



# Integrated Country Strategy

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**MALI**

**FOR PUBLIC RELEASE**

Approved: March 23, 2022

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## 1. Chief of Mission Priorities

U.S. relations with Mali are at a critical juncture. The United States continues to press for a return to a democratically elected government while the transition government, touting a democratic reform agenda, appears to be entrenching itself for the long haul. While France has traditionally been Mali's primary foreign partner, increasing anti-French sentiment complicates the U.S.-Mali relationship; however, we can seize opportunities to improve our standing with the Malian public and transition government. Following 2018 elections, Mali experienced significant political upheavals that hindered service provision and stagnated security partnerships with the United States. In August 2020, a group of military officers overthrew the elected government. In October 2020, that group ceded power to a transition government, with an 18-month mandate to hold elections and return Mali to constitutional rule by February 2022, as agreed with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Per U.S. law, the 2020 coup triggered restrictions on foreign assistance, significantly impacting the Mission's ability to partner with security forces and limiting other forms of assistance.

On May 24, 2021, military officers detained civilian transition officials, and, on June 7, 2021, Colonel Assimi Goita was sworn in as transition president in a further consolidation of military power. Following dialogues at municipal, county, regional, diaspora, and national levels in December 2021, on January 1, 2022, the transition government announced it would seek a five-year extension of its mandate. In response, ECOWAS then reimposed strict economic sanctions on Mali and restricted travel between Mali and ECOWAS countries on January 9, 2022. Given these constraints, our goals are to support a transition to democratic governance, emphasize capacity building in limited security partnerships, and improve socioeconomic outcomes and resilience for the Malian people.

In pursuit of these goals, U.S. objectives include supporting a return to a civilian-led, democratically elected government; improving Mali's perception of the United States; strengthening governing institutions to promote peace and stability; increasing efficiency, capacity, and trustworthiness of Malian security institutions; improving territorial and border control; supporting Mali in its efforts to ensure a healthier, better educated, and more

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prosperous population; reducing the vulnerability and increasing the resilience of the Malian population; improving the business environment to attract U.S. and foreign investment; and supporting a well-resourced Mission to meet the challenges of a changing and increasingly unstable operating environment.

These mission goals are closely aligned with the Bureau of African Affairs Joint Regional Strategy, the Interim National Security Strategy, the Sahel Strategy, and Executive Orders on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our strategy aims to build Mali's institutional capacity to address myriad challenges and to enable the Mission to operate with flexibility and resilience in a fluid environment. Mission Bamako's strategy employs a variety of reinforcement tools such as development assistance, policy dialogue, public diplomacy, limited security cooperation, and economic statecraft. It also deliberately draws on the diversity of Mali's population as we partner to build more representative and responsive Malian institutions.

A more prosperous Mali, with improved access to social services, reduced corruption, and increased employment opportunities, would provide greater opportunities for U.S. trade and investment. Prior to the 2020 coup and the COVID-19 crisis, Mali's economy was growing at an average of five percent annually since 2014. Due to the economic impact of COVID-19 in particular, real GDP declined significantly in 2020. Some foreign investment has continued in key sectors such as energy and mining; however, investment remains limited due to continued insecurity. Mali remains near the bottom of the Human Development Index, notably on health and economic outcomes. As co-chair with UNICEF of Mali's Health Sector Donors Partners Group, the Mission hopes to lead donor coordination for efficient and effective public health impact.

Implementation of the 2015 Algiers Peace Accord has stagnated. UN peacekeeping forces (MINUSMA) provide some measure of protection in the north and center of the country, but Mali's persistent failure to hold and secure territory cleared by French Operation Barkhane and other partner forces has impeded efforts to improve governance and service delivery in outlying areas. Insecurity has spread to the southern regions and increasingly threatens the capital region. Furthermore, the deployment of Russia-backed Wagner Group forces in Mali will likely further destabilize

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Mali's territory and increase human rights abuses, as well as divert resources away from the Malian people.

International and Malian troops have suffered significant losses at the hands of reinvigorated extremist forces. Al-Qa'ida-linked groups have further exploited ethnic resentments in central Mali to spread their influence and render new areas of the country ungovernable and host to trafficking, criminal, and terrorist networks. The Malian security force response to threats has occasionally resulted in the killing of civilians; impunity for such crimes has decreased the population's faith in the ability of security forces to protect them. Reforming Mali's security sector to ensure its ability to protect its people and control its borders will require the transition government to focus on civilian control and respect for human rights, as well as needed investments in health, education, agriculture, and the private sector – the social and economic keys to Mali's future.

