2020.
91 Contact, Gender Advisor at the Centre Study and Study International Cooperation (CECI-Mali).
climate continues to weaken the efforts of the women's organisation in Mali.

In the justice sector, the presence of women is low. When all judges and chief clerks are taken into account, they represent 10.77% and 16.18% respectively, of the entire Judiciary. However, the representation is relatively high in low-level positions such as the secretariat where women are 90.73% of the total. The actors interviewed, including women's organisations, and development partners, stressed that women and young people are not well involved in security initiatives in Mali despite the fact that they are the largest and most affected by insecurity issues.

For example, a respondent in the security sector pointed out that:

> Young people and women are forgotten at all levels. Even at the Level of the National Defence, Security and Civil Protection Commission, which is a key area in security governance, there is not enough emphasis on their concerns. (...) They are also less involved.

As previously mentioned, insecurity is affecting girls and women in Mali. As a category in terms of status (a subordinate status) that is entrusted to it by society, it remains the most affected by insecurity. Yet they are less involved in conflict management and resolution mechanisms, according to Lorentzen, Touré and Gaye. However, an interview with an official of MINUSMA attributes the less inclusion of women in the peace process and democratic governance to their low level of education. The difficult mesh between some cultural and religious practices sometimes explains the position of women and girls in the Malian context. However, from independence to the present day, slow changes are taking place towards a much more prominent consideration of girls and women in the development of the country.

### 3.2.3 Responses to the Peace and Security Challenges in Mali

**International responses**

There have been several international responses to the peace and security challenges in Mali with the main intervention being the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission for Stabilisation in Mali (MINUSMA). MINUSMA has made significant contributions to the implementation of peace and development programmes, as well as the implementation of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration process (DDR). Some of the activities are represented on Table 3.1. In 2020, MINUSMA contributed to the creation of reconciliation committees in at least four municipalities in the Douentza and Bandiagara in the Mopti region. The mission also supported several meetings devoted to inter- and intra-community dialogues in March 2020 in the villages of Touguéré-Koumbé, Woko and Nema-Badenyakafo (Mopti region) which resulted in the signing of peace agreements between the communities. To contribute to the peace and stability of the country, the mission has also supported the Malian security forces to perform their functions effectively. In May 2020, MINUSMA assisted the Central State of Mali logistically, technically and financially as part of the process to deploy reconstituted units of the national armed forces to the northern regions. Additionally, it has strengthened the operational capabilities of the Internal Security Forces to control small and heavy weapons, deploy throughout the country, implement community projects and the Community Violence Reduction Programs.
Apart from MINUSMA, UNDP and its partners have also supported the Ministry of Social Cohesion, of Peace and National Reconciliation in the process of building and consolidating peace by improving inter-and intra-community relations in the Tenenkou and Macina Circles with the involvement of 2,600 young people, women, community and religious leaders. They are also supporting the Youth Employment for Peace programme in the Northern and Central Regions through the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training. Indeed, UNDP has a programme called Young and Peace Mali-Burkina (Transrugial Mali-Burkina) that supports young people from two countries in the prevention and management of conflicts through the Ministry of Youth and Sports and implemented by the NGO AZHAR.

With respect to Women, UN Women provides support to government, civil society and works closely with the local private sector to put in place the policies, laws, services and resources that women need to achieve equality. It is supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women across the country as part of the implementation of the UNSCR 1325. It is promoting the economic empowerment of the poorest and most vulnerable women and girls in agriculture and in the private sector as well as working towards the increased participation and leadership of women in decision-making deals at the local, regional and national levels to ensure long-term peace and security. UN Women is also building resilience in the context of climate change. Most of the activities of UN Women is funded by the governments of Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Japan and Germany.

### Regional Responses

The regional responses to the peace and security according to the respondent's centers around the mobilisation of foreign defence forces and peace projects to respond to the numerous peace and development challenges. There is the G5 Sahel force which is operating within the region with the strategic support of the AU and ECOWAS. The Force has carried out several counterterrorism operations since its creation albeit with some logistical and financial limitations. The AU and ECOWAS have also been in Mali since the outbreak of the multidimensional crisis in 2012 supporting mediation and reconciliation efforts and the political processes. In terms of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.2.1. Some Projects carried out by MINUSMA&lt;sup&gt;98&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QIP Project (MOP20_003): Rehabilitation support and Equipment for Mopti Regional Reconciliation Support Teams (PRRA) - <strong>Amount:</strong> 15,931,346 FCFA,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project QIP (MOP20_023): Strengthening Social Cohesion, Prevention and Conflict Management through Dialogue and setting up Local Reconciliation Committees in the Mopti and Segou Regions, Amount: 23,369,780 FCFA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Trust Funds (TF -2018-34) &quot;Building peace and building the resilience of vulnerable populations affected by conflict in the municipalities of the Koro Circle”, Amount: 184,873,500 FCFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project trust funds (TF -2018-32) &quot;My neighbour my brother&quot; Promote the peaceful transformation of conflicts in the circle of Bankass&quot; Amount: 337,535 USD.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: MINUSMA

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Interview with UNDP-Mopti. November 2020


<sup>101</sup>Ibid
counterterrorism, it was reported that the African Union intends to deploy 3,000 troops to support the G5 Sahel Joint Force and ECOWAS also adopted an action plan to make financial resources available to fight terrorism and violent extremism in West Africa, particularly in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Following the political crisis in Mali in August 2020, which ended the departure of President Ibrahim Keita in a military coup on 18 August 2020, ECOWAS with the support of the AU and UN played key mediation roles leading to the establishment of a transitional government in Mali.

**National Responses**

The focus of state response is to address insecurity and extend the presence of the state throughout the country to ensure the safety and security of citizens as well as the delivery of basic social services. Several initiatives have been implemented by the Government to deal with the multitude of challenges confronting the country.

In an attempt to stem this insecurity, there have been considerable increase in the defence and security budget (22% of the national budget), the signing of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Algiers (2015), the adoption of National Policy for the Prevention and Control of Violent Extremism and Terrorism (PNLEVT), the Strategic Framework for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development (CREDD), the implementation of the Integrated Security Plan for Central Regions (PISRC) among others, with the support of technical and financial partners. The practical measures taken to implement these strategies and policies cover a diversity of actions, ranging from military operations to disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) initiatives, the increase in security patrols and the adoption of mobility restriction measures. As part of the implementation of the PISRC for example, the Government has established security posts in certain localities plagued by terrorist attacks and community tensions in the Mopti region, including Kouakourou, Dialloubé, Ourbé-Doudé, Korombana, Ténenkou, Youwarou, Douentza, Mondoro and Koulako. The report by the Civil Society’s Citizens’ Coalition for Peace, Accelerated Unity and National Reconciliation in Mali (CCSC-PURN) on the DDR process showed that among the 1,840 ex-combatants targeted in the Algiers agreement in 2015, only 1,325 ex-combatants had completed the process as of December 2020. The 1,840 ex-combatants have been reintegrated into the Security and Defence Forces of Mali. However, there are a lot of arms still in circulation in the conflict affected areas despite formulation of a national policy to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

While the Malian state and its partners seem to place particular emphasis on military responses to address the security challenges, communities are outraged by the rate of banditry and the human right violations of security personnel. The analysis of community perceptions also revealed that the threat associated with violent extremist groups appears to be a secondary concern in the hierarchy of challenges confronting the people. This is because of the primary targets of the armed groups, who are mostly security personnel, state officials and foreigners. Furthermore, the research findings revealed that the PISRC which seeks to establish an inclusive framework for inter-sectoral consultation and coordination for the implementation of the actions of government and its partners in the prevention and fight against violent extremism and terrorism has not been effective. Just like PISRC, the security sector

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100 Interview with ECOWAS-Mali, November 2020.
101 See the PNLEVT document, p.9.
102 The double attack on 30 September 2019 on the elements Malian Armed Forces Mondoro (Mopti region) and a military camp under the command of the G5 Sahel Force to Boukesssi (in central Mali, Mopti region), clearly indicates that violent radical groups intend to delegitimize the central state and, in turn, benefit from the support and support of communities to their causes.
reform process has also not been very effective in terms of implementation. The basic reason for the ineffectiveness of the policies is that there is lack of adequate knowledge of the provisions in these polices at all levels including state authorities, defence and security forces, elected officials, civilian population and civil society organisations. A head of a women organisation interviewed for instance noted that:

*We have never been called upon to talk about security, let alone the SSR. In Bamako here, it's insecurity everywhere, the state can't secure us. We women are forgotten by the actors of security and defence.*

This demonstrates the gap between security actors and community expectations. Indeed, the civil society white paper for peace and security in Mali notes that “the gap between the security and development priorities of local communities and the responses of national and international policies” is growing. The responses do not also sufficiently address the root causes of insecurity such as poverty, unemployment and disparities in the distribution of wealth as well as sufficiently integrate, the notion of human security.

In terms of responses to the issues of women, the Government of Mali has shown commitment to gender equality and youth development and their participation in peace processes. This is manifested through the adoption of the following documents:

- Law 052 of 18 December 2015, establishing measures to promote Women access to nominative and elective Functions. However, women are still underrepresented in State institutions.

- National Gender Policy (2009-2018) to domesticate national, regional and international commitments to build a democratic society and the rule of law in which equality between women and men is a fundamental value.

- The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Action Plan: Mali launched its first National Action Plan (2011-2013) in 2012 to operationalize the Resolution. On 31 October 2020, the third National Action Plan of Resolution 1325 for the period 2019-2023 was launched. However, the implementation of the previous Action Plans has been poor.

**CSO Response**

At the CSO level, several programmes and initiatives for peace, social cohesion, development and stabilisation have been implemented at the central and northern regions. Some of these CSOs include WANEP, IMPRAP (Malian Institute for Research Action), ARGA (“l’Alliance Malienne pour Refonder la Gouvernance en Afrique”), Humanitarian Dialogue Centre (HD), and Think Peace-Mali. The CSO Think Peace-Mali for example, conducts a number of initiatives and programmes within the framework of peace and reconciliation in the Mopti, Ségou, Timbuktu, Taoudéni, Gao, Kidal and Menaka regions.

