



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

Final Report to the Embassy of the Netherlands in Mali

Research on Human Trafficking in Mali

Project Data Table

Executing Organization:	International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Project Identification and Contract Numbers:	ML10P0508/PX.0243
Management Site	Bamako, Mali
Project Period:	01 August 2020 to 31 March 2021
Geographical Coverage:	Mali
Project Beneficiaries:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Coordinating Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices (CNCLTP)• Ministry of Justice• Other government entities• Brigade for the Repression of human trafficking and illicit migrant smuggling• International NGOs - Danish Refugee Council, Norwegian Refugee Council, ICRC, Red Cross• MINUSMA• Foreign Embassies interested and/or engaged in counter-trafficking - Netherlands, UK, US, France, Spain• EU Delegation• UNODC• National NGOs – ENDA, AJDM
Project Partner(s):	National Coordinating Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices (CNCLTP)
Date of Submission:	30 April 2021
Total Confirmed Funding:	EUR 49,301.05
Total Funds Received to Date:	EUR 40,000
Total Expenditures:	EUR 46,677.84

I. Summary of Key Achievements during the Reporting Period

This project built upon IOM's existing expertise and experience in counter trafficking in Mali and is consistent with the National Plan of Action on Counter Trafficking (NPA) 2018-2022, elaborated in 2018 by the National Coordinating Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Related Practices (CNCLTP), a committee presided over by the Ministry of Justice and including national and international organizations (such as IOM, UNODC, and ENDA) working on trafficking issues in Mali. The plan calls for the realization of a national study on the status quo of trafficking in Mali, that is to say a study on the current levels of trafficking in Mali and the actors trying to address this.

The goal of this study, as defined by IOM in collaboration with the other committee members, was to collect reliable and up-to-date information on the phenomenon of trafficking in Mali. Hence the objective of the project was to contribute to reinforce the response to trafficking in Mali, as involved actors will be more knowledgeable on the issue and therefore will be able to better target their interventions, for example to specific regions.

To this end, IOM Mali developed terms of reference to recruit a consultant, who was guided by IOM and the National Committee to implement the various activities, including the production of a final written document on the situation of human trafficking in Mali.

According to these terms of reference and in line with the pre-defined activities, IOM and the consultant achieved the following:

Desk review: The consultant conducted a large desk review in October 2020, including published studies, reports, legal texts, as press articles on trafficking in general and trafficking in Mali. This review gave the consultant the opportunity to define the research methodology for the study and develop an interview guide and questionnaires for the key informant interviews.

Key informant interviews: based on the desk review as well as meetings with the National Committee and individual discussions with committee members, the consultant was able to create an impressive list of organizations and individuals to interview for this study. As a result, the consultant significantly exceeded the target for key informant interview (40), speaking to 136 people in total (in individual interviews and focus group discussions).

Trafficking map of Mali: The consultant developed a map that highlights the different types of trafficking that exist in Mali as well as a non-exhaustive list of actors and counter-trafficking activities. This was done following the desk review, key informant interviews, and information collected during the field visits.

Trafficking indicators: the consultant also utilized this information to define trafficking indicators. These indicators are divided into three categories: contextual indicators, general indicators on the criteria of trafficking, and indicators specific to the forms of exploitation. They are intended to strengthen the possible identification of victims of trafficking in order to improve both direct assistance to these victims as well as data collection on trafficking. As such, they can be used by organizations conducting Protection or migration monitoring activities (ie IOM, UNHCR, DRC, and other Cluster Protection members) or organizations providing direct assistance to vulnerable groups (IDPs, survivors of GBV, hospitals, shelters, etc.).

Final report: The main achievement of this project is the production of a final report which summarizes all of these achievements and provides recommendations for possible next steps. The final report of the study was submitted by the consultant to IOM during the last week of March 2020. It includes four main sections, a conclusion and recommendations that will allow the identification of new actions, tools and mechanisms to further consolidate the efforts of actors working in the fight against trafficking in persons in Mali and more specifically the National Coordinating Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Related Practices.

II. Progress Made towards Realizing Outcomes and Outputs

The goal of this project, as defined by IOM in collaboration with the National Committee, was to try to collect reliable and up-to-date information on the phenomenon of trafficking in Mali. Hence the objective of the project was to contribute to reinforcing the response to trafficking in Mali, as involved actors will be more knowledgeable on the issue and therefore will be able to better target their interventions, for example to specific regions.

