



This project is funded  
by the European Union



Centre for  
Humanitarian  
Dialogue



# Redeployment of the State in Central Mali

What role for the communities in the  
return of state services in the Mopti  
and Segou regions?

Alerted to the emergence of a new conflict in the centre of Mali, the Government of Mali developed the Integrated Security Plan for the Central Regions (Plan de Sécurisation Intégrée des Régions du Centre, PSIRC) in 2017, with its aim to pacify and stabilize the region by restoring the state's presence in the area. It is within this context that in 2018 the Malian government called upon the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) to help secure the support of local communities. Since then, HD, with its mandate as a neutral intermediary, has been facilitating an ongoing dialogue between 180 community leaders, identified to represent the interests of their communities to the public authorities and state representatives involved in the redeployment of public services.

This permanent mechanism for dialogue seeks to facilitate a series of negotiations to ensure that the return of the state services meets the priority needs identified by the communities and it does not expose them to reprisals.

In addition to roadmaps drawn up jointly by parties for each of the seven target administrative districts in the Mopti and Ségou regions, these 180 leaders, split into district-based dialogue frameworks, are contributing to the return of public services and to improved collaboration between local communities and state authorities. A sampling of their achievements, in part due to HD support, are presented here.

## MOPTI

### Collaboration between Konna's youth and the security forces



In 2015, the arrival of jihadist groups in the Mopti region led to the withdrawal of the gendarmerie from the town and rural commune of Konna in the area ('circle') of Koro, on the orders of the military leadership. Public trust in law enforcement and security forces, already shaken by several tactical retreats, was further eroded. To compensate for the absence of a gendarmerie, the young people of Konna set up a youth-led security brigade. Equipped with clubs, machetes, sticks and walkie-talkies, the members of this youth patrol took it upon themselves to protect the community.

In 2018, when the State decided to redeploy the gendarmerie and the latter wanted to disband the youth-led self-defence unit, the young people opposed the plan and the situation quickly deteriorated. Requested by the Mopti community dialogue framework in 2019, HD began facilitating mediation between the community, representatives of the youth brigade, local authorities (mayor and sub-prefect) and the security forces. This process allowed the young people to share their grievances concerning the gendarmerie's behavior and lack of communication and enabled both parties to take stock and realise their overlapping interests.

Since then the youth brigade has been working with the gendarmerie, meeting regularly to discuss security issues. During a visit to Konna on 16 September 2019 by the Minister of Security and Civil Protection to mark the inauguration of the new guard camp, a representative of the Konna youth told the official of the readiness of all young people in Konna to collaborate with the security forces in the area. Satisfied with this initiative, the Minister gave the youth brigade a symbolic sum of one million CFA francs and urged its members to continue their collaboration.

## SEGOU

### Installation of a Brigade Commander in Dioro



The people of Dioro, a rural commune in the regional circle of Ségué, had been living in fear that the intercommunal violence and presence of armed groups in the neighbouring circles of Macina and Djenné would spread to their commune. Dioro's sole gendarmerie post, guarded by only three gendarmes, was not sufficient to ensure the safety of

## MOPTI

### Facilitating access to health care in the Koro health centre



The Koro circle, which has become the epicentre of the violence plaguing the Mopti region, is the scene of daily intercommunity clashes. As a result of this situation, the area has experienced a decline in development activities and the withdrawal of basic state services from rural areas. The health reference centre in Koro is one of the few facilities still open and it is struggling to meet the needs of the population. A growing number of complaints about the health centre include: the failure to issue health care forms that are compulsory to obtain treatment; absence of on-duty doctors at night, on weekends and

on public holidays; and even negligence by health workers when treating patients. Indeed, after some deaths were blamed on the centre's health workers, family members reacted by engaging young people in the community and planning demonstrations against the health centre.

Members of the Koro community dialogue framework decided to intervene in the situation and offer mediation as a resolution. After gathering community representatives, including the village chief, the president of Coordination of Women's Associations and NGOs of Mali (CAFO) and the

youth, to identify their grievances, the mediation group initiated a meeting between the health centre staff, the community representatives and local elected officials. Since this intervention the tension has subsided and the activities of the centre have resumed in a manner satisfactory to all.

the inhabitants of the commune.

In 2017, a brigade commander was appointed to head a new regional brigade that was to be established in Dioro. Due to a lack of living and office accommodations, however, the brigade commander was unable to take up his post and remained in Markala, another commune in the circle of Ségou located about 30 km from Dioro. When his successor was appointed in 2019, the community of Dioro were determined

to see the brigade commander settle in its commune and decided to take matters into their own hands.

Members of the Dioro community dialogue framework sought help from the mayor of the commune, who then took the initiative to provide the brigade commander with a property, and to cover the cost of building maintenance, until the construction of the regional brigade by the state authorities. The brigade commander was able to settle in Dioro and start

his post in September 2019. Heartened by his arrival, the community, through members of the community dialogue office, warmly welcomed the commander and expressed their availability to accompany him on his missions. In an area deserted by the Malian security forces, this event signaled a first step forward to restoring public trust in the government.



## SEGOU

### The reopening of M'bella school, closed for more than a year



M'bella is a village in the rural commune of Folomana in the Macina circle. M'bella is divided into two distinct parts, one inhabited by the Bambara community and the other by the Fulani community. The region's security crisis has not spared this small village, where, in 2018, the neighboring communities began to clash after the destruction of a field belonging to a Bambara family by the animal of a Fulani neighbour. The influence of jihadists and community armed groups, commonly known as hunters, soon grew in the area.

The M'bella school, located on the Bambara side but serving 97 pupils from both communities, was closed as a result of movement restrictions imposed on the village. Like so many other schoolchildren in the region, Kadidia, a young Fulani girl, and her best friend Aichata, a young Bambara girl, could no longer attend their community school where they had been students for five years and they were no longer allowed to see each other because of the community dispute dividing the village. Kadidia has since then spent her days by her mother's side helping her

with the housework: "I was afraid that I would be sent to the big cities to become a household helper like my sister, and I cried."

At a loss, distraught school authorities asked HD to facilitate mediation between the communities so that the school could be reopened.

Following a four-month mediation process led by two HD teams<sup>1</sup>, an agreement between the two communities was signed on 26 February 2020. The deal included a pledge by both sides for the immediate reopening of the school in M'bella. Thus, on 2 March 2020, the M'bella school once again opened its doors and welcomed three teachers and 49 pupils, including 29 girls.

*«God answered my prayers when my father smiled and told me that an agreement had been reached between the Fulani and Bambara, that the school would reopen and that I was allowed to visit my classmates again.»*

**Kadidia**

1 The project team Mediation of the Redeployment of the State in Mopti and Ségou and that of the project Mediation and Support to the Peace Process in Mali, funded by the Kingdom of Denmark, which has been conducting community mediations in the northern and central regions of Mali since 2012 (For more information: <https://www.hdcentre.org/fr/activities/mediation-in-northern-and-central-mali/>)



*This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.*