



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MALI TRANSITION INITIATIVE (MTI)

QUARTERLY REPORT

PROJECT YEAR 1 AND FISCAL YEAR 2014, 3RD QUARTER
April 1, 2014 – June 30, 2014

July 2014

This report was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by AECOM's MTI Team in Mali and the MTI PMU in Arlington, Virginia.

MALI TRANSITION INITIATIVE (MTI)

QUARTERLY REPORT

Report Type:

Quarterly Report - SWIFT III IQC Award No. DOT-I-00-08-00050-00, AID-OAA-TO-13-00028

Period Ending:

June 30, 2014

Prepared:

July 1, 2014

Prepared for:

United States Agency for International Development, Office of Transition Initiatives

Prepared by:

AECOM International Development
2101 Wilson Blvd., Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22201

DISCLAIMER: This report was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by AECOM's MTI Team in Mali and the MTI PMU in Arlington, Virginia. The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acronyms and Abbreviations	iii
Executive Summary	1
Country Situation & Political Updates	1
Budget Information	1
Program Highlights, Achievements & Major Activities	1
Activity Appraisal & Upcoming and Ongoing Activities	2
Objective 1: To increase citizen confidence in and information about the democratic process and governance	3
Objective 2: To promote reconciliation and social cohesion aimed at addressing drivers of conflict	3
Planned Activities	3
Security	3
Staff Movement	4
Operations and Administration	4
Problems Encountered and Proposed Remedial Actions	4
Annex A: Activities Cleared by Country Objective	6
Annex B: Financial Information for Internal Use Only	8
Annex C: Success Stories	9

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A&E	Architectural and Engineering
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AU	African Union
COP	Chief of Party (AECOM)
CR	Country Representative (OTI)
DDGS	Direct Distribution of Goods and Services
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GNI	Global News Incorporated
GUC	Grant Under Contract
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
LTTA	Long-Term Technical Assistance
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali <i>Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation au Mali</i>
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad <i>Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad</i>
MR	Management Review
MTI	Mali Transition Initiative
MUJAO	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa <i>Mouvement pour l'unicité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest</i>
NAG	Northern armed groups
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OAA	Office of Acquisition and Assistance
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
PAT-Mali	<i>Programme d'Appui à la Transition-Mali</i>
PLS	Procurement & Logistics Specialist
PM	Prime Minister
PMU	Program Management Unit
PPR	Program Performance Review
RPM	Regional Program Manager
SOM	Senior Operations Manager
SRS	Strategic Review Session
STTA	Short Term Technical Assistance
TAP	Transition Activities Pool
TDY	Temporary Duty
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched the Mali Transition Initiative (MTI) in June of 2013. During the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2014, MTI achieved solid activity development, with 28 new activities worth over \$1M cleared and implementation of cleared activities. The Gao office became fully operational and the Mopti office was effectively closed down, with final closeout happening in the next quarter. AECOM reconfigured the MTI team to better align with the evolving transition priorities and based on feedback received from the Management Review and Program Performance Review undertaken by OTI and AECOM during the quarter. We held a successful SRS in Mopti where the new focus of the program was discussed and the activity cycle was reiterated.

COUNTRY SITUATION & POLITICAL UPDATES

Despite the positive momentum achieved towards stability over the past year, violence flared again in the North during the quarter. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) carried out attacks during the new Prime Minister's first visit to the Kidal Region on May 17, 2014. While the Prime Minister (PM) escaped unscathed, insurgents took 30 civil servants and bystanders hostage and eight civil servants were either killed in the crossfire or summarily executed. The MNLA briefly occupied the Governor's Palace. Following these tragic events, the PM and President issued bellicose statements, deployed an additional 1,500 Malian Army troops to Kidal, and the peace process, viewed already as stalled, was completely derailed.