To achieve this objective, IOM identified the following outcome: ***The Malian Government, humanitarian agencies and national and international organizations have a better understanding of human trafficking in Mali.***

Output: ***One National study on the status quo of trafficking in Mali is produced***

In order to achieve this output, IOM defined the following key activities:

- 1.1.1 Desk review: Conduct a desk review of existing information on trafficking in Mali (based on the 2015 report), including national and international actors working in trafficking in Mali and all past/present projects on trafficking in Mali (such as the IOM FCDO project)
- 1.1.2 List of priority regions and key informants: Define priority regions and elaborate a list of organizations and opinion leaders on regional and national level to contact as key informants (including committee members)
- 1.1.3 Key informant interviews: Conduct interviews and focus group discussions with these key informants in Bamako and priority regions to refine information on trafficking and VoTs, including type of exploitation (forced labor, sexual exploitation, slavery, etc.), mode of recruitment, mechanisms in place (smuggling network, country-to-country communication system, mode of remuneration, etc.)
- 1.1.4 Trafficking map of Mali: Develop a participative mapping of Mali according to types and prevalence of trafficking per region and the main economic sectors within these regions (i.e. mining, agriculture) as well as a list of past and current trafficking projects, their scope, and geographic location
- 1.1.5 Trafficking indicators: Define trafficking indicators (i.e. gender, age groups, nationality, travel route, town/city of departure, destination)
- 1.1.6 Final report: Produce a final report with recommendations and next steps
- 1.1.7 Presentation of the study at committee meeting and Cluster Protection meeting

IOM hired a consultant to implement these activities and produce the overall study. This consultant had already worked for IOM Mali on multiple occasions, for example to develop a national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking in 2019, and therefore was well suited for this project.

The consultant started remotely with the desk review in October 2020, including the most recent published studies, reports, legal texts, as well as press articles on trafficking in general and trafficking in Mali.¹ This initial stage gave the consultant the opportunity to:

- Review methodological approaches used in other, similar studies
- Gather existing qualitative and quantitative data on trafficking in Mali
- Identify the different forms of trafficking in Mali;
- Familiarize herself with and appropriate the subject based on conclusions and recommendations from previous studies
- Identify the shortcomings of previous studies, particularly in regard to the lack of quantitative data and lack of information on trafficking in the northern regions of Mali
- Define the research methodology for the study and develop an interview guide and questionnaires² for the key informant interviews.

The consultant travelled to Mali at the beginning of November 2020 and met with the National Coordinating Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Related Practices (CNCLTP) on 5 and 12 November 2020 to discuss the terms of reference, and to present an initial research methodology proposal. In order to ensure an active participation of its members, as well as providing guidance and support to the consultant, the Committee appointed a dedicated steering committee. On 16 November 16th, the sub-committee reviewed and validated the methodological approach, data collection tools such as questionnaires and an interview guideline and assisted the consultant in identifying key stakeholders among governmental and civil society actors. It is during this first meeting that the steering committee and the consultant also decided that the study would cover the following administrative regions: Bamako, Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso, Segou, Mopti, Gao, and Timbuktu. Kidal and Menaka were excluded due to a lack of identified actors in these regions as well as the difficulty to travel there due to security concerns. Finally, the consultant was invited by the CNCLTP on 3 December 2020, and 4 January 2021 to update its members on the work achieved through short presentations and Q&A sessions.

Following the data collection tools developed with the steering committee, the consultant conducted key informant interviews with 136 targeted actors. During these interviews, which lasted about an hour each, the consultant systematically covered the following key elements:

- Verifying /evaluating key informants' understanding on the concept of trafficking;
- Identifying/mapping counter-trafficking activities implemented by the key informant;
- Identifying available information and databases on trafficking in Mali;
- Based on the expertise and cases of trafficking identified by key informant, analyzing and describing the phenomenon of trafficking in Mali (profile of victims and traffickers; itineraries and modus operandi used by trafficker). All the information collected were systematically reported in an analytical sheet, which highlighted the following key findings:
- Actors struggle to define what is trafficking in person, which hamper their capacity to detect, report and assist victims of trafficking. Considering that most available information on trafficking in Mali are based on case management information collected through interviews, qualitative information on trafficking is currently limited due to the relative low number of cases of victims of trafficking identified.
- Very limited quantitative data is available. While it is reported that some protection actors have data collection tools, they rarely use specific trafficking indicators. When they do, the indicators are not informed or not aligned, which is preventing the analysis of collected data (quantitative or qualitative).

