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MALI TRANSITION INITIATIVE (MTI)

Q1 FY2016 QUARTERLY REPORT

PROJECT YEAR 3 AND FISCAL YEAR 2016, 1ST QUARTER
OCTOBER 1, 2015 – DECEMBER 31, 2015

January 2016

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.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
CMA	Coordination of Azawad Movements <i>Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad</i>
COP	Chief of Party (AECOM)
CR	Country Representative (OTI)
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DDGS	Direct Distribution of Goods and Services
EM	Engagement Manager
GUC	Grant Under Contract
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>
MTI	Mali Transition Initiative
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
PAT-Mali	<i>Programme d'Appui à la Transition du Mali</i>
PMU	Program Management Unit
RPM	Regional Program Manager
TAP	Transition Activities Pool
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched the Mali Transition Initiative (MTI), also known as PAT-Mali, in June of 2013. During the first quarter of fiscal year 2016, the program continued to implement activities meeting each of its three country objectives:

- Increasing the supply and demand for a peaceful resolution to the conflict ;
- Restoring a sense of normalcy in strategic areas in the North;
- Countering violent extremism through inclusion of marginalized communities.

The program is preparing for close-out, scheduled for March 31st, 2016. MTI submitted its close-out plan, including a staff close-out plan, which was approved by OTI.

COUNTRY SITUATION & POLITICAL UPDATES

The first quarter of fiscal year 2016 has been marked by yet further degradation of the security situation, particularly in southern Mali, where on November 20th a jihadist attack at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako left 22 dead (see Security section below). In northern Mali, tensions are also rising between the CMA, the main coalition of armed groups that signed the Peace agreement, and jihadists. In December, Ansar Dine, an organization led by Iyad Ag Ghaly who publicly rejected the peace agreement, took credit for an attack which killed 11 CMA members in Kidal Region.

Meanwhile, progress in the implementation of the peace agreement has been slower than expected. Several bureaucratic advances have taken place, including the creation of the Security Sector Reform Committee, and plans for the implementation of a Transitional Authority that will allow the peace accords “regionalization” plans to move forward before elections are held. However, these “behind the scenes” successes have done little to maintain high levels of confidence from all the armed groups or the Malian public who do not yet see concrete peace dividends.

BUDGET INFORMATION

December-15	Amount Approved	Amount Spent To Date	Balance
Operations (Including TAP Fees)	\$12,592,263	\$10,711,283	\$1,880,980
TAP	\$10,550,000	\$9,667,105	\$882,895
Total	\$23,142,263	\$20,378,387	\$2,763,876
Percentage Operations	54%	53%	15%
Percentage Activities	46%	47%	8%

During the quarter, the program maintained a solid monthly average of \$411,098 in activity spending, while keeping operations spending to \$227,165 per month.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS & ACHIEVEMENTS

During the quarter, the program largely completed its CVE activities in Gounzoureye Commune, including the theater competition (MTI231), a cash-for-work activity (MTI194), as well as its year-long network of leaders activity (MTI154). The program also supported civil society group Think Peace to organize a workshop on CVE (MTI266), which led to the adoption of a youth action plan as well as a country-wide network of associations raising awareness on the issue of CVE in Mali.

Despite a fragile security situation in northern Mali, the program continued to educate the population on the contents of the peace agreement, holding assemblies in local languages in a total of 47 localities across Timbuktu and Gao Regions (MTI243 and MTI248).

In preparation for the close-out of MTI, scheduled for March 31st, 2016, the activity team completed and closed 26 activities. The program also completed its research on social network analysis (MTI173) and its Cluster evaluation of CVE activities in Gao Region (MTI211), ahead of the final program evaluation scheduled for January 2016.

ACTIVITY APPRAISAL & UPCOMING AND ONGOING ACTIVITIES

MTI cleared eight (08) activities valued at \$395,284.19 during the October to December 2015 period, broken down by objective in the below table. A total of 226 activities worth \$10,384,987 in Transition Activities Pool (TAP) funds have been committed from the inception of the program through December 2015.