These events exacerbated ethnic tensions and racist rhetoric began to rise. The security situation in the north became more fragile, with the northern armed groups (NAGs) increasing their presence and activity. Senior officials from UN Mission, various foreign governments, including the US, and countries in the region, notably Burkina Faso and Algeria all put pressure on both the government and armed groups to return to the negotiating table. In mid-June, Algeria hosted a third consultation session for peace which both the Government of Mali and NAGs attended. Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) also sent representatives. Further talks and a return to negotiations to move toward a definitive peace process are expected in the coming quarter.

BUDGET INFORMATION

June-14	Amount Approved	Amount Spent To Date	Balance
Operations (Including TAP Fees)	\$8,045,932.00	\$4,713,642.69	\$3,332,289.31
TAP	\$8,054,068.00	\$2,105,857.54	\$5,948,210.46
Total	\$16,100,000	\$6,819,500.23	\$9,280,499.77
Percentage Operations	50%	69%	41%
Percentage Activities	50%	31%	74%

MTI received its third funding obligation of \$2.8 Million, which will enable the program to operate through January 2015.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS, ACHIEVEMENTS & MAJOR ACTIVITIES

The opening of the Gao office extended MTI into not only a new geographical area, but also a new area of programming. While the tragic recent events in Kidal are a major concern, what happens in the Gao region remains at the center of the fight for peace and stability and against extremism in Mali. MTI cleared its first three activities in Gao supporting local-level forums on reconciliation and a small

infrastructure activity to encourage greater engagement between the government and local population in Gounzoureye commune. Two of these activities are targeting the Wahabi community of Kaji. The population in Kaji, driven by both ideological and economic factors, is perceived to have largely sided with the armed extremist Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) rebels during the occupation. Following the conflict, their support for MUJAO exacerbated longstanding marginalization by the government and local authorities.

With the peace process teetering on the brink of collapse following the outbreak of fighting in May, and ethnic tension and racist rhetoric on the rise, MTI moved quickly to provide support to civil society organizations committed to calling for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and national unity. A loosely-assembled group of civil society organizations, dedicated to encouraging peace in Mali came together to form a Platform for Peace. The platform members are carrying out civic actions and activities supporting the national Together We Are One Nation (#EnsembleNousSommesUnPeuple) campaign, which aims to promote peace and national unity among Malians.

Finally, MTI engaged in significant self-reflection during this quarter, hosting two internal evaluations and successfully completing its second Strategic Review Session (SRS). OTI’s Africa Team Lead Megan Mamula and AECOM’s Director for Crisis Response & Stabilization, Tom Bayer led the program’s first Management Review, and OTI’s Katie Prud’homme, Brendan Wilson-Barthes, and Marialice Ariens led its first Program Performance Review. MTI received much praise from each team, both in terms of its programmatic and operational approach. MTI also received and is addressing MR and PPR recommendations on a variety of topics.

ACTIVITY APPRAISAL & UPCOMING AND ONGOING ACTIVITIES

MTI cleared 28 activities valued at \$1,073,785 during the April to June 2014 period broken down by objective in the below table. A total of 95 activities worth \$4,848,526 in Transition Activities Pool (TAP) funds have been committed from the inception of the program through June 2014.

Of the activities cleared during the quarter, three contributed to the return to democracy, and 25 contributed to the reconciliation objective. A detailed list of the activities cleared during the quarter is included in Annex A.

OBJECTIVE	NUMBER	AMOUNT USD
To increase citizen confidence in and information about the democratic process and governance	3	\$165,044
To promote reconciliation and social cohesion aimed at addressing drivers of conflict	25	\$908,741
Total	28	\$1,073,785

MTI fell short of its quarterly target of \$1.5M in new activities cleared. Following weeks of dialogue with the Ministry of Reconciliation as to how MTI could provide support through analysis of trends in public sentiments and opinion leaders, MTI reached an impasse. Consequently, the program put on hold the award of a \$500K grant to Global News Incorporated (GNI) that would provide media monitoring and strategic communications support to the government of Mali. MTI expects that the impasse will be overcome and that the activity will be cleared in the next quarter.

