



# Mali

## The Challenges



### TERRORISM

Terrorist activity in Mali has increased in the wake of a 2012 rebellion that was led by Tuareg separatists and aided by terrorist groups. After rebels seized three towns in the northern region of Azawad and a military coup overthrew the ruling government in Bamako, French troops helped put down the rebellion. The UN sent in a 12,000 strong peacekeeping force to Mali (MINUSMA)<sup>1</sup> and new elections were held in 2013. ISIS affiliates, however, still operate along the border of Mali and Niger, and a new terrorist group, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) is now active. JNIM is affiliated with al Qaeda, Ansar Dine, and al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Terrorist attacks in the summer of 2018 helped to disrupt elections in Mali and political tensions remain high.

A French-backed force called the G5 Sahel, comprised of troops from Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania, was established in 2017 to work with US Special Forces, and UN peacekeepers in combatting terrorism in the Sahel.<sup>2</sup> More than 100 UN peacekeepers have died serving in Mali.<sup>3</sup> Approximately 4000 French soldiers are now based in Mali, Chad, Niger, Ivory Coast, and Burkina Faso.<sup>4</sup>

“[The UN mission in Mali] is a dam against the spread of terrorism in Mali and the whole region. To weaken it would risk making Mali and the region a new safe haven for terrorists across the globe.”

— FRANÇOIS DELATTRE, FRENCH UN AMBASSADOR, FOREIGN POLICY, MARCH 2017.

fertility rates remain unchanged, the UN projects (constant fertility variant) that Mali's population would jump to 61.1 million by 2050 and to 439.6 million by the end of the century. Mali's high fertility has also contributed also to a youthful age structure. In 2015 nearly half the population was 15 or younger.

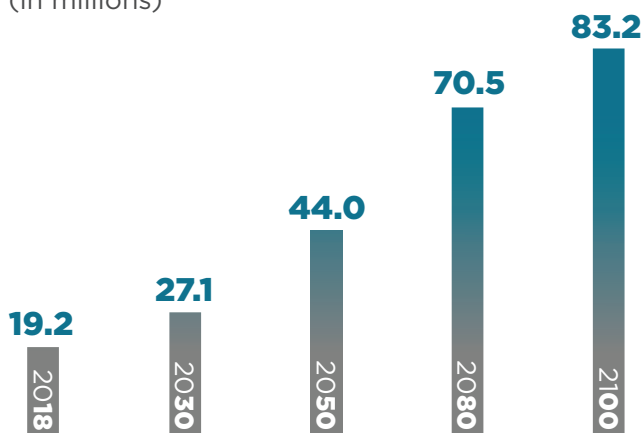
## Demographics



### POPULATION

In 1950, Mali's population was 4.7 million; today, the population is 19.2 million. The UN (World Population Prospects, 2017 Revision) projects that Mali's population will increase—even with a projected decline in fertility—to 44.0 million by 2050 and to 83.2 million by 2100. Falling mortality rates and persistent high fertility rates (Mali has the third highest fertility in the world) have contributed to the population boom. Today, women in Mali have still six children on average. If

**FIGURE 1: Population of Mali, 2018-2100**  
(in millions)



Source: UN Population Division, 2017 World Population Prospects (Medium Variant)

“In a country that doesn’t provide jobs, opportunities for decision-making and a sense of purpose, this youth bulge is more likely to be a powerful demographic time bomb rather than a driver of economic growth ... There needs to be a fundamental shift in the way that we look at youth development. Such an approach would look at how to integrate young people in the economy and create new generations of entrepreneurs, while giving them a political voice and a sense of purpose within their communities and the wider nation.”

— JEAN-LUC STALON, DEPUTY COUNTRY DIRECTOR OF UNDP IN MALI.

## AGE STRUCTURE/YOUTH BULGE

A youthful age structure is increasingly viewed as a risk factor affecting national and regional security. Several studies have shown that countries with a disproportionately high number of young adults relative to the older adult population—a phenomenon known as a “youth bulge”—are significantly more prone to political unrest and civil conflict. Definitions vary, but a “youth bulge” is generally said to exist when the proportion of the 15-29 age group exceeds more than 40% of all adults (15 and over).