OBJECTIVE	NUMBER	AMOUNT USD
To counter violent extremism through inclusion of marginalized communities	3	\$184,476.61
To increase the supply and demand for a peaceful resolution to the conflict	4	\$188,575.58
To restore a sense of normalcy in strategic areas in the North	1	\$22,232.00
Total	8	\$395,284.19

FUNDING SOURCE	NUMBER	EST ACTIVITY AMOUNT USD	DISBURSEMENTS
CCF	3	\$173,956.58	\$128,628.39
DA	0	0	0
ES OCO	2	\$101,499.04	\$45,495.66
TI	3	\$119,828.57	\$28,611.90
Total	8	\$389,210.85	\$202,735.95

As of December 31st, the total funding available for program activities is **\$10,550,000**, out of which **\$10,384,987** is already committed. The continual increase of the XOF/USD exchange rate over the course of the MTI program has led to higher-than-anticipated activity budget surpluses. The program intends to commit the remaining **\$165,013** in the month of January 2016, through simple activities that can be quickly implemented.

OBJECTIVE I: INCREASING THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION TO THE CONFLICT

During the quarter, MTI concluded its partnership with the Ministry of National Reconciliation by supporting the second leg of the Azalai Caravan for Peace (MTI250). During a period of 15 days, a delegation of 40 people from the government and civil society travelled on a boat along the Niger River and stopped in 10 locations in Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao Regions to explain and promote the Peace Agreement. In each location, the Caravan attracted large crowds. The Minister of National Reconciliation, who joined the Caravan on this last day, expressed satisfaction at the activity.

On November 24th, 2015, less than three months after the signature of the grant, MTI successfully restored the electrical network in the town of Menaka (MTI258). This is a significant achievement given the operational and security constraints on shipping generators and electrical equipment to Menaka by road. In the month of December, the program provided fuel to allow the operator to provide up to 8 hours of power per day, while conducting a communication campaign with the grantee to encourage the population to pay their electricity bill and ensure the sustainability of the service. Fuel provision should continue in the months of January and February 2016.

During the quarter, the program implemented its first and only cash award, a grant to the international NGO Search for Common Ground (SFCG) to produce a sixteen episode radio drama on the social cohesion and the peace agreement in three languages: Songhrai, Fulfulde and Tamasheq (MTI259). MTI then used a DDGS activity (MTI271) to air these episodes on more than 20 radio stations in Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao Regions.

OBJECTIVE 2: RESTORING A SENSE OF NORMALCY IN STRATEGIC AREAS IN THE NORTH

During the quarter, MTI completed and inaugurated several small-scale infrastructure rehabilitation activities under this objective. On October 10th, the Ministry of National Reconciliation held a large inter-community and civil society meeting in the town of Gao. For this purpose, the Ministry used Gao's Independence Plaza, which was rehabilitated by the program (MTI151). This was the first public event held at the Plaza since the works were completed, and served as a de facto inauguration ceremony. Incidentally, this turn of events held resolve an outstanding issue of ownership and use of the Plaza between the Mayor's office (grantee) and the Prefecture.

On October 30th, MTI officially inaugurated the rehabilitation of Radio Jimba-Jodo in Goundam (MTI204). Goundam Cercle now has a functioning radio station for the first time since the 2012 crisis. Jimba-Jodo broadcasting range reaches to 15 of Goundam's 16 rural communes.

On December 3rd, the program inaugurated the rehabilitation and re-equipment of Timbuktu High School's library and computer lab, as well as latrines and sporting facilities. The Principal expressed satisfaction as the students' major complaints over the past two years had been the absence of a functioning computer lab and library.

OBJECTIVE 3: COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM THROUGH INCLUSION OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

From October 7th to 10th, MTI supported a theater competition in which youth from each of Gounzoureye Commune's 13 villages participated (MTI231). Each village put together a troupe and prepared songs, dances, sketches on the themes of peace and reconciliation. For example, Kaji youth presented a play portraying reconciliation between former jihadists and the rest of the population. This activity represents the culmination of 15 months of MTI's engagement in the commune of Gounzoureye, as organizing cultural and artistic activities in ultra conservative communities such as Kaji would have been inconceivable a year earlier. MTI local staff worked closely with the grantee, the Mayor's office, to overcome initial resistance from elders, insisting on the compatibility of this activity with local culture and traditions. Troupes that were formed during this activity continue to perform in social events in the commune.

From October 15th to 30th consultant Jake Cramer conducted a second round of data collection in Gounzoureye Commune with the support of a local firm (MTI173 and MTI174) as part of the

program's effort to evaluate social networks. This research activity, which began in January 2015, sought to use social network analysis to better understand the relationships and integration both within and between the thirteen villages of Gounzoureye, and how this integration impacts key attitudes and beliefs, notably with regards to violent extremist messaging. Cramer, who submitted his final report integrating results from the two rounds of data collection, concludes that "the increased level of integration throughout the commune, as indicated by the acquaintance, family, perceptions, and ego networks, is associated with improved attitudes toward women's rights, liberalized views on religion, and improved outlook on security and the quality of life."