FUNDING SOURCE	Number	EST ACTIVITY AMOUNT USD	DISBURSEMENTS
CCF	11	\$430,979	\$80,515
DA	17	\$642,806	\$63,123
TI	0	\$0	\$0
Total	28	\$1,073,785	\$143,638

During the final quarter of the fiscal year, OTI and AECOM will agree on clear targets for new activity development for each team to ensure that the program remains on track to commit all program activity funding currently obligated to the task order by September 2014. The total funding available for program activities is **\$8,054,068**.

OBJECTIVE 1: TO INCREASE CITIZEN CONFIDENCE IN AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND GOVERNANCE

During the last quarter, the program continued with its first cluster evaluation, a review of its electoral activities undertaken by evaluation firm CEDREF. The program also discussed the possibility of supporting municipal elections, but ultimately concluded this kind of support to be outside of MTI's manageable interests as the investment necessary to achieve successful municipal elections would be significant both in terms of financial and geographic scope, and there are already other actors poised to work on this front.

The partnership with Studio Tamani continued as MTI officially handed over equipment procured for local correspondents during a ceremony attended by the Deputy Mission Director, Deputy Country Representative, and the President and Secretary General of URTEL (activity MTI080).

OBJECTIVE 2: TO PROMOTE RECONCILIATION AND SOCIAL COHESION AIMED AT ADDRESSING DRIVERS OF CONFLICT

During this quarter, MTI successfully worked at both the local and national level to promote reconciliation and social cohesion. MTI's local reconciliation expert, Mohamed Maiga, planned and facilitated several local level forums to address the potentially explosive Peuhl/Tuareg conflict in Tenekou and Youwarou communes of Mopti region. A similar local-level forum took place in the Tin Hama commune of Gao. Work also continued in Timbuktu to rehabilitate a water pump in Goundam and repair the motor of a critical ferry in Gourma-Rharous in order to support the redeployment of the state.

The #EnsembleNousSommesUnPeuple campaign, which aims to address rising ethnic tension after the recent confrontation in Kidal, got underway this quarter with support to a platform of more than 30 Malian civil society organizations around activities including soccer matches and press conferences during which the groups spread messages of peace and tolerance.

Finally, the Gao office developed a strong entry grant into the challenging village of Kaji, a long-marginalized area known to be a center of extremism, for the provision of two new critical water wells, which paired with a soft activity – a participatory dialogue facilitated by a local youth organization, in order to undermine support for violent extremist organizations.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Over the next quarter activity development and implementation will accelerate in Gao and as part of MTI's support for the Platform for Peace and Together We are One Nation Campaign. In July, a Program Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation Advisor will travel to Mali for a TDY to support the three activity management teams, Bamako, Timbuktu, and Gao to assist MTI in better integrating M&E into its activity cycle, and to support teams in using the theory-of-change method to develop clusters of activities to better measure impact. This visit is expected to strengthen the program's capacity to follow OTI's act, assess, and adapt approach to programming. Rehabilitation of several public facilities, which were damaged or deteriorated during the crisis, will get underway this quarter. Works will begin on the government housing provided to the president of Timbuktu's Tribunal, Douentza Independence Plaza, Timbuktu High School, and the Douentza High School.

SECURITY

In June, AECOM Corporate Security Regional Security Manager for Africa and the Middle East, Mr. David Webb, carried out a follow-up visit to his July 2013 trip. Mr. Webb visited all AECOM offices and expatriate residences. Receipt of a comprehensive report with his findings and recommendations is imminent. Among the operational aspects, which Mr. Webb evaluated was whether AECOM could safely base international staff in the Gao and Timbuktu Regions. AECOM's Corporate Security office supports an expatriate LTTA presence in both Gao and Timbuktu, with continued monitoring of the security situation by the AECOM team and established measures and facilities established in both locations should a drawdown of international and national staff presence and AECOM's footprint

generally be required. Effective contingency plans for draw-down measures and facilities are especially important with the July 2014 closing of AECOM's Mopti office.