**Currently, there is a significant youth bulge in Mali, as the 15-29 age group makes up just over 50% of the adult population** (defined as ages 15 and older). While the young adult population will gradually decline as a percentage of the adult population, the 15-29 age group by 2050 will still constitute nearly 45 percent of the total adult

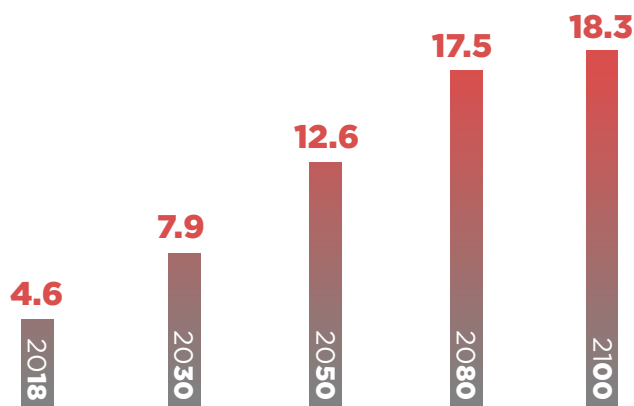


population. In 2015, the number of young adults, 15-29, totaled 4.6 million. By 2030 that population will increase to 7.9 million and by 2050 it will rise to 12.6 million.

For more than a decade, the National Intelligence Council (NIC) has identified these youth bulges as an area of concern – noting in 2017 that many “chronically youthful states” are “ill-equipped to meet the demands of sustained high fertility, rapid urban growth ... and an underemployed young-adult population, potentially contributing to instability.”

Over the past three years the unemployment rate of young adults (ages 15-24) in Mali has remained stubbornly high at 18 percent, and the percentage who are underemployed is even larger. Unless job creation outpaces the rapid growth of this young adult population, the rate of youth unemployment will rise in the decades ahead and increase the risk of political instability. In addition, like other parts of the Sahel, Mali suffers also from extensive human trafficking. Men, women, and children have been forced into domestic servitude, farm labor, sexual slavery, and mining.

**FIGURE 2: Young Adults, 15-29, in Mali, 2015-2100** (in millions)



Source: UN Population Division, 2017 World Population Prospects (Medium Variant)

## Health and Education



**Mali suffers from insufficient access to healthcare and education. According to the latest UNICEF data (UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 2017, <https://www.unicef.org/sowc2017/>):**

- Mali's child mortality rate (ages 1-5) is the fifth highest in the world. Almost one in five children die before their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- The literacy rate for young adults (15-24) is just 61% for males and 39% for females.
- Due to malnutrition, 30% of children have stunted growth and development.
- In rural areas, only 22% of the population have access to basic sanitation.
- Mali's maternal mortality rate is the 16<sup>th</sup> highest in the world.

“Although sparsely populated, with only 10% of its people living in the north, high population growth rates and drought have fueled food insecurity, poverty, and instability.”

— MALI OVERVIEW, WORLD BANK<sup>5</sup>

## Human Resources



Mali, like most countries in the Sahel, has a shortage of hospital beds, teachers, and medical professionals. The numbers, on a per capita basis, are far below the standards of developed countries. Given Mali's projected population growth, increasing the number of professionals to even two-thirds of the current average for OECD countries would require, in the decades ahead, exponential increases in hospital beds and the recruitment, education and retention of professionals. By 2050:

- The number of hospital beds would need to increase from an estimated 11,495 in 2018 to 137,915.

- The number of physicians would need to rise from an estimated 1,916 today to 99,793.
- The number of nurses and midwives<sup>6</sup> would have to jump from 7,663 to 264,120.
- The number of secondary school teachers would have to increase from 15,441 to 191,311.

## Food Security and Climatic Changes



Mali's economy, which relies heavily on agriculture, is particularly vulnerable to adverse climatic changes. Mali in recent years has experienced higher temperatures, less rainfall, and encroaching desertification. Only 5.6% of the land in Mali is arable.