Despite political turmoil, increasing insecurity, and restrictions on assistance, the United States remains the largest bilateral donor to Mali. U.S. bilateral foreign assistance to Mali's development totaled more than \$132 million in FY 2019 and over \$156 million in FY 2020; with nearly \$144 million anticipated for FY 2021 to support food security, health, basic education, water/sanitation, nutrition, protection, livelihoods, peacebuilding, and governance. U.S. humanitarian assistance to Mali in FY 2021 accounts for an additional \$75 million.

Mission Bamako faces an uphill battle with a transition government that is increasingly unaligned with U.S. priorities, including democratic, civilian-led governance, to the detriment of the Malian people. Our ample assistance provision and experienced personnel offer the ability to maintain critical relationships and relevance in unprecedented times where planning is difficult. Post will regularly monitor and report progress on the objectives to ensure alignment to overarching goals in a continually shifting environment.

## 2. Mission Strategic Framework

**Mission Goal 1:** Mali's democratic institutions are strengthened, its governance more responsive, and its respect for human rights improved.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Mali lays the groundwork for a transition to a civilian-led, democratically elected government that reflects Mali's diverse population.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Mali increasingly perceives the United States as a trusted partner.
- **Mission Objective 1.3:** Mali advances political and social reform that provides fundamental rights and liberties in a diverse and inclusive environment.
- **Mission Objective 1.4:** Improved governance for strengthening democratic institutions and systems to promote peace, stability, and sustainable development. (CDCS DO1)

**Mission Goal 2:** America's security at home and abroad is enhanced by Mali's increased capacity to protect its borders, secure its population, counter violent extremist organizations, combat transnational crime, and plan strategically.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Malian security institutions, organized under a well-resourced security strategy, demonstrate increased efficiency, effectiveness, capacity, trustworthiness, and transparency.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Mali is more stable and security forces exercise increased control of Mali's territory and borders in partnership with allies to combat transnational crime and violent extremism.

**Mission Goal 3:** Mali's population makes significant advances in socio-economic conditions through economic development, increased resilience to shocks (e.g., climate change) and improvement in the country's business environment.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Solidify and deepen the development gains (health, education, economic growth) in targeted areas. (CDCS DO2)
- **Mission Objective 3.2:** Reduce Malians' vulnerability and build community capacity to better prepare for and respond to shocks and stresses. (CDCS SpO)
- **Mission Objective 3.3:** Improved business environment to facilitate trade, increase opportunities for American companies, and attract U.S. and foreign investment.

**Management Objective:** To ensure Mission Mali has the resources needed to achieve its ICS objectives despite the changing and challenging operating environment through improving recruitment of U.S. and Local Staff, optimizing operations by tailoring them to better meet the specific needs of Embassy Bamako, and refining contingency and continuity of operations plans.

### 3. Mission Goals and Objectives

**Mission Goal 1:** Mali's democratic institutions are strengthened, its governance more responsive, and its respect for human rights improved.

**Description:** After repeated undemocratic upheavals in Mali's government, Mission Goal 1 is central to the success of Embassy Bamako's efforts in Mali. The objectives and sub-objectives of Mission Goal 1 illustrate how the interagency will respond to these governance challenges. In support of the policy priority of a democratic transition in Mali, Mission Bamako can help Malians address profound governance deficiencies and long-standing human rights violations. In order to make progress on this governance goal, Malians must also perceive the U.S. government as a trusted partner. Democratic elections in Mali will also provide opportunities for increased security partnerships with the lifting of 7008 restrictions. Mission Goal 1 contributes to the goals of the National Security Strategy by encouraging responsive governance, strengthening rule of law, and respecting human rights. This mission goal also aligns with the Africa Joint Regional Strategy goals of improving democracy, human rights, and good governance, as well as the U.S. Strategy on Countering Corruption.

**Objective 1.1:** Mali lays the groundwork for a transition to a civilian-led, democratically elected government that reflects Mali's diverse population.

- **Justification:** After two government overthrows in less than a year, it is imperative that Mali's transition government holds free, fair, and transparent elections and returns power to a democratically elected government. To address the drivers of past rebellions and ongoing conflict, the government must serve the interests of Mali's ethnically and geographically diverse population.
- **Linkages:** Mission Objective 1.1 aligns directly with Goals 1 and 3 of the Africa Bureau's Joint Regional Strategy – in particular, via AF JRS Objectives 3.1 and 3.3 – as well as to the White House's National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality and U.S. Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Strategy.