Generally, CSOs are mainly involved in awareness creation, sensitisation programmes, and assistance to victims of crisis. The development projects are often one-off projects on a small scale. These projects are in the areas of the fight against famine, support for food, health, agriculture, drinking water and sanitation, livestock, credit to small businesses (agricultural, commercial, artisanal, assistance to

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106 Head of a women’s organisation, November 2020.
107 Book developed by SIPRI and CONASCIIPAL as part of the project: towards lasting peace in Mali
109 Interview with the Director of the NGO Think Peace-Mali, November 2020.
women's groups, etc.). Some NGOs specialise in emergency operations of all kinds: epidemics, famines, floods, refugees, etc. It should be recalled that CSOs in Mali also participated in all stages of the peace agreement process, from the preliminary agreements in Ouagadougou (June 2013) to the Algiers agreement in 2015 between Mali and the armed movements.

Despite the tremendous efforts of CSOs to promote peace and stability, they do not have a framework of coordination among themselves, leading to the risk of a traffic jam or duplication of actions.

3.2.4. Limits and Pitfalls of existing responses to the peace and security challenges in Mali

Analysis of the data collected shows that there are some limitations/inadequacies in existing responses to the challenges of peace and security. These are grouped under the international, regional and national responses.

- **International responses**

In terms of international responses, the inadequacies are broadly related to the following factors:
- The non-alignment of most development plans and projects with the realities on the ground

- The non-involvement of communities, especially those in the rural area in initiatives affecting them. For example, MINUSMA is carrying out projects in central Mali that are not necessarily those expressed by rural communities in terms of needs.

- The difficulty of reaching certain areas of insecurity in order to assess the impact of initiatives in the process of reconciliation and social cohesion. The UNDP and the European Union for example support local NGOs operating on the ground. However, for reasons of insecurity, partners cannot travel to certain localities (Anderboukane (Menaka) Tenenkou (Mopti) to ensure the effectiveness of projects or programmes.

- There is the issue of relevance and effectiveness of programmes. Support is very often decided from urban centres, without necessarily involving the people at the periphery.

- **Regional responses**

The limits at the sub-regional level are:
- The lack of coordination of initiatives by the various stakeholders with the Malian State. Mali is not in a position today to list the number of initiatives that are being implemented to promote peace in the country because there is lack of formal coordination framework. Of course, the various state structures (ministries, departments, prefectures, etc.) are involved depending on the nature of the initiative, but between public structures, there is no effective and efficient coordination.

- The lack of human and financial resources to implement initiatives. ECOWAS, for example, had promised from the beginning of the crisis to send its force to eradicate the terrorist phenomenon. But for organisational and budgetary reasons, it ended up relying on the United Nations.

- **National Responses**

At the national level, the inadequacies of existing responses to the peace and security challenges were highlighted by the respondents. The multitude of actors on the ground without a functional coordination mechanism was also identified. In order to address this, some respondents suggested the creation of a comprehensive integrated framework of initiatives to ensure coherence and targeted responses. A respondent had this to say -

[...] it is better to integrate efforts ... in the area of security cooperation, humanitarian action, economic
development and peacekeeping, and above all the full return of state authority to all parts of Malian territory.¹⁰⁹

There is also the difficulty in the implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement. The dialogue between the signatory parties of the Agreement is not progressing. The parties continue to pursue acts that undermine peace and reconciliation efforts. For example, the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) issued two unilateral decisions on 30 January 2019, covering both administrative measures in the Kidal area and the launch of a military security operation. As a reminder, this region is still under the administration of the CMA, the State of Mali has no effective control of the region. On the Malian government's side, the launch of the military operation in March 2020 called Dambé (which literally means dignity) without involving the other signatory movements, constitutes a violation of the agreement.

The weak technical and operational capabilities of the Security and Defence Forces in the face of the multiple challenges is another issue highlighted. The Mali Defence and Security Forces are experiencing tactical and operational difficulties in dealing with the security threat, resulting in the expansion of insecurity from North to South through the Centre.

Lastly, the respondents mentioned the lack of strong leadership and crisis management skills among political and security actors in the country as a major gap in the existing interventions to address the multitude of problems in the country. Due to weak leadership and lack of crisis management skills, respondents noted that most of the countries leaders just take kneejerk political decisions to deal with ongoing crisis situations which has cost human life and properties worth millions of dollars.

• CSO Responses

CSOs are very ambitious but very often lack the technical, financial and human resources necessary to achieve the objectives set. They also largely depend to a large extent on external support to take action. Without donor support, CSOs are hamstrung in terms of the number of activities they are able to undertake within a given period. A respondent noted the following:

I find that many CSOs struggle to have a local anchor. In most cases, actions are contained in the areas that house the headquarters. However, the causes that are sometimes defended require local anchoring. Similarly, many of them are not financially self-sufficient, they depend on foreign aid. And that could raise the question of autonomy and independence of actions to be carried out.¹¹⁰

Thus, most CSOs depend on donor support and that also has implications for ownership of project conceptualisation, design and implementation. There is also sometimes limited coordination and competition among civil society actors. This problem emanates from the competition for project funds from similar sources and the weak leadership of some CSOs. The respondents also identified the short-term funding packages and project cycles as a major gap in existing interventions because it does not allow for lasting impact of their interventions to influence changes in the status quo.

Furthermore, although the challenges in Mali are cross border and transnational, there is very limited joint cross border initiatives by CSOs to address the different dimensions of the problem from a regional perspective. With the exception of organisations like WANEP that implement cross border initiatives due to its national offices in all the Sahel countries, most of the CSO initiatives are nationally focused. Lastly, it

¹⁰⁹Interview with the Director of the NGO Think Peace-Mali. November 2020.
¹¹⁰Interview with an A-member Alliance to Refound Governance in Africa (ARGA-Mali), Bamako, November 2020.
was also mentioned that CSOs do not often provide regular feedback of their interventions to the public to build community support and government trust in their activities.

3.5.1. Conclusion and Recommendations

The research shows that the responses to the peace and security challenges are far from being appropriate for the Malian context. According to most respondents, for the responses to be effective and enable the maintenance of peace and development, it must address the following key areas: securing the north and central regions; restoring the authority of the state through the empowerment of the state itself; the effective involvement of women and young people in the process of reconciliation and democratic governance; and management of political and electoral issues through institutional reforms. The main question at this stage is how to create a bridge between the existing set of peace and security governance arrangements to achieve maximum impacts. In light of the findings, the main policy recommendations are:

Government of the Republic of Mali

- Ensure better coordination between partners (technical and financial) and national actors to boost the effectiveness of actions carried out through the creation of an observatory for the coordination of peace and reconciliation initiatives.

- Ensure better coordination between the local and national actors to promote collective participation and accountability at all levels across the various governorates, prefectures and sub-prefectures. State representatives can rely on the Regional Reconciliation Support Teams, attached to the National Reconciliation Support Mission of the Ministry of Reconciliation. ERPs have the advantage of being very close to communities, especially those in the rural areas.

- Implement the various recommendations made at the National Agreement Conference (2017) and the National Inclusive Dialogue (2019)

- Implement Law 052 of December 18, 2015, instituting measures to promote Gender Access to Nominative and Elective Functions.

- Government should budget for peace or peacebuilding and develop a robust, innovative, and resilient resource mobilization strategy to support the implementation of initiatives.

International and Regional Partners

- Effectively communicate the actions of regional partners, including ECOWAS to change public opinion to gain support of the population. ECOWAS has been in Mali since the crisis erupted in 2012. However, many people see it as usurping the powers of Malian authorities. The various criticisms made against ECOWAS after its mediations before, during and after the fall of President Keita are a perfect illustration of this state of history.

- International partners such as French Barkhane Force should genuinely cooperate and collaborate with National Forces of Mali in the fight against violent radical groups to legitimise their operations instead of taking military actions alone which creates feelings of neocolonialism.

- Strengthen the capacity of CSOs, especially women and young people, through long term financial and technical support to play their full and meaningful role in peace-building and social cohesion initiatives. While CSOs benefit from the technical and financial contributions of partners, they raise the issue of duration of the support provided. Actions for peace are long-term.
However, the various supports given by partners are short-term.

- Review the existing funding mechanisms to allow local authorities to access direct funding to ensure citizen participation in the efforts of governance and economic development at the local level.

Civil Society Organisations

- CSOs should strengthen existing coordination and cooperation mechanisms to ensure coherence and targeted responses to compliment government efforts.

- CSOs should explore alternative sources of funding especially from the private sector and businesses aside the traditional donors to sustain their activities in the long term.

- CSOs should consider collaborating with their counterparts in neighboring countries to implement joint projects to address the transnational and cross border dimensions of the threats.

- Strengthen existing national platform on the WPS agenda to enhance coordination of actions among CSOs in the implementation of programmes.

- Increase advocacy on the implementation of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments by countries in the Sahel region.

- CSOs should develop good communication strategies to effectively communicate the outcomes of their intervention to the public, governments and development partners to gain the support and trust of stakeholders.
References


3.3.1. Overview of the multi-layered Peace and Security Challenges

Niger is a landlocked country bounded on the Northwest by Algeria, on the Northwest by Libya, on the east by Chad, on the south by Nigeria and Benin, and on the west by Burkina Faso and Mali. It is divided naturally into three distinct zones - a desert zone in the north; an intermediate zone, where nomadic pastoralists raise cattle, in the centre; and a cultivated zone in the south, where the greater part of the population are concentrated.¹¹¹

Figure 3.3.1. Political Map of Niger

Source: Nationsonline

The study identified four major challenges that have a functional correlation with issues of peace and social stability.

a) Structural Challenges and Poverty

With a poverty rate of 48.9% and a per capita income of $420, Niger unfortunately ranks last in the United Nations Programme’s Human Development Index. There are more than 3.6 million people in Niger who are at risk of chronic food insecurity, which affects children much more. Severe malnutrition and repetitive cycles of famine are partly linked to rainfall deficits in recent years. The rate of poverty in Niger is much more prevalent in rural areas and affects mostly women. The employment that is supposed to enable people to generate resources is limited, especially for women.