¹ A full list of references can be found in the study in the annex.

² The tools can be found in the annex of the study.

- To date, no information management system exists in Mali.

In addition, the steering committee proposed the regions of Kayes and Gao for two field visits, which was confirmed as regions of increased interest for trafficking by the key informants.

KAYES: According to the steering committee and key informants, Kayes is a major site for trafficking that features all forms of trafficking that have been identified in Mali, including the assimilated practice of descent-based slavery. Kayes is also the primary region of departure for Malian migrants, as well as a transit zone for a number of foreign migrants seeking economic opportunities. Finally, Kayes is known for its unregulated artisanal gold mining areas, which attract many people, including trafficking networks.

GAO: Neither the steering committee nor the consultant were able to provide or find any studies or reports on trafficking in the Northern regions of Mali. However, Gao is a key transit point for migrants trying to reach Algeria and Europe. These migrants are particularly vulnerable and prone to exploitation by smugglers and armed groups that control the region. Gao, Kidal, and Menaka, are also regions known for descent-based slavery. Finally, in recent years, the Gao region has become known for its gold mining that attracts Malians and foreigner migrants. These gold mining areas are generally controlled by armed groups with little or no supervision, resulting in large-scale abuse and exploitation of men, women, and children.

The consultant visited these regions in January 2021 (Gao from 13-15 January 2021 and Kayes from 25-29 January 2021), and hold 9 focus groups discussions (4 in Gao and 5 in Kayes) with respectively 17 and 18 representatives of technical services and civil society actors, including community and religious leaders, and a representative of l'Association des Anciens Passeurs de Gao (*see Annex 3: TOR Field Missions*)³. Furthermore, 2 Phone interviews were conducted with former smugglers based in Gao. Considering the sensitivity of the topic, each group discussions were targeting specific actors depending on their role (prevention; protection; repression) or status (law enforcement authorities; community leaders; NGOs and social workers). The objective was to create a platform where participants would feel comfortable enough to discuss the characteristics of trafficking; to share their perception on this topic with peers; and discuss the current state of collaboration and cooperation between actors. For this purpose, each group discussions started with a short descriptive presentation on what are the objectives and expected results, followed by a reminder of the Trafficking in person's definition. The rest of the group discussions aimed at identifying forms of trafficking specific to the regions through the identification of vulnerable population; mapping itineraries and identifying routes.

The consultant was not able to visit the other pre-defined regions (Timbuktu, Sikasso, Ségou, Koulikoro, or Mopti) due to limited financial and human resources. However, as alternative, she conducted telephone interviews with the relevant actors in these regions (*see annexes of the study*).

As a result, the consultant spoke to a total of 136 actors in 08 administrative regions during individual interviews or group discussions. This includes representatives of 16 national and regional technical services (including magistrates and prosecutors of the Specialized Judicial Pole, which is a governmental unit with special Jurisdiction with national competency to investigate and prosecute cases of trafficking and smuggling of migrants in Mali.); 9 community leaders (religious leaders; neighborhood or village chiefs; women's leaders); 26 national and 14 international NGOs (as well as their regional representatives); 8 international organizations, 5 Embassies, 2 university researchers, 2 specialized lawyers, 1 journalist, 25 victims of trafficking, and 2 former migrant smugglers.

³ The list of participants of these focus groups is located in the annex of the study.

The consultant analyzed the data and information gained from these interviews and focus groups to draft a map of Mali with types and prevalence of trafficking per region (*see Annex 4 and Annex 5*), develop 3 categories of indicators for trafficking (*see study for details*), and produce a final report with all findings.

Indicators are divided into three categories: contextual indicators, general indicators on the criteria of trafficking, and indicators specific to the forms of exploitation. They are intended to strengthen the possible identification of victims of trafficking in order to improve both direct assistance to these victims as well as data collection on trafficking. However, indicators should be taken in context and not in isolation. Positive responses to one or more of the indicators can only provide supporting evidence for suspected cases of trafficking, they cannot definitively confirm them.

