

APROFEM SUPPORTS MALIAN WOMEN IN SHAPING A ROADMAP TO SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Photo: Mickael Franci

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM GRASSROOTS WOMEN IN THE INTER-MALIAN DIALOGUE

Mali has long been marked by a rich cultural tapestry and enduring community traditions. However, its social fabric has been weakened by cycles of conflict, corruption, and marginalisation of key groups—particularly women and young people. Yet, amid this crisis and uncertainty, an opportunity emerged. Launched by the transitional government in May this year, the Inter-Malian Dialogue aimed to foster reconciliation and address the root causes of conflict within the country. APROFEM, the Association for the Promotion of Women and Children in Mali, recognised that this was a crucial moment—a chance for women to speak out and be heard. With support from the Rapid Response Window of the United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) and Cordaid, APROFEM united the voices of 50 grassroots women leaders to participate in this process. Unlike many initiatives focusing solely on national-level interventions, APROFEM prioritised municipal consultations, working directly at the community level. These efforts were concentrated in ten communes across the Mopti and San regions: San, Diéli, Karaba, Diégouena, Dah (in the San region), and Konna, Ouro Modi, Koubaye, Sokoura, and Sio (in the Mopti region). By anchoring their efforts in these communities, APROFEM ensured that the perspectives of women from diverse local contexts shaped discussions on Mali's future.

This document compiles the key findings and recommendations put forward by Malian women during the Inter-Malian Dialogue. The challenges identified here provide a clear snapshot of what stands in the way of lasting peace, while the recommendations reflect the voices of Malian women who insist that “No Peace Without Women” must be more than a slogan. Their voices underscore the vital role women play in shaping policies, advocating for legal safeguards, enhancing socio-economic infrastructure, and weaving traditional reconciliation methods into modern peace processes.

Below are the recommendations produced by these women to help guide Mali forward.

1. KEY CHALLENGES TO PEACE



1

Fragile social fabric

- Erosion of traditional values (communal responsibility, tolerance)
- Persistent inter- and intra-community tensions
- Disengagement of parents and weakening of teachers' authority

2

Governance deficits

- Corruption, nepotism, impunity, and weak authority of institutions
- Limited enforcement of legal frameworks ensuring women's participation (e.g. participation quota under Law 052, adopted in 2015, which requires at least 30% representation of either sex in all official appointments and elected positions)
- Non-application of relevant conventions and treaties

3

Economic and social inequities

- High poverty and unemployment rates—especially among youth and women
- Unequal access to land, natural resources, and business opportunities for women
- Poor infrastructure and public services in conflict-prone areas (schools, health facilities)

4

Recurring conflicts and insecurity

- Terrorism, rebellions, and violent extremism fuelled by frustrations and mistrust
- Proliferation of small arms, drug trafficking, and human trafficking
- External interference and competition over natural resources

5

Marginalisation of women's voices

- Women's input on peace and reconciliation is often disregarded
- Under-representation of women in political and decision-making spheres
- Cultural norms that limit women's leadership roles

6

Displacement and vulnerable populations

- Ongoing conflicts forcing people to flee (IDPs and refugees)
- Limited or non-functional social services for returnees, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups
- Inadequate reintegration support undermining social cohesion

2. RECOMMENDATIONS TO FOSTER SUSTAINABLE PEACE

A. Strengthen national reconciliation and social cohesion

LEVERAGE TRADITIONAL MECHANISMS

- Encourage the active participation of elders, women, and youth as mediators
- Reinvigorate traditional conflict-resolution practices ("joking kinship" and "Palaver Tree") to complement formal judicial processes

INSTITUTIONALISE A CULTURE OF PEACE

- Incorporate peace education and civic engagement modules into school curricula (primary to university)
- Promote a national "Peace Day" or "Day of Harmony" to reinforce unity and patriotism
- Establish or strengthen a government body (or centres) dedicated to peacebuilding, patriotism, and societal values

EMPOWER WOMEN AND YOUTH

- Enforce gender-equality laws to guarantee women's representation in decision-making bodies as mandated by Law 2015-052 on women's participation quota.
- Provide targeted resources (financing, training) to women entrepreneurs and youth-led initiatives in conflict-prone regions
- Involve women in security dialogues and peace committees (local, regional, national)

ENHANCE GRASSROOTS SOCIAL COHESION

- Promote tolerance, mutual respect, and collective education (parents, schools, civil society)
- Develop intercommunity projects and events that bring different groups together
- Provide psychosocial support and trauma healing programmes for communities affected by conflict

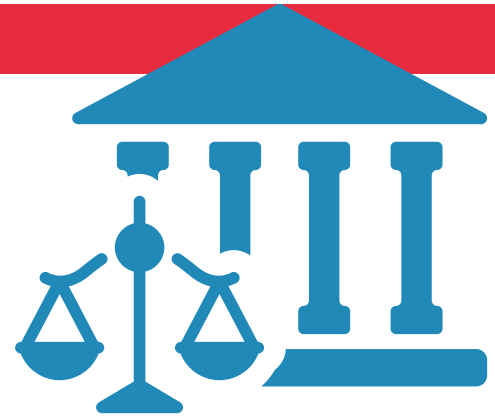
B. Improve governance and justice

COMBAT CORRUPTION AND IMPUNITY

- Strengthen anti-corruption bodies and regularly publish audit findings
- Apply sanctions against public officials found guilty of mismanagement or favouritism
- Encourage Whistleblowing: offer protection and clear channels for citizens to report corruption.