- **Risks:** Mali's transition government has requested a five-year transition extension beyond the period prescribed in its founding charter. Any resulting delay in elections could have resoundingly negative consequences on the United States' ability to partner with and provide assistance to Mali in the future. To mitigate this risk, Mission Bamako will continue to communicate to the transition government the negative impacts of delaying elections on U.S. partnerships and assistance.

**Objective 1.2:** Mali increasingly perceives the United States as a trusted partner.

- **Justification:** Despite limits on U.S. security assistance to Mali following the latter's August 2020 coup d'état, the United States remains the largest donor of bilateral humanitarian and development assistance to Mali. Once Mali holds democratic elections, the United States will look to increase our security assistance to help Malians build a more secure and prosperous future.
- **Linkages:** Mission Objective 1.2 aligns directly with Goals 1 and 3 of the Africa Bureau's Joint Regional Strategy – in particular, via AF JRS Objectives 1.1, 1.2, and 3.4. as well as Consular Affairs' Functional Bureau Strategy Goals 1 and 2.
- **Risks:** Under the transition government, the Malian population's support for the United States has waned. The United States will look to improve our public standing in Mali in order to limit space for adversarial actors to gain ground.

**Objective 1.3:** Mali advances political and social reform that provides fundamental rights and liberties in a diverse and inclusive environment.

- **Justification:** Despite recent national consultations providing a relatively clear roadmap of the political and institutional reforms necessary in Mali, reform efforts have often stalled in the face of political opposition. These reforms, though, are vital to Mali's future as a stable, democratic exporter of peace.
- **Linkages:** Mission Objective 1.3 aligns directly with Goals 1 and 3 of the Africa Bureau's Joint Regional Strategy – in particular, via AF JRS Objectives 1.1, 1.5, 3.1, 3.2, and 3.4.

- **Risks:** Without political and institutional reform, Mali risks returning to the same frustration and dissatisfaction that underpinned the 2020 political crisis. To mitigate this risk, Mission Bamako continues to support political and institutional reforms that will result in a foundation for representative and inclusive governance.

**Objective 1.4:** Improved governance for strengthening democratic institutions and systems to promote peace, stability, and sustainable development. (CDCS DO1)

- **Justification:** In an environment dominated by security and political crises, peacebuilding and stabilization efforts are crucial to ensuring that Malian citizens can look forward to a secure and peaceful future.
- **Linkages:** Mission Objective 1.4 aligns directly with Goals 1, 3, and 4 of the Africa Bureau's Joint Regional Strategy – in particular, via AF JRS Objectives 1.4, 1.5, 3.1, 3.2, and 3.4, and 4.3 – as well as the U.S. Strategy on Countering Corruption.
- **Risks:** If peacebuilding and stabilization efforts are unsuccessful, Mali will continue to struggle to make progress toward ensuring that the basic needs of the population are met. To counter this risk, Mission Bamako continues to support stabilization activities in some of the most conflict-affected regions of Mali.

**Mission Goal 2:** America's security at home and abroad is enhanced by Mali's increased capacity to protect its borders, secure its population, counter violent extremist organizations, combat transnational crime, and plan strategically.

**Description:** Mission Goal 2 links with the Interim National Security Strategy priority of helping African nations combat threats posed by violent extremism, strengthening the rule of law, and bringing the continent's deadliest conflicts to an end. This goal further links with the AF/AFR Joint Regional Strategy goals 1 and 3. Mali continues to be plagued by a deteriorating security situation that threatens the stability and security of Mali, the Sahel region, and the West African littoral states, and a significant portion of Mali's territory remains ungoverned and insecure. Malian security and defense forces also face continued challenges regarding

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human rights, transparency, corruption, and the prosecution of those accused of violations. Mali must make significant institutional change to become more effective in stabilizing the country; adhering to civilian democratic rule; and improving its accountability, justice, and human rights. Mali's security and defense forces must also improve their ability to counter and contain the VEO threat, control its borders, and protect its civilians from ever-increasing violence across the country. Mission Bamako will stress the importance of respect for human rights and the implications of continued impunity for violations to transition government ministries and will work with G5 Sahel partners and Malian security and law enforcement authorities to share information and best practices to contain the potential for regional spillover of instability.

**Objective 2.1:** Malian security institutions, organized under a well-resourced security strategy, demonstrate increased efficiency, effectiveness, capacity, trustworthiness, and transparency.