In addition to the above-mentioned fighting which broke out around the Prime Minister's first visit to Kidal, two incidents involving explosive devices occurred in Timbuktu. The first incident, which killed two Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) staff involved insurgents using a remotely-detonated device to target what they likely believed was a UN vehicle. In the second incident, a UN Peacekeeping vehicle hit a landmine, injuring seven UN Peacekeepers, one fatally. AECOM has reviewed its security protocols in light of these events, suspending movements of AECOM-owned vehicles along the Timbuktu-Goundam-Lere axis. Lower profile rental vehicles will be used for movements along this road. The security situation in Gao, also extremely fragile, is being closely monitored and the use of rental vehicles versus AECOM-owned vehicles weighed for each PAT-Mali staff movement outside of Gao town. International staff are to limit movements in and around Gao and Timbuktu to only essential movements and no international staff movement outside of Gao or Timbuktu towns is authorized without approval consultation and approval from the AECOM Regional Security Manager.

STAFF MOVEMENT

- Tom Bayer and Megan Mamula, traveled to Mali on April 12th and departed on April 22nd and completed the program's first Management Review.
- Katie Prud'homme, Brendan Wilson-Barthes and Marialice Adriens, traveled to Mali on April 13th and departed on April 25th and completed the MTI Program Performance Review.
- Aurora Deuss and Colin Deschamps, who supported the facilitation of the SRS, traveled to Mali on May 26th/29th and departed on June 6th.
- All PAT-Mali staff attended the program's second Strategic Review Session in Mopti, from June 2nd to June 5th.
- Program Manager Lauren Rushton and OTI's Field Programs Director, Deputy Africa Team Leader, and Program Manager travelled to Mali in June to attend the SRS.
- The COP left Mali for a brief personal trip in May and traveled to Gao from June 20th to 25th.
- The RPM rotated between offices in Gao, Timbuktu, and Bamako.
- Amina Sidibe and Mahamadou Diakité, two of five Malians selected for YALI, traveled to the U.S. for six weeks, starting mid-June.
- Jessica Bryant was on leave from June 12th to June 20th.
- Senior Operations Manager Laguerre Rutare was on leave from April 19th to May 19th.

OPERATIONS AND ADMINISTRATION

MTI successfully concluded the start-up phase of the Gao office, which began at the end of March. By the end of the quarter, the MTI Gao office, which includes a four-bedroom guesthouse on the second floor of the office compound, was fully functional with back-up power and water system in place, vehicles deployed and most of the full-time professional staff positions filled and equipped with computers, phones and internet connections. Following the SRS and request of the Field Programs Director, MTI began recruitment for a second RPM, who will be based full-time in the north.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND PROPOSED REMEDIAL ACTIONS

CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES

Getting MTI's first construction activities awarded continues to pose challenges. AECOM engaged a Senior Civil and Structural Engineer to provide short-term technical assistance support to the program. Recruitment for a Malian engineer is ongoing and MTI expects a full time Malian

engineering consultant to be in place by the end of the next quarter and prior to the expected award of MTI's first construction-related contracts.

STAFFING

The projects officer positions have proved challenging to fill. MTI carried out two rounds of short-listing, exams and interviews, but failed to identify a suitable candidate to fill the Gao projects officer position. Recruitment for this position has therefore been suspended to allow the Gao team to stabilize and in anticipation of the engagement of a second international RPM.

AECOM engaged a Media & Communications Advisor on an STTA agreement, with the hope that he might transition into the LTTA Projects Officer position. Without notice, he abandoned his consulting assignment and did not answer calls or emails for over two weeks leaving critical activities, notably with the Ministry of Reconciliation, lacking the follow up required for their successful and timely implementation.