The final report, finalized by the consultant in April 2021, highlights a number of key findings:

- Data (quantitative and qualitative) on trafficking is almost non-existent in Mali
- The understanding of the concept of trafficking is limited, even amongst organizations working directly in counter-trafficking in Mali, as the majority of interviewed key informants were not able to define trafficking
- The lack of a standardized data collection tool with precise indicators further impedes data collection on the issue in Mali.

As a result of the finding, the consultant provides a number of recommendations in the final report, including training first responders (providers of direct assistance) on the definition of trafficking and the identification of victims of trafficking, creating a standardized data collection system on trafficking, and developing a national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking, which should also improve data collection.

The consultant presented the preliminary results of this study to an extra-ordinary meeting of the National Committee on 4 February 2021. Once the donor has approved the final study, it will be sent to all committee members in early May 2021. IOM will also present the study at the next National Committee meeting and the monthly Cluster Protection meeting.

Three months later (August 2021), IOM will conduct an online study with committee members to test retention of knowledge on the study (% of committee members who can name at least two main regions and nationalities for trafficking in Mali) and its application (% of committee members who report to have used the study to inform their trafficking interventions of the study).

III. Progress Made towards Incorporating Cross-cutting Themes

Gender was mainstreamed over the entirety of this project, from conception, over implementation, to reporting. In fact, gender played an integral part of the project because trafficking predominantly affects women and girls, according to international reports and data on the issue⁴. This assessment corresponds with IOM's own experience (in providing direct assistance to victims of trafficking), but IOM wanted to test whether this is also confirmed by other data or other actors in Mali, as this will impact how IOM and others can provide assistance or address the issue in the future.

The study notes that gender discriminatory factors make women and girls particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Mention is made of the latest WalkFree report, which supports the findings from the field that girls in Mali have less schooling than boys, and that women are more likely than men to be in poverty, to work in the riskiest informal sectors, and to be exploited. Women and girls also face disproportionate rates of gender-based violence and a myriad of prejudices and harmful cultural norms that make them particularly vulnerable.

The study also made it possible to make a connection with the efforts put in place by MINUSMA in the fight against terrorism. Indeed, trafficking seems to be an increasingly important means of financing armed and terrorist groups as well as the smuggling of migrants.

It is also possible to talk about child protection. It is clear that children on the move are particularly vulnerable, especially unaccompanied children and those traveling with their parents to mining sites. It therefore seems essential to support the Malian government in the supervision of gold mining sites through regular monitoring by labor agents; the establishment of mobile schools on the sites; condemnation of employers who expose children to dangerous work in contravention of the law; condemnation of any person who employs a child under 15 years of age. etc.

⁴ 2020 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons

IV. Progress Achieved Compared with the Indicators in the Results Matrix

	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Data Source and Collection Method</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Progress</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
Objective: This project will contribute to reinforcing the national and international response to human trafficking in Mali based on current needs.	% of committee members who report to have used the study to inform their trafficking interventions	Online survey six months after publication of the study		50.00 ⁵		
Outcome 1: The Malian Government, humanitarian agencies and national and international organisations have a better understanding of human trafficking in Mali	% of committee members who can name at least two main regions and nationalities for trafficking in Mali	Online survey before and after distribution of final study.		80.00 ⁶		Committee members are key informants for the study and respond to online survey
Output 1.1: One national study on the status quo of trafficking in Mali is produced	# of individual key informant interviews conducted	Individual interviews	0	40	136	Key informants (including committee members) are willing to cooperate in the interviews and desk review.
	Reports produced on research topic	Desk review document, key informant interview document, final report	0	3	3	
Activities that lead to Output 1.1 1.1.1 Conduct a desk review of existing information on trafficking in Mali (based on the 2015 report), including national and international actors working in trafficking in Mali and all past/present projects on trafficking in Mali						Key informants (including committee members) are