- **Justification:** Mali continues to be plagued by a deteriorating security situation involving violent extremist organizations and myriad transnational criminal organizations that threaten Mali as well as the stability of the entire region. Malian security and defense forces also face continued challenges regarding human rights, transparency, corruption, and the prosecution of those accused of violations. Mali must make significant institutional change to become more effective in stabilizing the country; adhering to civilian democratic rule; and improving its accountability, justice, and human rights.
- **Linkages:** Mission objective 2.1 links with the Interim National Security Strategy priority of helping African nations combat threats posed by violent extremism, strengthening the rule of law, and bringing the continent's deadliest conflicts to an end. This goal further links with the AF/AFR Joint Regional Strategy goals 1 and 3.
- **Risks:** If Malian security and defense forces fail to improve respect for human rights, rule of law, and accountability, it would result in further isolation from the international community and negatively impact their ability to receive assistance from the United States and other partners at a time when security and stability are rapidly

devolving. Further, increased reliance on Russian private military companies may increase human rights violations, undermine stability, and limit space for U.S. and allied cooperation. To mitigate, the Mission is working with transition government ministries to stress the importance of respect for human rights and the implications of continued impunity for violations of those rights.

**Objective 2.2:** Mali is more stable and able to exercise increased control of its territory and borders, in partnership with allies, to combat transnational crime and violent extremism.

- **Justification:** A significant portion of Mali remains outside the control of the Malian government, as a near decade long fight against violent extremist and transnational criminal organizations rages on. This conflict is increasingly threatening the stability and security of Mali, the Sahel region, and the West African littoral states. Mali's security and defense forces must improve their ability to counter and contain the VEO threat, control its borders, and protect its civilians from ever-increasing violence across the country.
- **Linkages:** Mission objective 2.2 links with the Interim National Security Strategy priority of helping African nations combat threats posed by violent extremism and bringing the continent's deadliest conflicts to an end. This goal further links with the AF/AFR Joint Regional Strategy goals 1 and 3.
- **Risks:** If Mali is unable to regain control of its territory and borders, and effectively put an end to the increasing violence gripping the country, the possibility for instability and crisis to spread to much of West Africa is almost certain to occur. To counter this risk, the embassy will work with G5 Sahel partners and Malian authorities to share information and best practices to contain the potential for regional spillover of instability.

**Mission Goal 3:** Mali's population makes significant advances in socio-economic conditions through economic development, increased resilience to shocks (e.g., climate change) and improvement in its business environment.

**Description:** Key U.S. interests in Mali include reducing chronic vulnerability by improving social development and increasing sustainable livelihoods; and encouraging economic growth, opportunity, and development by supporting sustainable development and increased U.S. economic investment. Over the past ten years Mali has seen improvements in the areas of health, nutrition, agriculture, education, and economic growth. These U.S. government-supported steady-state development efforts have had stabilizing effects for communities. However, despite these gains, Mali continues to suffer from high levels of maternal, infant, and child mortality; widespread poverty and malnutrition; and more than two million children aged between five and 17 years out of school. The increasing instability and insecurity coupled with ongoing detection of zoonotic and other infectious diseases and increasing food insecurity have added significant complexity and threaten to disrupt and reverse previous development gains. Although health, nutrition, agriculture, economic growth, and education will remain as central efforts of the U.S. government's assistance in Mali, it is imperative that the U.S. Mission employ an adaptive posture and approach to seize windows of opportunity given the security and political environment. In the more challenging regions, the U.S. government will leverage multi-sectoral development and intensify collaboration between humanitarian, development, and peace stakeholders to improve resilience and stabilization, while solidifying the overall socio-economic environment in the more stable geographic areas of the country.

**Objective 3.1:** Solidify and deepen the development gains (health, education, economic growth) in targeted areas (CDCS DO2)

- **Justification:** U.S.-Mali relations have been strong for decades and have been based on shared goals of improving stability and reducing poverty through economic growth. Mali remains near the bottom of the Human Development Index, notably in health and education, as well as continues to face serious security challenges. However, through

long-term investments in sustainable development and institution-building the U.S. government will address the root causes of conflict.