According to the 2014 statistics of the National Statistical Institute, 60.1% of women are inactive and among men this proportion is around 10.2%. This precariousness of the social strata is compounded by a relatively low literacy rate. This is about 29% due to the high informal Islamic learning centers which the State is struggling to control. The phenomenon of Islamic schools has the tendency to lead to enlistment in extremist organisations. Niger’s proximity to Nigeria increases this threat because of the massive recruitment of Nigerian children by preachers often radicalized and supportive of the Boko Haram sect. Poverty has also been the main cause of recruitment of the youth into terrorist groups. Former President of Niger Issoufou Mahamadou for example noted that "It is against social misery and demographic pressure that must be fought to weaken Boko Haram... Poverty is the main ally of terrorism. Most of its recruits are downgraded, unemployed youth."

b) The challenges of the foundations of sustainable development

Niger is struggling to lay the foundation for its sustainable development because of certain demographic factors that nullify almost all the efforts of different governments. The population growth rate is one of the most dynamic in the world. This rapid population growth clearly explains the high demand for basic social needs and services such as education, infrastructure, electricity and health. This situation severely limits the economic outlook of a country hard hit by poverty and where 60% of its population live on less than a dollar a day.

c) Political challenges

The political challenges facing Niger are in two parts: poor governance and the recurrence of institutional instability. Good governance requires the existence of credible state structures capable of defining strategic directions and implementing credible policies for the consolidation and management of state resources and investments. However, this can only be achieved when the state itself has the appropriate human resources and material resources to do so. However, Niger suffers from administrative governance challenges such as the mismanagement of public funds or corruption, politicisation of state institutions, poor public procurement practices, poor management of state assets and political clientelism that exacerbates tensions between different political groups.

Niger is also a country where political instability is quite recurrent. There has been the interference of the military in the politics of the country. From 1990 to present, the country has experienced military coups in 1996, 1999 and 2010. In total, Niger recorded 7
Figure 3.3.2: Illicit arms flow into the Sahel-Saharan space

Source: UNODC

interruptions of the constitutional order, 5 of which were by military coups and 2 by civil coups. These interruptions have affected the building of strong democratic institutions in the country. Practices such as arbitrary arrests, repeated violations of the constitution and constant harassment of opposition parties and members of civil society are still in Niger.

d) The challenges of growing insecurity.

For about three decades, the countries of the Sahel-Saharan region, including Niger, are experiencing extremely turbulent environment due to the proliferation of several violent extremist groups and terrorism, cross-border crime (trafficking in firearms, human trafficking in drugs and other illegal products, etc.) and many inter- and intra-community conflicts. The figure 3.3.2. Shows the illicit arms flow in the Sahel-Sahara space.

3.3.2. Specific Challenges Facing Women and Girls

The following are the specific challenges that affect women in Niger:

Divorce: this in traditional societies means a definitive break between husband and wife. Interviews conducted during this study identify divorce as a problem that affects women. From the interview with the leader of the Islamic Association of Niger, in 2019, they registered 846 divorce cases. The women often assume the consequences of divorce. They are forced to leave the house they acquired with their spouse even when they have custody of the children. Sometimes, if it is the woman who asked for a divorce as a result of abandonment or acts of violence, she will be asked to repay the dowry that her spouse paid. This discrimination was highlighted in the words of Dr. Balkissa Abarchi, a woman leader and head of the Association of...
Women Lawyers of Niger “At the end of a divorce, if it is the woman’s initiative, she is asked to repay the amount of the dowry”¹¹⁵. It is a phenomenon that is growing because women in Niger embody the image of poverty”. This discrimination persists, despite the existence of legislative and institutional frameworks such as the National Gender Policy (PNG) that abhors this form of violation against women. Article 22 of Niger’s Constitution clearly states that “the State ensures the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, girls and persons with disabilities. Therefore, the existence of these practices shows Niger’s real commitment to upholding international and regional legal instruments relating to women and human rights.

**Forced or early marriage:** Article 488 of the Civil code of Niger states 21 years as the age one is capable of all acts of civil life including marriage. A man and a woman cannot marry before 18 and 15 years and there is no marriage when there is no consent. Despite the existence of this law, early and forced marriages are growing in both urban and rural areas due to poverty, illiteracy, religious and cultural factors.¹¹⁶ According to a Belgian cooperation official interviewed, this bad practice persists today despite substantial support to the Ministry of Population, Women’s and Children’s Protection. According to him, some social groups with conservatives traditional and religious beliefs block all the initiatives undertaken to reverse this trend. A teenager interviewed during this study recounted her story as follows:

*My father unilaterally decided that I marry his nephew Ibrahim even though I was among the top five students in my sixth grade, he threatened my mother with divorce if she refused this marriage and that he would curse me if I gave an opinion against his decision, that is how I abandoned my studies (...), to prevent my mother from being on the street or to be judged by the society that encourages this type of marriage.*

It is clear that the causes and risk involved in child marriage in Niger remain complex.

**Gender-based violence (GBV):** In Niger, the incidence of GBVs is frequent. Women and girls are most often the victims of GBV in the form of physical, sexual and marital violence. Generally, women in the Sahelian space are affected by socio-cultural prejudices that keep them in a state of dependence, ignorance and extreme poverty.

A study carried out by OXAM in 2007 on women in the region of Dosso, Maradi, Zinder and Agadez revealed that most violence against women is most often carried out by household heads. The marital home thus becomes a place that keeps the woman in constant fear. According to a member of the Women Journalists Network, “Girls and women are exposed to all forms of violence, the most noticeable of which are sexual and psychological violence (...), very young married girls are often beaten and abandoned by perpetrators often in their fifties […] The average age of marriage is 15; between the age of 15 and 19, 36% of girls are already mothers or pregnant.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵Interview with Dr. Balkissa Abarchi, head of the Association of Women Lawyers of Niger, November 2021.
¹¹⁶For more information see the UNFPA 2013 report on Niger.
¹¹⁷Interview with a member of the Women Journalists Network, Niger, November 10, 2020
3.3.3. Responses to the Peace and Security challenges

- International responses

International responses to security threats can be categorised and analysed in two essential dimensions. These two dimensions are: the repressive dimension based on the use of military force and the preventive dimension based on international frameworks and conventions.

The United Nations is a strategic partner of Niger in its efforts to address the peace and security challenges in the country. Niger has benefitted from the implementation of the Integrated Strategy for the Sahel since its adoption in 2013. The main objective of the strategy is to facilitate multi-sector interventions in the Sahel-Saharan region.¹² This strategy is called integrated, because it envisages the promotion of good governance practices in all Sahelian countries; the operationalisation of a common strategic framework to combat cross-border threats and the adoption of a humanitarian assistance programme conducive to strong community resilience. The UN has supported Niger through financial and technical assistance to address some of its pressing challenges.

At the multilateral level, Niger enjoys considerable support, especially from the European Union, which is involved in several security areas. Among the most active structures in Niger is the Counterterrorism in the Sahel (CT-Sahel) project, which is also present in the five G5-Sahel countries. CT-Sahel has largely enabled the defence and security forces to acquire several military equipment adapted to combat new forms of terrorist threats. Also, as part of the partnership with the European Union, Niger through the EUCAP Sahel Niger Project, which has been in place since 2012, has benefited from an extensive programme of assistance to build the capacity of Niger's actors involved in the fight against terrorism. The EU also provides financial support to Niger as part of its financial assistance of 650 million euros (450 million euros paid to the three Sahel countries and about 200 million euros in the Maghreb countries) to countries in the Sahel.

There is also the counterterrorism operation of the French Barkhane Force, which has been in the region since 2014. The Force has conducted several operations against violent extremism and terrorist groups in the country. The US through its Department of Defence (DoD) has established a strong partnership program with Niger. The objectives of this extensive programme of support to foreign defence and security forces are to professionalise the Nigerien Armed Forces (FAN), combat terrorist and criminal threats. Accordingly, the U.S. Department of Defence delivered large military equipment to Niger in 2012 worth $350 million to strengthen its logistics capacity.¹² This anti-terrorism programme has enabled the police, gendarmerie and the Nigerien Republican Guard to receive a grant of around $25 million.¹³ The US has also enhanced aerospace capabilities, intelligence, surveillance and communication capabilities of the Nigerien Security Defence Forces.

- Regional responses

At the regional level, there are some initiatives to deal with the peace and security threats. There is the Sahel Platform for Judicial Cooperation, created in 2010 to strengthen judicial cooperation based on

¹²³Ibid, p.2
bilateral, regional and international agreements. Since its establishment, the platform has led to the successful completion of several extradition requests from member states in the region. So far, this platform has significantly facilitated communication between national central authorities responsible for drafting, disseminating and ensuring the regularity of the implementation of requests for international cooperation in criminal matters.

The African Union also provides some support through the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL) in the areas of policy development, political processes, human rights and humanitarian action, as well as finding solutions to security challenges including armed conflicts, terrorism, drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organised crimes in the country.¹¹⁸ The AU also supports the country’s development efforts in finding innovative ways to reduce poverty, food insecurity and desertification. Moreover, in the efforts to implement the ECOWAS counter-terrorism strategy, ECOWAS has organised capacity building and awareness programmes in Niger involving the youth, opinion leaders and religious organisations. Several training sessions have been organised by ECOWAS in the eight regions of Niger to alert, raise awareness and train actors on issues of security, the rule of law and democracy and peace. For example, from 6 to 25 September 2020, ECOWAS in collaboration with Zinder University organised a workshop to train Ulémas, youth leaders and civil society actors. The multi-stakeholder workshop aimed to build participants’ capacity in the culture of peace, the fight against radicalisation and violent extremism. It also aimed to strengthen the teaching skills and knowledge of the Imams of the madrasas through new programmes (focusing on education for peace, family planning, prevention of drug abuse and violent extremism).¹²²

- **National Responses**

Niger’s response has encompassed both military and non-military responses. Conflicts between farmers and pastoralists is one of the most recurrent problems particularly in rural areas. To tackle the recurrence of this form of conflict, the government has put in place several structures and mechanisms for preventing and managing this crisis. The rural code developed for this purpose has proven to be effective and the mobilisation of customary and administrative leaders has greatly contributed to lowering the tensions between these two communities.

In combating violent extremism and terrorism, the government has strengthened the operational capabilities of the defence and security forces through the creation of new police stations, several mobile security companies, the recruitment of personnel, the purchase of military equipment adapted to the effective fight against terrorism, the establishment of a scientific police laboratory among others.

On the judicial front, the government of Niger is installing a fairly effective mechanism to combat the dubious financial flows that allow extremist organisations to prosper. A National Financial Information Processing Unit has been¹²³ set up to monitor the origin of certain bank transfers. To this end, a review of the competences and responsibilities of legal bodies has been carried out to better integrate the areas of finance. Thus, in order to better combat terrorism, Niger has strengthened its legal system through legal and institutional reforms.


¹¹³ Interview with CSOs, November 2020.

Niger also contributes to the G5-Sahel Force and has bilateral agreements with Mali specifically on the sharing of information to neutralised jihadist groups operating in the area. Niger also has bilateral cooperation with Nigeria, Chad and Algeria to fight extremist and terrorist groups. However, these cooperative frameworks have been hampered by the existence of porous borders and weak state presence in some part of the Sahel. The jihadists continue to challenge Sahel states and expand their fields of influence.