FAIR AND INCLUSIVE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

- Apply existing laws, conventions, and treaties that protect women's rights and promote inclusivity
- Integrate traditional dispute resolution with formal justice to speed up conflict resolution and reduce prison overcrowding
- Decentralise detention centres for women and children to keep families closer and better support reintegration.



UPHOLD CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER

- Legally condemn and ban coups d'État
- Organise transparent, credible elections at all levels (municipal, legislative, presidential)
- Encourage broad citizen engagement and respect for the ballot box to prevent post-election crises

C. Support displaced populations and vulnerable groups

SECURE RETURNS AND REINTEGRATION

- Ensure safe conditions in areas of return (rehabilitated infrastructure, presence of state services)
- Provide holistic support - livelihood assistance, MHPSS (Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support) - to IDPs, refugees, and persons with disabilities
- Implement recommendations of the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission (CVJR) to build trust

PROMOTE ECONOMIC INCLUSION FOR WOMEN

- Allocate specific quotas in agricultural and land policies to women's cooperatives and vulnerable groups
- Prioritise women's entrepreneurship and training in local industries (food processing, artisanal crafts, natural resource management)
- Facilitate better access to financing and markets for women, especially in rural communities

PROTECT VULNERABLE PERSONS

- Expand specialised education, health, and welfare services for children, orphans, and persons with disabilities
- Raise awareness of lineage slavery, ensuring strict enforcement of anti-slavery laws
- Tailor crisis prevention, response, and rebuilding programmes to address the unique needs of women, youth, and marginalised groups



D. Limit conflicts and terrorism

LOCALISED SECURITY AND DIALOGUE

- Strengthen community policing and trust-building efforts between security forces (FDS) and local populations
- Increase women's and youth's roles in community watch committees, ensuring they help identify early signs of radicalisation or conflict
- Open continuous channels for peace dialogues among conflicting or historically adversarial communities

PREVENT ARMS AND TERRORIST RECRUITMENT

- Combat illegal arms trafficking and limit the circulation of small arms
- Provide viable employment and vocational training to discourage youth from joining armed groups
- Foster cooperation with neighbouring countries to reduce cross-border terrorist movement

MANAGE NATURAL RESOURCES FAIRLY

- Prevent conflicts over land, minerals, and water by creating transparent, equitable frameworks for resource extraction and sharing of benefits
- Resolve local disputes over resource ownership via mediation and local councils, involving female stakeholders
- Prioritise environmental protection to maintain livelihood options (forestry, agriculture, pastoralism) that reduce community tensions



“No Peace Without Women”

These challenges and recommendations underscore women's central role in rebuilding Mali's social fabric. From community-level dialogues to national policy reforms, women's leadership and inclusion in governance, entrepreneurship, and peace processes are indispensable for establishing lasting, equitable peace.

“No Peace Without Women” remains the guiding conviction: by empowering women, championing good governance, and addressing socio-economic imbalances, Mali can pave the way for sustainable peace and national reconciliation.

3.COMMUNITY VOICES: TESTIMONIES FROM THE INTER-MALIAN DIALOGUE

The testimonies shared below reflect the impact and significance of APROFEM's support to local dialogues across Malian municipalities. Women leaders and key stakeholders speak to the strength of their engagement, the quality of the process, and the hope it inspires for lasting peace and development.

Awa – Female leader, Karaba Commune:

"I sincerely thank APROFEM for launching this initiative in the Karaba municipality. Fifty people took part in the consultations, including 17 women. We were divided into working groups, and our proposals were truly taken into account. This was made possible thanks to APROFEM and its partners, who trained and empowered us. I believe the mayors genuinely heard our message. Recently, many of us also participated in a training on climate change. I would like to share even more, but I've lost my voice from the strength of my mobilization during the dialogue! I am grateful from the bottom of my heart."

Female Leader – Kona Municipality

"Being a woman has never been easy — especially in a community facing tension and uncertainty. The APROFEM training was a turning point for me. It strengthened my leadership and advocacy skills. Now, I make my voice heard in all decision-making spaces and inspire other women in my community to actively take part in local development. Thanks to this initiative, I was able to present concrete recommendations during the dialogue. My heartfelt thanks go to APROFEM."

Social Development Officer – Member of the Steering Committee

"At the end of this monitoring mission, I want to express my sincere congratulations to the entire APROFEM team. Your dedication on the ground — supporting participants like true foot soldiers — has led to the development of a document that truly reflects the aspirations of our communities. Your work is a valuable contribution to peacebuilding, social cohesion, and sustainable development in Mali."