As a result of the advisor's abrupt departure and challenges generally in developing and implementing a coherent strategy for the national initiatives team, MTI carried out a major reorganization of its team in Bamako. MTI terminated the contract of the Projects Specialist, appointed the Information, Communications, and Technology Officer to act and fulfill the duties of the Projects Specialist, while leading greater use of and integration of new technology into the program, and transitioned the Procurement & Logistics Specialist (PLS) to act as the Projects Officer for a probationary period of three months. Initial indications are that the reorganization has had a positive impact evidenced by solid new activity development and implementation by what is now referred to as the Bamako team.

CHALLENGES IN SECURING OTI AND OAA APPROVALS

Securing approvals from OTI and OAA to hire qualified staff remains a challenge. Delays in hiring limit the program's capacity to perform and put unreasonable strains on a team which is already lean considering the size, scope, volume, and scale of activities and geographical coverage of the program, operations, and the challenges inherent in operating in Mali. Approval for a candidate MTI proposed initially to fulfill an operations and subsequently a PLS role took over two months to secure from OTI and OAA. This happened at an especially inopportune time as the program reconfigured its staff, activities rapidly expanded, and a new field office opened in Gao.

INVENTORY

MTI has faced challenges in creating an accurate inventory and establishing an effective inventory management system. The lack of a properly set-up inventory and system for inventory management during the start-up of the program, exacerbated by separation of staff from the program, leave taken by staff responsible for establishing and maintaining the inventory system, and short-term TDY staff not having or dedicating sufficient time in-country to developing the system or fixing the problems encountered, resulted in a nine-month effort to reconcile the inventory and produced a six-month backlog of procurements which have been undertaken but not yet entered into the inventory.

During this quarter MTI finalized the updating of an Excel-based inventory list and uploaded this list to OneSource, AECOM's proprietary operations management system. OneSource will house the final inventory system, providing an effective platform for procurement, human resources, and information management. By the end of the next quarter, and following the Program Manager's TDY planned in July, an accurate inventory and effective inventory management system, with clear roles and responsibilities assigned to both staff in Mali and Arlington, will be in place.

ANNEX A: ACTIVITIES CLEARED BY COUNTRY OBJECTIVE

To increase citizen confidence in and information about the democratic process and governance

ACTIVITY NUMBER	ACTIVITY TITLE	AWARDEE	EST ACTIVITY AMOUNT USD	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
MTI099	Summer Universities : Values and Institutions of a Free Society	DDGS - Arab Center for Scientific Research	\$55 968	Cleared	04/24/2014	08/31/2014
MTI101	Support To Justice Sector	Justice Rapid Response	\$60 000	Completed	04/25/2014	06/30/2014
MTI103	Rehabilitation of the Community Radio Station in Gourma-Rharous	Community Radio Station Alkhabar	\$49 076	Cleared	05/08/2014	08/31/2014
Total			\$165 044			

To promote reconciliation and social cohesion aimed at addressing drivers of conflict

ACTIVITY NUMBER	ACTIVITY TITLE	AWARDEE	EST ACTIVITY AMOUNT USD	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
MTI076	Timbuktu High School Regional Basketball Competition for Young Women and Men	Academie Enseignement (AE) de Tombouctou	\$66 016	Cleared	07/04/2014	14/07/2014
MTI079	Amplifying Reconciliation Efforts through Radio	DDGS - Studio Tamani	\$24 223	Cleared	06/05/2014	31/08/2014
MTI097	Urgent Water Supply Infrastructure Provision in Goundam	Goundam Urban Commune	\$20 830	Completed	14/04/2014	31/07/2014
MTI098	Communications support to the Ministry of National Reconciliation	Ministry of Reconciliation	\$220	Cancelled	14/04/2014	30/06/2014
MTI100	Engineering Assessment Support for Ahmed Baba Institute	STTA Engineers Goesain Johardien and Chris Rollins	\$24 093	Completed	11/04/2014	15/05/2014
MTI102	Youth Cash-for-Work and Sanitation activity in Lere Town	Lere Rural Commune	\$95 333	Cleared	07/06/2014	31/07/2014
MTI104	Emergency Operational Support to the Ahmed Baba Institute	Ahmed Baba Institute	\$20 804	Cleared	07/07/2014	30/09/2014
MTI105	Peulh - Tuareg Dialogue Initiative	STTA - Mohamed Alhousseiny Maiga	\$17 436	Cleared	12/05/2014	31/07/2014
MTI106	Sending Messages of Peace: Peace Walk for Chibok Schoolgirls	Yellen Africa	\$12 076	Completed	12/05/2014	30/05/2014