- **CSO Response**

Civil society in Niger is a strategic link in the fight against extremism and terrorism. Organisations such as WANEP-Niger are implementing capacity building initiatives that focus on women and youth empowerment and increasing their participation in local governance. WANEP-Niger is also promoting community dialogue involving women, youth and community leaders in areas affected by conflicts to promote peaceful coexistence. Additionally, it is building early warning capacity for preventing violent extremism in Niger.

More significantly, CSOs provide a monitoring function that constantly exposes them to major risks. It is primarily a human rights watchdog and denounces all forms of violations. In the security field, Nigerien CSOs have been very successful in denouncing certain human right abuses attributed to the army in the fight against terrorist and armed groups in the region especially in the Diffa and Tillabéry regions. CSOs have repeatedly denounced the poor oversight of the repressive security system, which consistently commits human rights violations. On this issue, Chichangari, one of the leading civil society leaders said in a public statement: “We are doing human rights monitoring work in the Lake Chad region, where Boko Haram is rampant and where the armed forces have been deployed as part of the state of emergency. Niger may be at war, but we cannot turn a blind eye to abuses on both sides.” This monitoring role often exposes CSOs to risk but there are no laws to protect Civil Society Organisations from attacks. A civil society actor interviewed explained “every time we lambast the security agencies of certain human rights violations, the power calls us opponents or mercenaries. we carry out a difficult job that very often leads us to prison”. However, it is imperative that CSOs ensure that principles such as respect for human rights, good governance and social justice are respected.

In relation to poor governance, Niger has recently experienced a situation where state officials have been cited in major cases of embezzlement of funds allocated to the Ministry of Defence. Several CSOs who commented on this corruption scandal were tagged as being part of the opposition. This is the same situation when CSOs speak against the violations of the constitution by the government.

### 3.3.4. Limits and Pitfalls of Existing Responses to the peace and security challenges

- **International responses**

In recent years, the Sahelian space has become an environment where several international forces (Germany, France, Italy, Norway, United Nations forces, US forces, etc.) converge. This high concentration of military forces lacks a structural and institutional framework that coordinates the actions of the different actors in countries like Niger. This leads to role clashes and duplication of efforts by international partners in Niger. From the responses during the interviews, it was quite clear that there is lack of functional cooperation among development partners in Niger. Furthermore, the large size of the country coupled with the limited human and financial resources of international actors has hindered effective responses to the threats. For example, it would take the Barkhane forces several years to achieve meaningful results in the Sahel including Niger due to some operational and strategic barriers such as supply costs, staff support, lack of logistics,
dilapidated equipment, reduced workforce due to lack of resources. Therefore, since its deployment, the Force has not lived up to expectations especially in Niger where terrorism continues unabated in regions along the Mali border andDiffa region.

• Regional Responses

At the regional level, one of the main gaps in terms of responses to the threat is the low mobilisation of resources which severely limits the effectiveness of the decisions taken. Managing security crises requires a significant mobilisation of financial resources that Sahel countries do not have. The G5 Sahel countries for instance are struggling to mobilize financial and material resources to effectively prevent or combat the threats. They suffer from chronic budgetary implications, politicisation of their bodies, and excessive corruption of military officials. The low mobilisation of resources is compounded by the refusal of some strategic partners to support the G5 Sahel Force. The United States is for instance concerned about the flow of money to the G5 Sahel countries which are already undermined by corruption and embezzlement of public funds. This situation is further worsened by the exclusion of a country like Algeria, which has solid experience in the fight against Salafist movements. Also, among the G5 countries, there are differentiated understanding of terrorism and this leads to contradictory positions on issues between member states.

With regard to the Sahel Judicial Cooperation Platform created in 2010, it is still in its infancy. It faces two types of problems that limit its effectiveness. The first problem is financial, and the second obstacle refers to the limited commitment of some States. Regarding the limitations of the ECOWAS responses, respondents noted the human, logistical and financial limitations as some of the factors limiting the effectiveness of its interventions.¹²⁴

• National Responses

One of the major limitations of national responses is the State-centred approaches to peace with limited involvement of citizens and CSOs in the conceptualisation, design and implementation of programmes. The respondents noted that citizens are not involved in the activities of the government and sometimes they become victims of human rights abuses by the defence and security forces. This situation has not helped in creating the necessary support for government interventions at the community level. Moreover, it was also indicated by respondents that most states in the Sahel including Niger do not often budget for peacebuilding aside the budgets for counterterrorism operations. As a result, the government lacks financial and material resources to implement policies to promote peace and stability. It has to depend on development partners for support to deal with threats such as terrorism and localised conflicts.

Furthermore, the politicisation of public institutions for personal gains has been one of the major banes in the efforts to address the peace and security challenges in Niger. This has weakened Niger’s public administration and limited the institutional efforts to address the challenges. Additionally, the lack of respect for the principles of social justice and equality has hampered efforts to promote reconciliation and peaceful coexistence within communities. Lastly, there is a deficit in the effective application of the law due to certain social, cultural and political practices. Court decisions are not always accepted by people who have reservations about due process or verdicts. This deficit regularly generates verbal or physical violence.

¹²⁴Interview Crisis Group, Bamako, November 2014.
• **CSO responses**

CSOs lack financial and material resources to carry out activities that will inure to the benefit of the population. This makes them also vulnerable to donors' whims and caprices as the funding they often get is for specific purposes. Furthermore, CSOs frequently face attacks from politicians and other state officials for speaking on national issues that border on security, governance, corruption and human rights. Additionally, the interviews revealed that the short-term funding packages and project cycles was a major gap in existing interventions because it does not allow for lasting impact. Additionally, there is very limited joint cross border initiatives by CSOs to address the different dimensions of the problem from a regional perspective.

### 3.3.5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Niger faces multidimensional security challenges fueled by violent extremist and terrorist groups and the development of criminal activities related to arms, drug and human trafficking. There are also challenges related to political governance, inter-communal violence, religious fundamentalism, land and the use of natural resources. Over the years, there have been responses by the Government of Niger to address these challenges with the technical and financial support of development and regional partners. Based on the gaps identified from the existing responses, the recommendations are made:

**Government**

- The law enforcement agencies must change their negative behavior and act professionally in their dealing with CSOs.
- Strengthen the existing legal instruments for preventing and combatting radicalisation and violent extremism.
- Involve the media (traditional, social and journalists' networks) in the production and dissemination of messages on the prevention of violent extremism.
- Develop initiatives to enhance the economic empowerment of young people (girls and boys) and the education of girls in rural and urban areas.
- Identify the causes of the different types of inter-communal conflicts specific to each region and define a non-violent resolution mechanism to address them.
- Establish an operational information control and regulation system to check the Jihadists misinformation and populism to enlist young people affected by unemployment and poverty.
- Discourage any form of expression of freedoms inspired by the poor readings of secularism. They generally lead to the polarisation of opinions and the crystallisation of interfaith or inter-community hatred.
- Promote a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding by involving local actors and initiatives to promote peace, security, development and justice
- Government should budget for peace or peacebuilding and develop a robust, innovative, and resilient resource mobilisation strategy to support the implementation of initiatives

**Regional and international Actors**

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the mobilisation capabilities of Forces stationed at the borders of the G-5 Sahel countries. This assessment would better define the forms of technical support and equipment needed to operationalise attack units.
• Reconfigure the borders of the Sahel states in order to make the borders of these states more visible, fixed and well demarcated. The porosities of border are linked to the lack of means and equipment to monitor them as well as the lack of knowledge of the border lines that separate states. This reconfiguration must be accompanied by the construction of infrastructure that can enable the occupation of this large area by the people and the development of economic activities in the border areas.

• Expand the G5 Sahel Force to other countries such as Algeria to capitalise on its experiences and seek technical and military assistance.

• Reorganise the mandates and deployment of military forces in the Sahel to address their leadership conflict against terrorism in the Sahel-Saharan region.

• Organise sub-regional workshops on building the capacity of ulemas who are involved in the development of prevention and counter-terrorism strategies.

• Trace the sources of terrorist financing to reduce its capacity for expansion of terrorist activities and also deal with drug trafficking and their networks.

• Encourage research by universities on issues that address security, peace, radicalisation and violent extremism to generate new ideas and policy recommendations to complement existing responses.

• **Civil Society Organisations**

  • CSOs should strengthen existing coordination and cooperation mechanisms to ensure coherence and targeted responses to compliment government efforts.

  • CSOs should consider collaborating with their counterparts in neighboring countries to implement joint projects to address the transnational and cross border dimensions of the threats.

  • CSOs should explore alternative sources of funding especially from the private sector and businesses aside the traditional donors to sustain their activities for long term impact.

  • Increase advocacy on the implementation of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments

  • Increase advocacy for the inclusion of separate peace or peacebuilding programmes budget in National Budgets for a specific amount to be dedicated to peacebuilding activities.
References

Burkina Faso

3.4.1. Overview of the Multi-layered Peace and Security Challenges

The historical evolution of Burkina Faso is marked by periods of violence which affects the peaceful coexistence of communities.¹²⁵ There have been several conflict issues relating to ethnicity, religion, politics and development. Some of the most pressing peace and security challenges are inter-communal conflicts, agro-pastoral conflicts, insecurity fuelled by banditry and terrorist attacks.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Pre-colonial history marked by the conquest of some communities over others, the slave trade and colonization that imposed a regime of violence on the natives, the post colonial period punctuated by political violence of the exceptional regimes and regionalist demands.

¹²⁶ Some informants point to latent political conflicts that result in hateful and violent speech between political actors during the November 2020 election campaign. See Appendix 01: The Tree of Conflict in Burkina Faso.
• Inter-community conflicts in Burkina Faso: Burkina Faso’s economy is 80% rural, with agriculture and livestock sectors as the driving sectors. The main protagonists of the agro-pastoral conflicts are the Fulani herders and farmers from other ethnic groups from the different regions: Moosé - Peulhs in the north-central and central plateau, the Peulhs and Bissa in the central east, Peulhs and Lobi in the South-West. 127 Agro-pastoral conflicts undermine social cohesion and peaceful co-existence in the communities. From north to south and from east to west, agro-pastoral conflicts occur every dry season. The increasing population and changing demographics, economic activities that require more space and poor management of shared natural resources have contributed to the problem. Climate change, easy access to small arms, physical violence and damage to farm and animals are also aggravating factors to the conflict.