- In August of 2018, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that more than 3 million people in Mali were food insecure and 900,000 people required urgent assistance.<sup>7</sup>
- The World Food Programme (WFP) reports that food insecurity in Mali is aggravated by limited job opportunities, displacement, conflict, and violence.<sup>8</sup>
- Household surveys conducted by the UN's International Organization of Migration reveal that adverse climatic events, including high temperatures, severe drought, and flooding are contributing to internal displacement.<sup>9</sup>
- Persistent drought has forced the traditionally nomadic Tuareg population to cultivate drought-resistant crops and settle in villages, increasing tensions with the non-Tuareg residents in those villages.<sup>10</sup>





## Migration



Poverty, conflict, demographic pressure, unemployment, food insecurity and drought drive Malian seasonal migration and emigration. Many rural Malians move during the dry period to nearby villages and towns to do odd jobs or to adjoining countries to work in agriculture or mining. Pastoralists and nomads move seasonally to southern Mali or nearby countries. Since the early 1990s, Mali has become a transit for regional migration and illegal migration to Europe. Many Malians from the Kayes region in Western Mali have migrated to France.

Hundreds of thousands of Malians have been displaced since 2012, due to fighting in northern Mali between government forces and Tuareg secessionists and their Islamist allies and chronic food shortages. Currently, Mali houses approximately 15,000 refugees from Mauritania and 50,000 internally displaced persons. An estimated 140,000 Malians have taken refuge in neighboring countries due to violence and conflict.<sup>11</sup>

“The worsening situation in Mali is also a risk to the surrounding governments in the region, especially Mauritania and Niger. The lack of Malian control in the north, the increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons, and a history of Tuareg grievances in the region, raise the possibility that the situation in Mali could destabilize neighboring states. The food insecurity across the region further underscores the fragile political situation in the region.”

— TESTIMONY OF AMANDA J. DORY, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS, DECEMBER 2012.<sup>12</sup>

- 1 Ty McCormick and Colum Lynch, “To Save Peacekeeping From Trump’s Budget Ax, Will the U.N. Embrace Fighting Terrorism?” *Foreign Policy*, March 29, 2017.
- 2 Robert Malley, “10 Conflicts to Watch in 2018” *Foreign Policy*, January 02, 2018
- 3 “UN Chief Seeks More Support for Mali Peacekeeping Force” *Voice of America*, June 1, 2018
- 4 Alan Taylor, “France’s Counterterrorism Forces in Africa,” *The Atlantic*, October 24, 2017.
- 5 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mali/overview>
- 6 The OECD provides data for nurses only; the assumption here is that midwives would be gradually replaced by nurses by 2050.
- 7 “Mali Humanitarian Response Plan 2018,” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, <http://www.fao.org/3/i8517EN/i8517en.pdf>.
- 8 “Sahel Lean Season Situation Report #4,” World Food Programme, May 31, 2018. [https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/ab51b3c44acf4e3baca3f-7cb2ae95b2/download/?\\_ga=2.114245767.1466553984.1531418877-2041904161.1530295293](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/ab51b3c44acf4e3baca3f-7cb2ae95b2/download/?_ga=2.114245767.1466553984.1531418877-2041904161.1530295293).
- 9 “Migration and Climate change,” International Organization of Migration, June 1, 2018, <https://mali.iom.int/mali3/programmes/migration-and-climate-change>
- 10 Richard Harris, “Drought Forces Desert Nomads to Settle Down,” *NPR*, July, 2 2007. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11608264>.
- 11 “Mali Fact Sheet,” UNHCR: the UN Refugee Agency, August 2017. <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Mali%20Factsheet%20-%20August%202017.pdf>.
- 12 United States. Cong. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs. Addressing Developments in Mali: Restoring Democracy and Reclaiming the North, December, 5 2012. (Statement of Amanda Dory, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs). [https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Amanda\\_Dory\\_Testimony.pdf](https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Amanda_Dory_Testimony.pdf).