To promote reconciliation and social cohesion aimed at addressing drivers of conflict

ACTIVITY NUMBER	ACTIVITY TITLE	AWARDEE	EST ACTIVITY AMOUNT USD	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
MTI107	Peulh - Tuareg Intercommunity Dialogue in Tin Hama	DDGS - Village and Fraction Leaders in Ansongo Cercle	\$14 707	Completed	19/05/2014	31/08/2014
MTI108	Improving Access to Potable Water in Kaji Village	Gounzoureye Rural Commune	\$66 196	Cleared	09/06/2014	31/07/2014
MTI109	Dialogue Initiative on Support to Violent Extremist Organziations Insurgency	Allahidou Youth Association	\$26 280	Completed	09/06/2014	31/08/2014
MTI110	Creating Momentum for Peace : Summer Youth Mobilization in Timbuktu	Timbuktu Regional Youth Council	\$101 678	Cleared	01/07/2014	30/09/2014
MTI111	Strategic Communications to Address Mali's Rising Tension	DDGS - Strategic Communications Support	\$57 750	Cleared	22/05/2014	30/09/2014
MTI113	Creating Momentum for Peace: Distributing Materials at Bamako Mini-Bus Stations	Open Mali	\$35 391	Completed	26/05/2014	01/07/2014
MTI114	Support to the Ministry of Culture for CRAterre Training on Earth Architecture	Ministry of Culture	\$57 668	Cleared	09/06/2014	01/08/2014
MTI115	Creating Momentum for Peace: Distributing Materials at Bamako Test Centers	AJFMDEM	\$34 554	Completed	30/05/2014	31/07/2014
MTI116	Creating Momentum for Peace: Distributing Materials at Bamako Bus Terminals	AIDE 21 Mali	\$42 780	Completed	31/05/2014	31/07/2014
MTI117	Creating Momentum for Peace: Distributing Materials at the Annual SIDA FOOT	Association des Jeunes pour la solidarite et l'Espoir du Mali (AJSEM)	\$40 054	Completed	31/05/2014	31/07/2014
MTI118	Emergency Repairs to the Gourma-Rharous Ferry	Gourma-Rharous Prefecture	\$16 739	Cleared	09/06/2014	31/07/2014
MTI119	Peulh Tuareg Dialogue Initiative in Tenenkou Cercle	Tenenkou Prefecture	\$19 776	Completed	09/06/2014	31/07/2014
MTI120	Peulh Tuareg Dialogue Initiative in Youwarou Cercle	Youwarou Prefecture	\$19 776	Cleared	09/06/2014	31/07/2014
MTI121	Creating Momentum for Peace: Distributing Materials in World Cup Matches	Convergence Nationale pour le Developpement (CONADE)	\$64 135	Cleared	12/06/2014	11/09/2014
MTI122	Creating Momentum for Peace: press conference and video clips calling for peace	Plus Jamais Ca!	\$14 204	Cleared	18/06/2014	31/07/2014
MTI123	Emergency Repairs to Gossi Electricity Supply System	Commune rurale de Gossi	\$16 022	Cleared	26/06/2014	31/07/2014
		Total	\$ 908 741			

ANNEX B: FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

ANNEX C: SUCCESS STORIES



Success Story – MALI

Cash for Work: An opportunity for economic recovery and social cohesion in Soumpi



Photo – Laborers carry water to a cash for work site in Soumpi.

Photo by Yaya Bouare.