• Armed Bandity: Since the 2000s, Burkina Faso has faced armed attacks on both roads and urban centres. The regular security forces could not respond to this insecurity to ensure the safety of citizens especially in rural areas. 128 As a result, people organised themselves to deal with the situation by setting up community structures to ensure their safety and security. Since 2010, people have created self-defence groups, the most well-known is the koglweogo. In responding to the threats, the koglweogo use firearms and knives. They have been the source of some community clashes.

• Violent extremism and terrorism: Extremist groups operating in Burkina Faso, particularly in the administrative regions of the Sahel, North Central, East, Central East, North and Mouhoun regions. The motives for terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso are both endogenous and exogenous. In terms of the endogenous factors, experts cite poverty, youth unemployment, the inability of the state to meet the needs of the people such as security and local development, inter-communal conflicts, especially agro-pastoral clashes, poor local governance and the porosity of borders as the factors that facilitate the emergence of the terrorist phenomenon. 129 External causes include the Libyan crisis in 2011 and the Malian crisis in 2012. Terrorism-related insecurity is cross-border and affects the other G5 countries in the Sahel region, mainly Mali and Niger. Since 2015, terrorist attacks have killed 1,665 people, including 1,229 civilians and 436 members of the defence and security forces. 130 As of 10 November 2020, the country had more than 1,049,767 internally displaced persons, 53% of whom are women. The situation has deprived hundreds of thousands of students of their right to education with the closure of thousands of schools. The security situation is already undermining the government’s efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in particular on Goals 3 and 4 for health and education, respectively. Development partners are having their efforts undermined by the inability to intervene in certain areas, delays in the implementation of certain projects, increased costs and inadequate infrastructure to facilitate the monitoring of projects due to the inaccessibility of the beneficiary areas.

• In addition to the major challenges mentioned above, respondents also cited climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic as key challenges in the country. Both threats have a negative impact on the human security of especially women and children. The insecurity prevents them from benefiting from government supports and assistance from other development partners.

130 Ibid.
3.4.2. Specific Challenges Facing Women and Girls

Several experts say that women are both victims and actors of violent extremism and terrorism in Burkina Faso. The Arbinda massacre shows how women are often targeted by terrorist groups. Thus, on 23 December 2019 in Arbinda, unidentified gunmen committed the unspeakable by massacring 31 women at a water point. These internally displaced women were the subject of a possible act of retaliation and revenge by terrorists in the face of the military operations of the Burkina Faso Defence and Security Forces. This was a serious attack on the social, cultural and economic lives of communities especially women.

Generally, women and children in Burkina Faso are the most affected by insecurity. In the context of terrorism-related insecurity, women and girls are severely affected. They no longer have access to social services (education, health, sanitation, food, etc.) because of widespread insecurity. The Social Safety Nets project aimed at relieving the most vulnerable people can no longer meet its targets. This situation further complicates the conditions of women and girls. In the Eastern Region of Burkina Faso, women living in high-risk areas are most affected by the ban on certain income-generating activities such as the sale of dolo (millet beer) and pig farming. Some respondents reported events such as the purchase of all the barrels of dolo by the terrorists who pour the drink and threaten the vendors not to do it again. They also buy the pigs, slaughter them and prohibit women from doing these activities. There is also the adoption of a specific style of dress by women, including the compulsory wearing of the veil without taking into account the religious denomination. In order to avoid being targeted by terrorists, some NGOs prohibit themselves from creating awareness and sensitisation of issues such as family planning, gender and women’s rights. All this contributes to undermining the material conditions and women’s rights in this region as well as prevents them from benefiting from support in terms of literacy, maternal health, income-generating activities, training and safety awareness.

The phenomenon of mass displacement affects women in Burkina Faso. Displaced women often lack adequate water, security, food, education and health. Women are also exposed to gender-based violence (VGB) such as harassment and rape. Forced displacement exposes women to disease, starvation and family rifts. Women are also at risk of losing their spouses and children, making them more vulnerable.

3.4.3. Responses to the Peace and Security Challenges

The responses to the security challenges in Burkina Faso come from international and regional actors, and national actors, including the government and civil society organisations. Some of these interventions are discussed below:

- International responses

The actors involved in the international responses are mainly the United Nations (especially UNDP and UNHCR), the World Bank, the European Union, France and the United States. Through the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), the UNDP in its preventive strategy supports national programmes for peaceful crisis management, improving trust between the population, administration and SDF, and promoting the culture of peace and social cohesion. Similarly, the UNHCR works on prevention, humanitarian assistance and resilience building. Preventive activities involve raising awareness about social

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133 This fund is estimated at $14 million (Thiombiano ThiombianoJune 26, 2020).
cohesion and peaceful coexistence. As far as assistance is concerned, physical, psychological and medical support are provided for the benefit of women victims of violence. Resilience is promoted by awareness-raising activities on social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

To prevent the impact of crises on women and girls, the World Bank is planning to implement a large-scale programme from 2021 focusing on the "Three Border Zone" and the municipalities of the Sahel Emergency Programme (PUS). The Bank is supporting the preventive actions of the restructured Burkina Faso Territorial Communities Support Programme (PACT). The support takes into account the health context of the COVID-19 pandemic at the communal level and the provision of essential household items to internally displaced persons, the operationalisation of the new CT Support Agency, among others. The World Bank has also intervened in building resilience through support for the Emergency Local Development and Resilience Project to improve community access (including internally displaced persons) to critical infrastructure and essential social services in stressed and prevention areas.

In order to preserve peace and social cohesion in Burkina Faso, the European Union supports CSOs through the EU Emergency Trust Fund (FFU) for Africa. At the same time, it contributes to building community resilience. On its part, France has initiated projects on prevention of conflict and resilience, through the AFD channel. It has supported the provision of drinking water in urban areas, sanitation in rural areas, and electricity. To deal with the security threat, France is supporting the SDF logistically. These forces also benefit from military assistance from the Barkhane Force on the ground.

The United States, through Burkina Faso's second compact by the MCC Board of Directors has strengthened access to low-cost, better quality electricity. Burkina Faso also benefits from US military assistance through logistical support to SDF (training, equipment, military exercises). USAID provides short- and medium-term support to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities in the northern and Sahel regions.

- Regional responses

The regional actors include AU, ECOWAS, G5 Sahel Force, and UEMOA. The AU has supported efforts by the Government of Burkina Faso to increase women's leadership in peace and security (ensure the consideration of women's voices in conflict prevention and peacebuilding). During its first consultative meeting of regional women's, peace and security forces in Africa in May 2019 in Ouagadougou, the AU affirmed its commitments to women empowerment and increased roles in peacebuilding ventures. ECOWAS has also shown similar support to the plight of women and youth in Burkina Faso. It has also included gender issues in its Regional Early Warning system to address the concerns of women and girls in the country.

The G5-Sahel has a more holistic policy that takes prevention, assistance and resilience into account. Indeed, the strategy for the Development and Security of the G5-Sahel countries (September 2016) takes into account the gender and human rights dimension. The February 2020 Integrated Priority Action (CAPI) provides for a women's platform and a network of National Youth Coordinations to support efforts to mitigate violence; respect for human rights and gender inclusion. The Priority Investment plan (2019-2021) in May 2018 developed a project of women leaders of the G5 Sahel to strengthen the role of women in the consolidation of social peace,
development and security in the Sahel. UEMOA has a prevention tool called the Early Warning and Warning Mechanism (MeVap). This helps the organisation in its preventive and response efforts against the security threats.

- **Government responses**

The national responses are provided by the state structures. On prevention, the Prime Minister's National Early Warning and Early Response Mechanism Coordination Centre (CN-CMAPR) produces monthly and thematic security alert reports for the government. The reports help the Government in the prevention and response to emerging conflicts or security challenges. The Ministry of Finance through the Local Economic Development Support Programme (PADEL) and the Sahel Emergency Programme (PUS/BF), contributes to peace and development through economic empowerment projects (female entrepreneurship) for the socio-economic integration of women in 4 regions of Burkina Faso. The Ministry in charge of social cohesion has the "Amazons of Peace" Initiative which is composed of 58 women from different communities aimed at mobilising other women and conveying messages of peace in the 13 regions through awareness creation and education activities. The government has also established the National Observatory for the Prevention and Management of Community Conflicts in Burkina Faso (March 2016) to prevent and ensure the integrated management of community conflicts. The Ministry in charge of gender promotion, through the Permanent Secretariat of CONAP-Genre, organises activities to promote positive gender social values in the regions of Burkina Faso. The SP/CONAP-Genre is also involved in the implementation of the Social Cohesion, Security and Rule of Law (COSED) programme in seven regions through training sessions on gender concept, the care of GBV victims and gender consideration in SDF missions.

Regarding the fight against insecurity and assistance to communities, the State has declared a state of emergency in six regions of the country. The SDF has conducted major military operations such as Otapuanu (March 2019 in the eastern and central-eastern regions) and Doofu (May 2019 in the Sahel, North and North Central regions). In addition, there are permanent security actions (patrols...) across the country especially in conflict prone areas. The SP/CONAP-Genre is involved in managing the needs of GBV victims in collaboration with the Legal Assistance Fund, UNFPA and AFJB. It also provides food and other assistance to communities especially to women.

- **Responses by CSOs/NGOs**

The non-state actors are contributing in diverse ways to address the peace and security challenges in the country. Below is the list of some of the activities and projects being carried out by CSOs:

**WANEP-Burkina:**
- Project on the Peaceful Management of Local Conflicts in the North-Central Region in 2019 (WANEP-Burkina, UNDP funding)
- Danish demining group (DDG) and WANEP Women’s Leadership Program: Creating a Pool of Women’s Expertise for Inclusive Security Governance in the Sahel.

**OXFAM (British NGO):**
- Supporting CSOs in promoting UNSC Resolution 1325 on the 20th anniversary. OXFAM marked the celebration with strong actions in support of women’s and girls’ commitment to peace and security issues. They support CSOs as part of the
"I matter" campaign, to say that women's rights matter, women's engagement matters"

• In terms of resilience building, OXFAM and AJLE are working to respond to the needs of women and promoting their active participation in governance and peace-building structures at the local, regional and national levels. The AJLE has also carried out programmes for the benefit of victims, particularly women and girls at risk of violence.