During the quarter MTI concluded its flagship Network of Leaders activity in Gouzoureye Commune with a final event in the village of Bagoundie I (MTI154) on October 30th. The Ministry of National Reconciliation's Azalai Caravan (MTI250), which had arrived in Gao two days before, participated and gave the concluding event a national dimension.

From November 5th to 11th, MTI supported Malian association Think Peace, in partnership with the Morocco-based Transnational Initiative to hold a five-day workshop with 53 youth civil society activists from across Mali to build their capacities regarding CVE and draft a Youth Agenda. This Youth Agenda, which contains four action items including the creation of a country-wide youth network to raise awareness on the issue of CVE. This network has already been created and has held activities.

In December, consultant Andrea Barbosa (MTI211) submitted her CVE Cluster Evaluation Report, which was circulated with the US Mission in Mali and well received.

SECURITY

On November 20th at 7AM, two men armed with AK-47s stormed the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, taking the guests and staff hostage, and killing 20 of them. After a 10-hour siege, Malian Special Forces, with support from French, American, and UN forces, neutralized and killed the two attackers. In the following days, both Al-Mourabitoune, a jihadist organization led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar and affiliated with Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), as well as the Macina Liberation Front, reportedly close to Malian jihadist organization Ansar Dine, took credit for the attack. This is the most important terrorist attack on the Malian capital since the attack at the bar La Terrasse in which five (5) people were killed in March 2015.

In the wake of this incident, USAID/OTI decided to accelerate the departure of its CR Joel Hirst to December 11th, 2015, and to limit the in-country presence of his replacement, Deputy CR Jessica Bryant, to a three-week period in January 2016.

STAFF MOVEMENT

- COP Olivier Girard attend the Regional OTI Conference in Accra on October 21st and 22nd, as well as the AECOM COP Annual Summit in Arlington, VA from December 14th to 17th. He returned to Mali on December 30th after taking personal leave.
- OTI Deputy Country Representative Jessica Bryant attended the OTI Worldwide Management Meeting in Washington DC from November 16th to 20th. Her return to Mali was delayed to January 10th, 2016, following implementation of "authorized departure" by the US Mission in Mali.

- OTI Country Representative Joel Hirst left the program on December 11th, 2015. Deputy CR Jessica Bryant will assume CR duties starting in January 2016.
- During the quarter, COP Olivier Girard travelled to Gao from November 16th to 20th, and the Timbuktu from November 30th to December 4th. During this last trip he participated in the inauguration of the Timbuktu High School Rehabilitation activity (MTI060, MTI086, MTI087).

OPERATIONS AND ADMINISTRATION

CLOSE-OUT PREPARATION

On October 30th, MTI submitted a draft closeout plan, including a staff closeout plan, for review by USAID/OTI. This plan includes the phase-out of the Timbuktu and Gao field offices in February 2016, one month ahead of the Bamako office and program closeout on March 31st 2016. A four corners meeting to discuss the plan has held on November 10th, and the plan formally received COR concurrence at the end of the quarter.

SHARING LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE MTI PROGRAM

On October 15th, MTI presented at the Digital Finance Atelier in Bamako, to share lessons learned on the use of Mobile Money, particularly as part of cash-for-work activities in Timbuktu and Gao Region. This workshop, hosted by USAID, was aimed at a wide audience of Malian government officials, private sector partners, donors and NGOs. MTI's presentation generated a lot of questions and interest from participants. As of July 2015, the program has transferred over \$1 million dollars in mobile money through more than 15,000 individual transactions, mostly to cover activity expenditure in remote locations across northern Mali.

In October, the MTI COP, Deputy CR, along with Project Specialists Andre Tanguy and Wanalher Ag Always, participated in the two-day OTI Sahel Regional Meeting in Accra, Ghana, hosted by USAID, to share lessons learned, notably on monitoring and evaluation. This allowed the project specialists to share their experience with other local staff members, notably from the Niger program.