⁵ Will be tested in August 2021

⁶ Will be tested in August 2021

<p>1.1.2 Define priority regions and elaborate a list of organizations and opinion leaders on regional and national level to contact as key informants</p> <p>1.1.3 Conduct interviews and focus group discussions with these key informants in Bamako and priority regions to refine information on trafficking and VoTs, including type of exploitation (forced labor, sexual exploitation, slavery, etc.), mode of recruitment, mechanisms in place (smuggling network, country-to-country communication system, mode of remuneration, etc.)</p> <p>1.1.4 Develop a participative mapping of Mali according to types and prevalence of trafficking per region and the main economic sectors within these regions (i.e. mining, agriculture) as well as a list of past and current trafficking projects, their scope, and geographic location</p> <p>1.1.5 Define trafficking indicators (i.e. gender, age groups, nationality, travel route, town/city of departure, destination) for Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs)</p> <p>1.1.6 Produce a final report with recommendations and next steps</p> <p>1.1.7 Presentation of the study at committee meeting and Cluster Protection meeting</p>	<p>willing to cooperate in the interviews and desk review.</p>
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V. Challenges Encountered and Actions Taken

<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Actions Taken</i>
Lack of access and identified relevant actors in Kidal and Menaka	Decision was taken with the National Committee to focus on other regions to provide valuable data. However, group discussions in Gao managed to highlight general dynamics identifiable in all 4 northern regions. All actors that are currently targeting mining sites in the north (Kidal; Tessalit; Gao) emphasized on the necessity to develop large scale sensitization activities in order to engage and penetrate / infiltrate local communities prior to implementing any prevention/protection projects. It is a prerequisite for safety measures.
Sensitivity of the subject matter (prostitution, slavery, criminality)	Sources were kept confidential, unless organization or organizational data are publicly available.
Lack of viable data	The National Committee compiles in its annual report the information provided by each member on their annual activities. But statistical data on this subject only covers identified victims without specifying their profile, areas of exploitation, prosecutions, etc.
Difficulties in obtaining quantitative information from the actors interviewed	A mapping of anti-trafficking actors and activities provides a non-exhaustive list of identified databases and available information.
Understanding of the definition of human trafficking	Interviews with key actors revealed that only 40% are able to define trafficking in persons precisely, 37% can partially define trafficking and 23% cannot. Consequently, the collection of primary information from the targeted actors is to be measured in terms of their knowledge, perception and, above all, their understanding of what is meant by "trafficking in human beings. Only the involvement of statisticians and a database dedicated to the systematic collection of information on the phenomenon of trafficking according to clear criteria will make it possible to analyze and draw a realistic picture of the phenomenon of human trafficking in Mali.

VI. Conclusion

The project “Research on human trafficking in Mali”, financed by Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade & Development Cooperation, ran from 1 August 2020 to 31 March 2021, with a preparatory period from 1 August to 30 September 2021 to recruit a consultant charged with implementing the project. The main objective of the project was to contribute to reinforcing the response to trafficking in Mali by collecting reliable and up-to-date information on the phenomenon of trafficking in Mali that can be used by involved actors to better target their interventions.

All activities were carried out on time and on budget, including a map of Mali with regions with a higher prevalence of trafficking, a list of indicators on trafficking, and a final report with recommendations for future interventions. Most notably, this report highlighted that data (both quantitative and qualitative) on the issue in Mali is limited, as is the knowledge (even among actors working directly on counter-trafficking activities) on the definition of trafficking and how it is different from illicit migrant smuggling. It therefore has to be emphasized that the study is a result of a qualitative approach. It proposes an analysis of the situation and does not claim to quantify the phenomenon of trafficking in Mali. Research was based on the analysis of quantitative data available in reports, studies, bulletins and statistical yearbooks as well as on information obtained from 136 actors (including 25 victims of trafficking) during semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

The study provides ample information and recommendations for future programming by IOM and other actors, some of which have already been incorporated for the COMPASS project from 2021-2023. For example, IOM will provide trainings for civil society organizations, government, and embassies on the identification of victims of trafficking. IOM will also hire a consultant to update and validate a national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking. Finally, IOM is discussing internally and with the Cluster Protection on how to improve data collection on trafficking.

Once the study has been validated by IOM and the donor, it will be presented at meetings of the National Committee and the Cluster Protection. In fact, a large number of Cluster Protection members have already requested additional trainings on the identification of victims of trafficking, which will be provided as part of the COMPASS project and online, according to need.

VII. Expenditures and Resource Utilization

The final financial report will be provided on 30 June 2021, according to the donor agreement.



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VIII. Annexes

Annex 1: TOR Consultancy

Annex 2 - Members of the Steering Committee

Annex 3: TOR Field Missions