**CECI (Canadian NGO):**

• Project to support co-consolidation of peace and social cohesion (funded by the PBF)

**Dialogue without borders:**

• Awareness campaigns on social cohesion through high-level reflections and exchanges to understand security and peace issues and propose solutions

**Promediation (French NGO):**

• Organized regional conferences to promote social cohesion and strengthen inter-community relations in the Eastern, Western, Waterfall, North and North Central regions

**CHEICK MOAZE FOUNDATION for Social Cohesion, Peace and Benevolence:**

• Organised a National Conference on Social Cohesion and Respect for Authority (19 September 2020, Ouagadougou)

• Organised a regional Awareness Conference for Peaceful Elections on "Elections and Homeland" (Kaya, October 24, 2020)

**COFEPAX**

• Project on: “Involving Burkina Faso women in reconciliation and reform processes” which involves conducting activities such as forums, communications activities, production and performance of forum theatre sessions.

**Association of youth development (ADYP):**

• She4Peace Project from September 15 to October 30, 2020 to promote women's and girls' participation in peacebuilding

**Association of Young Evangelical Leaders (AJLE):**

• Awareness, training and prayer on peace and social cohesion

**Burkinabe Federation of UNESCO Associations, Centres and Clubs (FBACU):**

• Project to "Raise Awareness and Involvement of Young People in monitoring and preventing violent extremism through the establishment of a community alert mechanism" (Northern Region, Ouahigouya, 2019)

**Africa Youth Network (RAJ): Good Governance and Security Project**

• Security stream: promoting dialogue between SDF, civilians and community leaders through regional fora

**YIM (Faso en Marche):**

• Project to improve the level of participation of young people and women in elections and to combat electoral and post-election violence for a peaceful and accepted election in the Sahel and Northern regions.

The non-exhaustive inventory of CSOs/NGOs responses above reveals the different peace and security initiatives in Burkina Faso. Most of the CSOs are supported by donors such as France, Belgium and the United States. But despite this diversity of actors and their multiple interventions, the responses...
have some limitations which is discussed in the subsequent section.

3.4.4. Limits and Pitfalls of Responses to Peace and Security Challenges

- **International responses**

While the initiatives of international partners have had a definite impact on the lives of women and girls in the conflict-prone areas, the discontinuity and short-term funding package of programmes such as the Peacebuilding Fund does not provide a lasting impact. An example of such a programme is the Association for More Cohesion between North Central livestock and Farmers (A.C.E.A.C.N) project on the peaceful management of local conflicts in the communities of Barsalogho, Foubé and Yirgou. The project commenced in July 2019 and involved the organisation of rural activities bringing together women from four villages in the Barsalogho municipality to promote peaceful coexistence between communities. However, the end of the project did not allow the implementers to acquire mesh for the field fence to separate the farms and livestock. Similarly, the humanitarian response is more time limited and its impact is not measured. This raises the problem of the quality of humanitarian actors’ response in a context where demand is greater than supply.

- **Regional responses**

There is lack of complimentary actions or efforts by the various regional actors. The peace and security mechanisms of regional organisations (ECOWAS, G5-Sahel, Liptako-Gourma Authority and UEMOA) are fragmented with relative impacts. The actors do not often pool their experiences and resources together to help address the challenges in Burkina Faso. Furthermore, it was also noted by respondents that there is limited/no involvement of communities in initiatives affecting them. Thus, the regional interventions are less inclusive and participatory, leading to programmes that do not respond to the immediate needs of the local population.

There is also limited human, logistical and financial resources to implement regional initiatives in the country.

- **Government responses**

At the national level, there is lack of follow-up on projects implemented with the support of international partners. This is the case with the UNDP-funded “Youth and Peace” project. Moreover, the establishment of institutions in charge of community conflicts and religious events suffers from a lack of financial support by the State. These initiatives are struggling to function optimally because of the lack of resources. The state is also not showing sufficient leadership in the coordination of humanitarian actors. This has impacted negatively on the effectiveness of humanitarian care. The lack of strategy for the rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration of IDPs in Burkina Faso does not allow for the strengthening of the resilience of women and girls. The strong focus on emergency actions also prevents the focus on sustainable resilience and reconstruction.

- **CSO responses**

The CSOs often lack the capacity and resources to locally and nationally take ownership of projects supported by international actors. Project time is also limited to enable actions with sustainable impacts. The majority of international, regional, national and civil society organisation responses are focused on prevention and assistance. Post-conflict sustainable resilience and reconstruction are dimensions that are not taken into account by the various responses. While prevention of conflicts is important, consolidating peace and strengthening the socio-economic capacities of communities and specifically women and girls is vital to help stabilise the situation in a sustainable way.
3.4.5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Promoting a peaceful society in Burkina Faso requires all actors to play their meaningful roles including women and the youth with the support of multilateral and regional actors. A lot of interventions have been implemented by the Government of Burkina Faso, CSOs, regional and multilateral actors operating in the country. However, despite the limited achievements, there were some limitations and pitfalls that were identified in the existing responses. To address these gaps in the existing responses by the various actors at the national, regional and international levels, the following recommendations are made:

**Government**

- Implement the decisions of regional organisations (G5-Sahel, ECOWAS, UEMOA...)
- Promote local and national ownership of the achievements of international responses to peace and security
- Ensure the resettlement of IDPs by creating secure reception areas in other parts of the country to enable families to produce and empower themselves and at the same time avoid the risk of mass emigration to neighbouring countries.
- Put in place effective measures to address the political, economic, social, cultural and gender vulnerabilities
- Promote peaceful coexistence and social cohesion through peace education and sensitisation programmes at the community level
- Strengthen the skills of women and girls to promote peace and security through the implementation of effective UN Security Council Resolution 1325 to ensure their meaningful participation in peace and political processes in Burkina Faso.
- Government should budget for peace or peacebuilding and develop a robust, innovative, and resilient resource mobilisation strategy to support the implementation of initiatives

**Regional and International Actors**

- Prioritise the development and humanitarian component of your interventions to compliment the security dimension instead of the preponderant focus on the latter approach. In essence, promote the security - development - humanitarian nexus in your interventions to achieve maximum impacts
- Promote better synergy or coordination among the key actors in the provision of humanitarian aid to the people.
- Provide adequate support to families and host communities in need of humanitarian care to reduce frustrations and improve IDP reception centres.
- Offer alternative economic opportunities to people especially the youth in areas of insecurity to sustain their livelihoods and to lessen their vulnerability to recruitment by violent extremist or terrorist groups
- Promote women’s economic empowerment to reduce their vulnerability through financial and technical support to set up income generating activities.
- Provide long-term funding of gender-sensitive
peace and security initiatives for greater impacts instead of the short-term funding cycles.

Civil Society Organisations

- CSOs should explore alternative sources of funding especially from the private sector and businesses aside the traditional donors to sustain their activities in the long term.

- Expand activities/interventions from conflict prevention and the provision of humanitarian assistance to post-conflict resilience building and reconstruction which are lacking in current responses.

- Increase advocacy on the implementation of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments by countries in the Sahel region.

- Increase advocacy for the inclusion of separate peace or peacebuilding programmes budget in National Budgets for a specific amount to be dedicated to peacebuilding activities.
References


3.5.1 Overview of the Multi-layered Peace and Security Challenges

Côte d’Ivoire

Figure 4.3.1. Map of Côte d’Ivoire

Source: Nationonline Project

The multidimensional challenges of peace in Côte d’Ivoire are mainly of three main types: security, socio-political and economic.

Security:
The challenges at this level relate to the large-scale reconstruction of the Ivorian army. First downgraded during the governance of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, then instrumentalised for political struggles during the 1990s, it finally became a major player in the Ivorian crisis. The army really entered the political game through the military coup d’état of 1999 before remaining there permanently with the armed rebellion of 2002. For ten (10) years, there were two opposing armed forces. On the one hand, the Defence and Security Forces (SDF) of the State of Côte d’Ivoire and on the other, the armed forces of the New Forces resulting from the 2002 rebellion. After the post-election crisis of 2010 that left 3000 people dead, the Ivorian army was reformed. However, there are still some security challenges which include:

- The renement of the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process
- Security sector reform
- The fight against terrorism and violent extremism
- Urban violence of young people
- Social cohesion

Economic:
Poverty and socio-economic inequalities are a breeding ground for conflict. In fact, for the World Bank, poverty is the major source of armed conflict in Africa. In the Ivorian context, the various political crises have weakened the country’s economic capacity and accelerated the poverty rate during the period 1993-2000. But since 2012, Côte d’Ivoire has placed economic recovery at the heart of its peace agenda. This strategy raises three questions that need to be resolved in order to consolidate peace and strengthen security:

- Peace through inclusive growth
- The fight against poverty and
- the reduction of socio-economic inequalities

Socio-political:
The tension and violence during the presidential elections of October 2020 indicate that Côte d’Ivoire is still looking for peaceful governance and a rule of law. Moreover, the perceived tensions in the Ivorian social setting clearly demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the national reconciliation process. So, the challenges at the sociopolitical level relates to:

- Governance and the rule of law
- National reconciliation

3.5.2 Specific Challenges Facing Women and Girls

The specific challenges faced by women and girls are mainly three (3): socio-economic marginalisation, gender-based violence, violence in times of political crisis and armed conflict.

Socio-economic and political marginalisation:
In Côte d’Ivoire, the socio-economic downgrading of women and girls is an indisputable reality. Faced with the poverty of their households, they are often forced to be pillars of their families. Mothers, wives, shopkeepers, farmers, they hold these roles at the risk of their health and life. In the country, one of the strong expressions of the marginalisation of young girls is the increase in recent years of school pregnancies, thus weakening their educational background. The Executive Director of UNFPA in Côte d’Ivoire stated in 2014 that:

“Teenage pregnancies originate in poverty, gender inequality, violence, child marriage and forced marriage, imbalances between adolescent girls and their male partners in imposing their will, lack of education and the failure of systems and institutions to protect their rights.”

¹³⁸ To see UNFPA WCARO | Pregnancy among the Adolescents School In Côte d’Ivoire: Government And l’UNFPA tackle The Scourge; poche_20182019_fr.pdf (men-dpes.org)
The multidimensional challenges of peace in Côte d'Ivoire are mainly of three main types: security, socio-political and economic.

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However, there are still some security challenges which include:

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- Security sector reform
- The fight against terrorism and violent extremism
- Urban violence of young people
- Social cohesion

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138 To see UNFPA WCARO | Pregnancy among the Adolescents School in Côte d’Ivoire: Government And l’UNFPA tackle The Scourge ; poche_20182019_fr.pdf (men-dpes.org)
The phenomenon continues even as the government continues to raise awareness on the issue. In the 2018-2019 school statistics, the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training reports 127 cases of pregnancy at the primary level and 4,475 cases at the secondary level. In addition, the rural world continues to concentrate the high rate of women's poverty in Côte d'Ivoire. According to the National Statistics Institute, 75% of rural women live below the poverty line. At the political level, they also have low participation in political decision-making processes and their political skills are sometimes even denied. In a political crisis, women and girls are the first victims of power struggles.