ANNEX A: ACTIVITIES CLEARED BY COUNTRY OBJECTIVE

ACTIVITY NUMBER	ACTIVITY TITLE	AWARDEE	EST ACTIVITY AMOUNT USD	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
Increasing the supply and demand for a peaceful resolution to the conflict						
MTI250	Peace Caravan in Timbuktu and Gao Regions	Ministry of National Reconciliation	\$140,997	Cleared	2015-10-09	2015-11-06
MTI267	Participation of Think Peace to the First Arab Liberty Festival	Think Peace	\$5,351	Cleared	2015-10-19	2015-12-11
MTI270	Provision of IT equipment to the Malian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	DDGS	\$107,27.58	Closed	2015-11-27	2015-12-31
MTI271	Airing Radio Drama on Peace and Reconciliation in Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao	DDGS	\$31,500	Cleared	2015-12-08	2016-01-15
Total			\$188,575.58	4		
Restoring a sense of normalcy in strategic areas in the North						
MTI272	Inauguration of Douentza High School	Conseil de Cercle de Douentza	\$22,232	Cleared	2015-12-08	2016-01-15
Total			\$22,232	1		
Countering violent extremism through inclusion of marginalized communities						
MTI266	Developing a Malian Youth CVE Agenda	Think Peace	\$51,569	Cleared	2015-10-05	2015-11-30
MTI268	Research Project on Terrorism in Mopti	DDGS to Navanti	\$82,977.57	Cleared	2015-11-24	2016-01-15
MTI269	DDGS - Promoting Timbuktu Renaissance video in Arabic on Social Media	DDGS - Social Media Firm	\$49,930.04	Cleared	2015-12-01	2016-12-23
Total			\$184,476.61	3		

ANNEX C: SUCCESS STORIES



TRANSFORMING LIVES – MALI

Local Dialogue on Peace Agreement



Photo by : Ahmadou Mahamane, Lellehoye, Ansongo.

December 2015 – On June 20th, 2015, Mali put an end to three years of conflict after the coalition of the main rebel groups, the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), finally signed a Peace and Reconciliation Agreement with the government in Bamako. At this critical juncture MTI, in dialogue with civil society groups, found it critical to inform the Malian population on the contents of the peace agreement, as understanding and acceptance of the peace agreement by a majority of the population, particularly in the northern regions of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal, is crucial to its implementation.

MTI developed a dialogue activity at the village level in the Gao and Timbuktu Regions, using civil society leaders to lead village assemblies in which they explained the contents of the Peace Agreement in local languages. Close to 50 events were held across the two northern regions, many in remote and isolated communities with little to no Malian government presence.

As a traditional leader in Nonia, Commune of Ansongo, in Gao Region expounded: "I welcome MTI's approach regarding the dissemination of the Peace Agreement. Here we live in an island and are cut of all contact. This activity is a gift from heaven as we needed to be informed of the content of the Agreement and cut short the rumors that had taken over."

Adama Idrissa, president of the Youth organization in Hamzacoma (Timbuktu Region), said: "I realized through today's conference, that we must unite and trust each other for a lasting peace in our country. I appreciate the information about the regionalization and the newly created roles of elected representatives. The role of traditional leaders and villages is to be revised, which is very important for our communities."

Local radio stations were used to cover and amplify the impact of these events.

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TRANSFORMING LIVES – MALI

Restoring Electricity in Menaka



Photo by : Mohamed Illily Ag Mohamed

December 2015 – Since 2012, the town of Menaka (pop. 20,000) in northern Mali had been occupied by a succession of rebel groups, leaving the population with degraded public infrastructure and no electricity. On April 28th 2015, in full breach of an existing ceasefire, the pro-Mali armed group GATIA seized Menaka from rebel groups, prompting retaliatory attacks and threatening the ongoing peace process. As part of a deal which paved the way for the signature of a definitive peace agreement on June 20th, 2015, all armed groups eventually agreed to leave the town of Menaka in the hands of the UN Mission (MINUSMA) and Malian authorities.

Local authorities were keen to demonstrate their capacity to improve the lives the population after the trauma of the occupation. It is in this context that MTI carried out strategic interventions to restore a sense of normalcy in Menaka and to help the government signal to the population that peace – and adhering to the accords which were helping to keep it in place – was in their best interest.

One of the critical activities supported by MTI was the provision of two new 250 KVA generators to Menaka, restoration 32 km of distribution lines, replacement of all pre-existing meters and provision of fuel to ensure the first three months of operation. Beyond surmounting the logistical and security challenges associated with delivering equipment to a town located 1,500 km from Bamako, MTI rallied the population, local authorities and the former private utility company to the cause of restoring this critical public service while respecting a user-pays principle.

On November 24, 2015, less than three months after the signature of the grant, the electrical network of Menaka was fully restored. An inhabitant summarized how the political significance of this accomplishment: “Tonight for the first time we feel Malian and the proof is that we are looking at the evening news on national television for the first time the beginning of the crisis”.

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