- **Linkages:** Mission Objective 3.1 aligns directly with Goals 1 and 4 of the Africa Bureau's Joint Regional Strategy and its objectives 1.4, 4.1, and 4.4. Mali is a focus country for U.S. assistance priorities and initiatives found in Mission Objective 3.1, including Global Climate Change (GCC), Feed the Future (FTF), Water for the World Act, Resilience, the Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS), the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI), the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR), the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), and Ending Preventable Child and Maternal Death (EPCMD).
- **Risks:** From conflict to COVID-19 and from the coup to ECOWAS sanctions, Mali's challenges seem insurmountable. Rapid population growth may negate progress in all development sectors. Without U.S. government assistance, health, economic, and education outcomes will be negatively impacted increasing Malians' vulnerabilities to malign actors.

**Objective 3.2:** Reduce Malians' vulnerability and build community capacity to better prepare for and respond to shocks and stresses. (CDCS SpO)

- **Justification:** Prolonged displacement, disrupted trade flows, and competition over natural resources continue to increase vulnerabilities among affected households. Mali is experiencing a complex emergency stemming from the 2012 rebellion, climate change, and regional sectarianism. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate as insecurity, violence, and chronic vulnerabilities are compounded by recurrent shocks, such as droughts and floods. In 2021, 3 million people were affected by the poor rains and an extended lean season. In 2022, 1.9 million people are projected to suffer from an elevated level of acute food insecurity, the highest level since 2015. Overall, more than 35 percent of the Malian population, approximately 7.5 million people, will require humanitarian assistance in 2022.

- **Linkages:** Mission Objective 3.2 aligns directly with Goals 1 and 4 of the Africa Bureau's Joint Regional Strategy and its objectives 1.4, 4.2 and 4.3. Mali is a focus country for U.S. assistance priorities and initiatives under Mission Objective 3.2, including the Global Food security Strategy (GFSS), Global Climate Change (GCC), Feed the Future (FTF), Water for the World Act, and Resilience.
- **Risks:** Mali's humanitarian needs are at an all-time high and the overall response is significantly underfunded. To prevent instability and further loss of life, Mission Bamako will closely monitor the rapidly changing environment to target resources to areas with elevated needs.

**Objective 3.3:** Improved business environment to facilitate trade, increase opportunities for American companies, and attract U.S. and foreign investment

- **Justification:** Prior to the 2020 coup and the COVID-19 crisis, Mali's economy was growing at five percent on average since 2014. Some foreign investment has returned in key sectors such as energy, but investment remains limited by continuing insecurity in the country. Due to the economic impact of COVID-19 in particular, real GDP declined significantly in 2020 and Malian's capacity to recover from income loss, reduced remittances and a higher cost of living has eroded economic gains. The World Bank forecasts an increased poverty rate of 4.8% in 2022.
- **Linkages:** Mission Objective 3.3 aligns directly with Goals 2 and 3 of the Africa Bureau's Joint Regional Strategy and its objectives 2.1, 2.2, and 3.4. This Objective also aligns with Consular Affairs' Functional Bureau Strategy Goals 1 and 2.
- **Risks:** Without sustained access to foreign investment, Mali's economy will likely stagnate and fail to deliver the rate of growth needed to keep up with rapid population growth, much less to raise the overall standard of living. In response, Mission Bamako will emphasize to Malian interlocutors that foreign investment often leads to intangible improvements like a more skilled workforce, which create a virtuous cycle by making the country even more appealing to future investors.

#### 4. Management Objective

**Management Objective:** To ensure Mission Mali has the resources needed to achieve its ICS objectives despite the changing and challenging operating environment through improving recruitment of U.S. and Local Staff, and implementing the principles of Diversity, Empowerment, Inclusion and Access, optimizing operations by tailoring them to better meet the specific needs of Embassy Bamako, and refining contingency and continuity of operations plans.

- **Justification:** Operating in an increasingly less secure environment, Mission Bamako has continued to struggle with staffing, particularly with those positions for which greater experience is required. In addition, these circumstances require that we be prepared to respond properly should a crisis occur, and then continue to operate effectively with a diminished staffing posture thereafter.
- **Linkages:** Achieving the Management Objective ensures that Mission Mali has the appropriate resources in place and the ability to achieve the broader Mission objectives described above regardless of the circumstances on the ground. This objective is, therefore, linked to the Bureau of African Affairs Joint Regional Strategy through the goals and objectives described above.
- **Risks:** Failure to achieve this objective threatens the success of the Mission as envisioned in this document, since without the appropriate staff or ability to operate in difficult circumstances, Mission Mali would be unable to fully achieve its purposes. We mitigate this risk by continuing to work within the current recruitment system and hire staff with the best available skills while continuing to drill and refine our systems for the best possible crisis response.