**Gender-based violence (GBV):** According to statistics from the Ministry of Family, Women and Children, 36% of women in Côte d'Ivoire are victims of physical, psychological, moral and sexual violence. Despite efforts by the government over the past several years, gender-based violence continues in the country. Political crises weakening the social fabric and the family are major causes. Women in areas of armed conflict and those considered displaced have been shown to experience a greater propensity for physical, psychological and sexual violence. The challenge for the Ivorian authorities is mainly to strengthen the legal framework for the repression of gender-based violence and to raise awareness of these practices on a large scale.

**Violence in times of political crisis and armed conflict:** Because of their vulnerability, women are generally victims of political crises and armed conflicts. However, they are also sometimes actors of gun violence. Côte d'Ivoire's military-political crises since 1999 have severely affected women. It has weakened their economic activities and exacerbated household poverty. While some were victims of physical and sexual violence during armed clashes, others voluntarily joined the Forces Nouvelles rebellion and alongside Laurent Gbagbo's loyalist forces (Diallo, 2018). Their long-term fragility as a result of the military-political crisis may be an entry-level for some entrepreneurs of violence such as terrorist movements in border communities.

### 3.5.3. Responses to the Peace and Security Challenges

Responses to the challenges of peace and security in Côte d'Ivoire are multifaceted and varied. These responses are mainly spread over two periods - the resolution of the military-political conflict and the search for peace that runs from 2002 to 2011 and, the consolidation of peace since the end of the post-election crisis of 2010-2011. At the vertical level, these responses are provided by international, regional and national actors. From a horizontal point of view, they cover several sectors: security, humanitarian, socio-educational, health, economic and political.

- **International responses**

  The international responses involved multilateral actors and the bilateral actors of Côte d'Ivoire such as France, Germany, Norway among others.

- **The time of the resolution of the Ivorian conflict and the search for peace (2002-2011):**

  During this period, there was a strong intervention by multilateral and bilateral international actors in a country cut in half and plagued by armed violence.

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139 Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training, Pocket School Statistics, 2018-2019. To see Directorate of Strategies, Planificationet Statistics (DSPS) (mendpes.org)
141 Ibid.
143 Ibid.
144 For more information see Report 2019, UNFPA Côte d’Ivoire.
145 Interview with an NGO manager in Bouaké, Interview with the African small arms and light weapons network in Abidjan.
The aim of this concentration of international actions was to make a substantial contribution to the search for peace in the country and to help to address the socio-economic, security, humanitarian and political fragilities of the population. These combined actions focus on mediation, peacekeeping and humanitarian action.

Regarding multilateral actors, the UN was at the forefront of international interventions. It’s presence in Côte d’Ivoire was first through the High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to manage the situation of Liberian refugees from Liberia’s civil war that began in 1989. At the beginning of the 2002-armed rebellion, the United Nations was active in mediating to end the conflict. From the 2003 Linas-Marcoussis agreements to the 2007 Ouagadougou political agreement, the 2004 Accra agreements and the 2005 Pretoria Agreement, the United Nations was heavily involved in finding solutions to the Ivorian problem. Several Security Council resolutions were issued as part of the process to end the crises.

With regard to peacekeeping, a United Nations mission to Côte d’Ivoire for the observation of the peace process was first set up on 13 May 2013. Then, in the face of the exacerbation of armed violence and the risk of widespread violence, the United Nations created the United Nations in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI). UNOCI as a peace mission in Côte d’Ivoire was deployed to freeze the conflict and keep the peace and impose a demarcation line called a "buffer zone" between the warring forces. It invested in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process from 2003 to 2010. Finally, the mission provided technical, financial and security assistance during the 2010 electoral process that finally led to the post-election crisis of 2010-2011.

In terms of humanitarian action, several UN agencies were active during the period 2002-2010. Organisations such as UNICEF, OCHA, WFP, FAO, IOM mainly covered the North-West Central areas controlled by the Forces Nouvelles rebellion. The humanitarian situation there was much more worrying. The European Union, for its part, also supported the peace process in Côte d’Ivoire through its support for mediation, and peacekeeping through official development assistance and its humanitarian action through the activities of the European Humanitarian Commission (ECHO).

Regarding bilateral international actors, the most striking example is France’s involvement in the peace process in Côte d’Ivoire since the beginning of the armed conflict in 2002. At the level of mediation, French diplomacy was very active during the period 2002-2011. It initiated the 2003 Linas-Marcoussis Accords and conducted active diplomacy with the UN Security Council in the management and resolution of the Ivorian crisis. Regarding peacekeeping, it participated in ending the armed conflict at the "buffer zone" level through the deployment of the "Unicorn" force under the auspices of the United Nations. In addition, French troops participated in securing the 2010 election and ending the 2010-11 post-election crisis with the use of force (Peace enforcement). France also supported the peace process through official development assistance. The French Development Agency (AFD) was from 2008 the catalyst for France’s development actions in Côte d’Ivoire. In terms of humanitarian action, France supported French NGOs present in Côte d’Ivoire, including the French Red Cross. Other state development agencies have been much more active in the humanitarian field. This is the case, for example, with USAID on health issues and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

The end of the post-election crisis of 2010-2011 restored constitutional order in the country after ten (10) years of crisis. International actions to support peacebuilding was consistent with Côte d'Ivoire's post-crisis economic emergence plan. The Ivorian state reaffirmed its authority by taking control of priority sectors (education, health, food, etc.) and managed them independently.

With regard to multilateral international actors, the United Nations system provided support for the DDR process and the security sector reform totally led by the State of Côte d'Ivoire at the end of the post-election crisis. Despite the end of UNOCI's mandate in June 2017, the UN continued to play its role as a peacemaker in Côte d'Ivoire. During the recent post-election crisis of 2020, the permanent representative of the United Nations system was involved in finding solutions to the crisis. In addition, the organisation continues to support peacebuilding in Côte d'Ivoire through the actions of its specialised agencies such as UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women, UNICEF, IOM, FAO and WFP. The European Union, for its part, not only supports development in Côte d'Ivoire but also campaigns to raise people's awareness of peace. An example is the collaboration between the EU and the magic system musical group that has been going on since 2019. This initiative called the EU-Magic Tour is about sharing the values of peace throughout the country through music.\(^{150}\)

France, for its part, supports peacebuilding from two angles: Preventive diplomacy and AFD's development actions. Preventive diplomacy focuses on the use of the good offices of France to prevent any outburst of violence in the country, particularly during the presidential election in October 2020. It is supported by the representation of the European Union in Côte d'Ivoire. AFD's development partnership is divided into three points: development deleveraging contracts, support for the private sector and partnership with French NGOs operating in Côte d'Ivoire. In addition, in the fight against terrorism, France provides technical, material and financial support to Côte d'Ivoire. The country occupies a strategic position in the fight against the proliferation of terrorist and extremist movements in the Sahel and the rest of West Africa.

The United States, for its part, continues to provide support through USAID-managed health programs (The health sector occupies 90% of USAID's actions). The organisation also intervenes in the area of governance, democracy and inclusive peace. Programmes such as "Ivory Coast Transition Initiative 1 and 2" have focused on conflict prevention and management mechanisms in the west of the country and on the situation of ex-combatants.\(^{151}\) Since 2019, the American NGO National Democratic Institute (NDI) has been leading the "Transition and Political Inclusion" programme in Côte d'Ivoire on the consolidation of peace and democracy.

Regional responses

The regional responses to the Ivorian crisis have mostly been led by ECOWAS. It has been involved in active diplomacy in the country than any other regional organisations such as UEMOA, CEN-SAD and the Mano River Union. ECOWAS was also involved in the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire from 2002 to 2011 using its good offices to mediate the crisis. The mediation and preventive diplomacy of ECOWAS led to the signing of various peace agreements. In 2003, ECOWAS launched a peace mission called ECOWAS Mission in Côte d'Ivoire.

\(^{150}\)Interview with the National Council of human rights in Bouaké 11 November 2020.

(ECOMICI), to help end the Ivorian armed conflict.

This active diplomacy of ECOWAS was also evident during the recent electoral crisis of 2020. Before, during and after the presidential election in October 2020, ECOWAS in collaboration with the AU and the UN initiated meetings with stakeholders in the Ivorian political game to reduce tensions and create the conditions for a peaceful presidential election. In addition, it dispatched a ministerial mission of preventive diplomacy with the idea of continuing the recommendations of the joint ECOWAS-AU-UN mission. ECOWAS then embarked on an election observation mission to ensure the legitimacy and credibility of the vote. Finally, in the search for solutions to the electoral crisis, the joint ECOWAS-AU-UN mission was reactivated to facilitate dialogue among stakeholders. The ECOWAS actions had the effect of preserving the socio-political climate and curbing widespread violence. The integrated ECOWAS-AU-UN approach is innovative in that it harmonises the views of these international organisations in the prevention and resolution of political crises. Besides ECOWAS, the AU has also been active in mediation and was involved in resolving the 2010-11 post-election crisis. At the peacekeeping level, it supported the ECOWAS mission based on the principle of subsidiarity.

- National Responses

National responses to peace and security challenges include three components: security, economic and socio-political.