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

2012 saw the occupation of much of Northern Mali by armed groups and extremist actors intent on imposing sharia law and exacting harsh repression on local populations. The negative effects of this crisis affected the economy, as well, as many merchants fled the area and products became scarce and expensive. Soumpi Commune in Timbuktu Region was hit particularly hard on all fronts, including economically. Located just across the border from Mauritania, the area was home to some of the earliest battles of the 2012 rebellion. During its occupation by armed groups, development projects were terminated early, local businesses were forced to shut down, and income generating activities of youth and women were severely limited. In addition, the occupation exacerbated ethnic tensions and eroded social cohesion throughout the North.

In an effort to contribute to economic recovery and support the reconstruction of social cohesion in the community of Soumpi, the Programme d'Appui a la Transition – Mali (PAT-Mali), implemented a cash for work project that engaged 420 local residents and distributed over \$40,000 USD via small cash payments throughout the activity. Developed in partnership with local authorities, six community projects were identified in the villages of Dofana, Enekar, Edorak, Toubel and Septieme Groupe.

According to Balla Kagnantao, a village chief, “there is a member of each family from our village in the group of workers. This activity is the first in the recent history of our village which includes all the youth of the village around a community objective. The participants work together and eat together and this is a sign of peace.”

Village elder Ali Kaya added, “finally our children can stay in the village with us this year because of this project, instead of leaving in search of work in the big towns. And with the equipment provided by the initiative, our village will continue with this community work even after the life of the project; we will identify other community activities for the continuation.”

This activity provided an opportunity for members from different ethnic groups to work together to achieve a tangible goal for the good of the community, and injected much needed cash into economically depressed communities.

Contact: *Nadia Shah*, nashah@usaid.gov follow us on Twitter @USAIDOTI
Web: www.usaid.gov keyword search: Political Transition



Success Story – MALI

Bringing Telecommunications Back to Soumpi Commune



Photo – Laborers on MTI's Cash for Work project in Soumpi with their newly issued cell phones which will allow them to utilize the important OrangeMoney mobile payment system via the newly restored cellular network.

Photo by Yaya Bouare.

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

During their occupation of the North in 2012, armed groups destroyed many types of infrastructure, and communications networks were principal among them. Cell towers were looted and damaged, rendering them useless, and cellular communication became impossible in many areas, including the Soumpi Commune of Timbuktu Region. This limited communication between displaced populations and residents who remained in the commune, restricted coordination between security forces and the community, and negatively affected commerce.

Local authorities, MINUSMA, as well as the communities themselves highlighted the impact of the absence of cell service as one of the biggest obstacles to development. For USAID/OTI's Mali Transition Initiative (MTI), the lack of cell service created operational and programmatic challenges with respect to its cash for work project that aimed to increase social cohesion and economic recovery in the area. The project depended on the ability to distribute payments electronically via OrangeMoney, a cellphone-based payment system which limits security and corruption risks.

Beginning in January, MTI began engaging executives from the cellular service provider Orange in Bamako to communicate the importance of the rehabilitation of the Soumpi cell tower, as well as MTI's plans to use the OrangeMoney system to increase the number of beneficiaries from 120 to 420, and distribute over \$40,000 USD in small payments over the course of the grant. Orange responded positively to the news, and by the end of April, had rehabilitated the tower, a development which has additional benefits for the community beyond facilitating the Cash for Work program.

Residents report the cell network allows the community to be connected to the rest of the country. As elder Arouna Coulibaly reported, "ever since the occupation of our town, we felt forgotten by the government and the private sector in terms of communication, but we feel truly Malian now with this communication means." Another community elder stated, "Now I feel safer because I can quickly communicate with large cities, with my relatives in and outside of Mali, and with security services for emergency needs. And my sons and others can send me money safely through OrangeMoney."

Contact: Emily Bremner, ebremner@usaid.gov follow us on Twitter @USAIDOTI Web: www.usaid.gov keyword search: Political Transition