- At the security level: After the severe post-election crisis of 2010-2011, the Ivorian army reformed itself. Several heterogeneous and antagonistic forces, including the former defence and security forces (SDF) under Laurent Gbagbo and the armed forces of the new forces constituted the various factions. For this reason, the military was described as an "army of factions". The integration of rebels into the army at the post-crisis period raised the question of cohesion within the armed forces of Côte d'Ivoire. To address this problem, a DDR process and the reform of the security sector was undertaken under the regime of Alassane Ouattara. Established in 2012, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Authority (ADDR) led the DDR process, which ended in 2015. At the end, the ADDR succeeded in reintegrating 52,000 ex-combatants out of a total strength of 74,000. However, 18,000 could not be integrated. The reform of the security sector, on the other hand, consisted of a major restructuring of the Ivorian army to make it more professional. To achieve this goal, the State created the National Security Council in 2012 to lead this reform. In addition, there was the establishment of elite units such as the Coordinating Centre for Operational Decisions (CCDO) and the Special Forces of Côte d'Ivoire. In the fight against terrorism, Côte d'Ivoire has strengthened its security apparatus. Despite its remoteness from areas plagued by terrorist movements (Sahel-Saharan Band, Liptako-Gourma, Lake Chad basin, etc.), it remains a potential target of terrorist attacks. The economic heart of West Africa and a country with high immigration rates in the region, Côte d'Ivoire has now a strategic place in the fight against terrorism. For example, it supported the deployment of French forces from Operation Serval against terrorist armed groups in the Sahel in 2013. The presence of a French military base on Ivorian soil is a major part of the counter-terrorism operations in West Africa. Côte d'Ivoire's strategic position presents itself as a "possible bulwark" in the fight

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¹⁵⁵ ibid
against terrorism and violent extremism. This explains why, in the framework of an agreement between France and Côte d’Ivoire, they decided to set up an international academy to fight terrorism. The launch ceremony for the academy’s construction site took place in October 2018. The academy’s ambition is “to promote global response to terrorism, from intelligence to judicial response to the action of specialized forces.” Although not being a member of the G5 Sahel, the country is still a key player in the region, especially with the establishment of this international academy on its territory. In strengthening its counter-terrorism efforts, Côte d’Ivoire joined the Accra initiative launched in September 2017 with the aim of “preventing the spread of violent extremism and combating cross-border organized crime in border areas.” The member states of the Accra initiative are Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire and Togo. At the national level, Côte d’Ivoire’s National Border Commission was established in July 2017 as a tool for development, security and integrated border management. It is also a means of preventing violent extremism. However, it has remained inactive since its inception. It was only from January 2020 with the establishment of an executive secretariat that it began to carry out activities in line with its objectives. In the end, despite all these efforts, Côte d’Ivoire’s Ivory Coast remains on alert. The terrorist attacks in the north of the country in Kafolo in February 2020 and those in Grand-Bassam in March 2016 are a reminder that it is not entirely immune from subversive actions of these violent extremist movements.166

• At the economic level: The consolidation of peace through a robust economy in Côte d’Ivoire has been based on the so-called "elephant triumph" scenario as announced in the National Development Plan (2012-2015). Under this approach, reviving the country’s economic growth was envisaged to guarantee peace and social cohesion. It is a liberal approach to peace.157 The state played the leading role in managing humanitarian aid itself through the Presidential Emergency Programme (PPU) and by streamlining its economic recovery with the national development programme.158 This economic strategy, which has placed the state at the heart of development planning, committed strong public spending on infrastructure and developed private investment incentives, enabled Côte d’Ivoire to have a continuous growth rate of about 8% from 2012 to 2019. However, the outbreak of the Coronavirus crisis weakened the economic by making the growth rate at 1.8%. Economic inclusion is not yet effective, and the poverty rate seems to have stagnated over the past decade.

• At the socio-political level: Several initiatives at the socio-political level have been undertaken to achieve peace and facilitate social cohesion. These include the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CDVR), the National Commission for Reconciliation and Compensation of Victims (CONARIV), the National Programme for Social Cohesion (PNCS), the National Human Rights Council and the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Cohesion and the Fight against Poverty. These institutions are to contribute towards national reconciliation. But the road is still dotted with a lot of pitfalls because, they present a rather mixed record on national reconciliation. For example, the CDVR which was

154 To see Côte d’Ivoire: possible Rampart Against The Terrorism Sahel? | TVSMONDE - Information ; To see Presentation Academy International Fight Against The Terrorism (...) - France In Ivory Coast (amibfrance.org); To see The Initiative Accra Can Prevent The Terrorism in the States Coastal Africa West? - ISS Africa ; Interview with the Executive Secretary of the National Borders Commission of Côte d’Ivoire, Abidjan, 24 November 2011; To see CNFCI | Commission National Borders Côte d’Ivoire; To see Ivory Coast Presentation (banquemondiale.org)
created in 2011 with much hope and great ambition to "replicate" the success of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa has not succeeded in its mission of true reconciliation. It was weakened by its strong politicisation. All the institutions created as a result of the CDVR have had their mission undermined by the inability of political actors to transcend their differences in order to agree on a roadmap for sincere reconciliation. The 2018 amnesty order, which was a far-reaching act, could not be the expected catalyst for the national reconciliation process. In other words, the project of national reconciliation in Côte d'Ivoire is being held hostage by incessant political struggles.

3.5.4. Limits and Pitfalls of Existing Responses to the Peace and Security Challenges

Several limitations were identified in the international, regional and national responses to the peace and security challenges. These gaps are discussed below.

- **International responses**

  The limitations in international responses relate to these various points:

  - **Focus on Top-Down Approaches:** Activities by multilateral and bilateral international actors are generally based on top-down approaches. This is less inclusive and participatory. It does not allow for a real consideration of the context of fragility or violence on which peace and security must be built.

  - **Sustainability:** International responses are not long-term and do not keep pace with the dynamics of peace and security in the country. These responses are generally guided by international agendas that do not take into account the specific context of Côte d'Ivoire.
account the different phases of crisis.

- **Prevention**: International responses are much more reactive than prevention. The prevention component remains quite weak. Proactive responses will allow to anticipate the relapse of conflict and break the cycle of violence.

- **The choice of internal actors**: Collaboration between international and national actors is often diffuse. While some international actors prefer to formulate responses directly related to the state, others prefer to turn to civil society. There is therefore no coordination of actions.

- **The Leadership Crisis**: International responses also reveal a leadership crisis among international actors in their responses to peace and security issues.

- **Regional responses**

  The limitations in regional responses relate to these different points:

  - **Funding question**: Regional responses are regularly faced with funding constraints. This generally delays or slows the pace of peace actions need to address unfolding conflict situations.

  - **Regionalisation of armed conflicts**: The regionalisation of conflicts in West Africa weakens responses to a specific situation. The cross-border nature of crises requires more coordinated and effective regional responses. However, this is often not the case.

  - **Prevention**: Preventive measures are less emphasised in regional responses to conflicts. For example, ECOWAS should strengthen its early response system to respond proactively to conflicts.

- **The Leadership crisis**: Regional responses also suffer from a leadership crisis due to interests and rivalry among states.

- **National Responses**

  The limitations in national responses relate to these different points:

  - **Strong institutionalisation of actions**: Actions for peace and security are far too state-centered in Côte d'Ivoire. This does not facilitate popular ownership of the actions carried out.

  - **The low involvement of civil society**: In dealing with the challenges of peace and security, civil society are not sufficiently involved, especially in the development of national responses.

  - **Reconciliation and the cycle of violence**: Côte d'Ivoire has not yet succeeded in the truth and reconciliation process of the various crises. This has affected the country's resolve to break the cycle of violence.

  - **Struggles for state power**: National responses are often held hostage by the struggles to conquer and preserve state power in Côte d'Ivoire. Gains on peace and security are often put to the test during election moments. National responses should focus on consolidating the democracy, peace and development of the country.
• **CSO responses**

The limitations in CSO responses relate to these various points:

• **Lack of coordination and competition among civil society actors:** There is no clear coordination among Ivorian civil society actors on the responses to peace. These actors often compete in the context of capturing political, social, economic or humanitarian opportunities.¹⁶⁵

• **Lack of resources:** Civil society organisations do not have substantial resources (material, financial and human) as part of their mission on peace and security. The lack of resources also weakens the prevention of CSOs.¹⁶⁶

• **The risk of politicisation:** Some civil society actors are subject to political manipulation. This undermines neutrality, a major feature of civil society's work.¹⁶⁷

### 3.5.6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Côte d'Ivoire's march towards peace has not been easy and seems far from being certain. For more than two decades, the country has been trying to break out of the cycle of political violence in order to build lasting peace and consolidate its democracy with the support of international and regional partners. At the international level, for example, the United Nations has provided mediation, negotiation and peacekeeping support with the deployment of UNOCI. At the regional level, the AU and ECOWAS continue to be at Côte d'Ivoire's bedside with active, concerted and preventive diplomacy. For example, the ECOWAS-AU-UN trio played a major role in facilitating dialogue during the recent electoral crisis of October 2020. At the national level, the Ivorian State has taken several initiatives on security sector reform and reconciliation, supported by civil society actors. However, the study shows that these international, regional and national responses suffer from several gaps that deserve to be addressed. In essence, prevention is still low at the international and regional levels and the strong involvement of civil society in peace actions is not yet a priority for the State of Côte d'Ivoire. Based on the gaps and pitfalls of the existing responses, the following recommendations are provided:

#### The Government

• Involve more strongly the Ivorian convention of civil society on issues of peace and security.

• Involve people in the development and implementation of crisis solutions and reconciliation resolutions. Thus, involve local communities in the search for solutions to peace.

• Implement a more inclusive national reconciliation mechanism with a clear methodology and agenda.

• Put gender and women issues at the heart of peace agendas in Côte d'Ivoire.

• Strengthen the implementation of the human security approach in the transformation process of the Ivorian army.

• Make the national early warning system a major tool for crisis prevention in Côte d'Ivoire.

• Give public and private media a large place in promoting peace.

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¹⁶⁵Interview with the American NGO National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Côte d’Ivoire in Abidjan on 19 November.

¹⁶⁶Interview with the African network on small arms and light weapons-Ivory Coast (RASALAO) in Abidjan on 23 November 2020.

¹⁶⁷Interview with the American NGO National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Côte d’Ivoire in Abidjan on 19 November.
Regional Actors

- Strengthen armed conflict prevention tools that encourage regional and national early warning systems.
- Strengthen collaboration between sub-regional organisations (CEDEAO, UEMOA, CENSAD, Mano River Union, etc.) on peace and security issues.
- Develop strong approaches to address the regional dimensions of national conflicts to prevent it from spreading to other countries.

International Actors

- Strengthen armed conflict prevention tools that encourage regional and national early warning systems.
- Develop a concerted vision (international, regional, national) on peace strategies.
- Focus on the "Bottom-up" approach to peacebuilding with a strong involvement of civil society and civilian populations
- Implement long term programmes to promote peace and stability and also regularly monitor the responses to the peace and security challenges to assess their effectiveness
- Increase funding support for CSOs and the Ivorian government to address the peace and security challenges with strong accountability mechanisms.

Civil Society Organisations

- CSOs should strengthen existing coordination and cooperation mechanisms to ensure coherence and targeted responses to compliment government efforts.
- CSOs should explore alternative sources of funding especially from the private sector and businesses aside the traditional donors to sustain their activities in the long term.
- Increase advocacy on the implementation of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments by countries in the Sahel region.
- Increase advocacy for the inclusion of separate peace or peacebuilding programmes budget in National Budgets for a specific amount to be dedicated to peacebuilding activities.
- CSOs should at all times uphold their professionalism and impartiality to sustain their credibility to compliment government efforts in the security and development process of the country.
References


