

Mali Mètre Special Edition: Gao, Kidal, Ménaka (January/February 2015)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2012, the Mali office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung has been conducting the nationwide opinion survey “Mali Mètre”. As the Kidal region in Mali’s deserted far north-east was previously excluded for security reasons, the current special edition is therefore focusing exclusively on the cities of Kidal, Ménaka and Gao. Due to the current political developments, the strong presence of armed groups in this northern region, as well as regarding the ongoing peace negotiations in Algeria, the opinion survey in Kidal and Ménaka possess a special relevance for Mali and beyond.

This special edition of “Mali Mètre” covers a broad range of issues such as the Algiers negotiations, the operational capacity of the Mali Armed Forces, armed groups, BARKHANE and MINUSMA, the securization and stabilization of the Northern regions of Mali, the dialogue and reconciliation process, as well as the equitable development of the country. Moreover, the survey covers questions regarding the organization of local elections, the perception of corruption, conditions for the success of a future peace accord and the military contribution of the international community.

A total of 770 citizens of both sex with a minimum age of 18 years were questioned. In proportion to the respective size of the population, the sample was consisting of 385 citizens in Gao, 204 citizens in Ménaka and, 181 citizens in Kidal. The survey was conducted on the ground between December 28th, 2014 and January 6th, 2015.

On the President and Government

69% of citizens have confidence in the President in Ménaka, 62.6% in Gao and 41.2% in Kidal, where the majority, i.e. 47% claim to have no confidence in him.

The results of the survey indicate that a great majority of the citizens of Ménaka (92.2%), and Gao (75.8%) have confidence in the Government and Prime Minister¹. This contrasts with a minority of 26.9% in Kidal.

Asked about what should be the priorities for the government, the responses are almost identical in the three zones: fight against corruption and injustice (81.5%), flight against insecurity (76.2%), fight against youth unemployment (60.6%), reconcile the Malians (60,2%), ensure the return of displaced persons and refugees (53.2%), negotiate with the armed groups (52.6%), improve the school system (52.1%).

¹ At that time Prime Minister Moussa Mara.

On the Negotiations

A significantly larger number of inhabitants of Kidal (94.6%) are in favor of negotiations between the government and armed groups than in Gao (79.7%) and Ménaka (63.5%). In Ménaka, more than one-third of the population (36%) are opposed to the government negotiating with armed groups.

More than 80% of the respondents in each area surveyed, irrespective of gender and location, have confidence in the negotiators. A majority of respondents in Kidal (51%) consider that the signatories to the Ouagadougou Accord (MNLA, HCUA and MAA) should be the ones to participate in the negotiations. On the contrary, in Ménaka more than 90% are favorable to the participation of the entire spectrum of armed groups (including GATIA, CPA, CMFPR, MPSA).

With regard to the participation of the civil society, the majority of the inhabitants of Ménaka (58.2%) are favorable, compared to a large minority of 42.7% in Gao and very few persons (10.4%) in Kidal.

Regarding the content of the negotiations, in Gao and Ménaka the development of the regions of the North (75.9% Gao and 93.0 % Ménaka) and disarmament of rebel groups (77.8% Gao / 78.2 % Ménaka) are considered as priorities, whereas in Kidal only a quarter of the respondents (24.3%) are considering development of the regions as an issue for negotiations. A much smaller group (10.3%) considers the disarmament of rebel groups an issue for negotiation. Instead, emphasis is placed in Kidal to include the issues of a special status of the regions (37.3%) and the independence of the Northern regions (30.5%).

Among the polled populations of Gao and Ménaka only a very small minority would like to include the issue of independence into the negotiations (2.3 % and 0.87 % respectively). 14.78% in Ménaka and 15.3% in Gao are favorable of including the issue of a special status for the Northern regions into the negotiations.

The issue most frequently mentioned as not negotiable by the majority of respondents in the three regions is the preservation of the territorial integrity of Mali (Gao 85.7%; Kidal 59.1%; Ménaka 87.0%).

The great majority of residents of Kidal (81%) are confident that the negotiations will result in a peace accord, as against 62% in Gao and 68% in Ménaka.

On dialogue and reconciliation

The overall majority (91.43%) in all three regions considers that reconciliation between the different social groups is necessary.

Regarding the process of dialogue and reconciliation, the results of the survey show that respondents in Kidal have more confidence in armed groups which have signed the Ouagadougou Agreement (64 %), and traditional chiefs (52.3%) than in the Malian government (32.5 %). On the contrary, in Gao and Ménaka the population has more confidence in religious leaders (Gao 72.35 % and Ménaka 89%) and in the Malian government (Gao 70.4%; Ménaka 81.0%) than in the armed groups (Gao 19.5%, Ménaka 7.47%).

A great majority of respondents believe that reconciliation should incorporate dialogue and pardon between the communities in the Northern regions (74.3%), and truth and justice for the negative acts committed during the conflict (65.34%).

A great majority of respondents believes that investigations or trials should be conducted on crimes committed by armed groups (70.9 %) and by Malian armed forces (65.1%).

In all three regions, the majority of respondents consider that the state should improve the population's access to basic social services (66.5%), security (61.1%) and the fight against corruption (57.1%) in order to regain confidence of its citizens.

On the impact of the crisis on cohabitation of the social groups

The majority of respondents in Gao (53.5%) and Ménaka (59%) believe the crisis will have a negative impact on cohabitation between the refugee populations and the locals, as against 51% in Kidal who feel that it will have no effect on cohabitation among these groups.

On a sustainable reconciliation between the communities

A large majority of the population surveyed in the three towns believe in the chances of a sustainable reconciliation among the communities of the North as well as between them and the communities of the South of Mali. About one-third of respondents in Kidal (32.8%) claim not to believe in reconciliation between the communities of the North and South of Mali.

On corruption

Almost the entire populations of Gao, Kidal and Ménaka irrespective of gender consider the level of corruption as high (96.75 %). Out of those 69 % believe corruption is "very high" and 28 % consider it as "high".

Level of insecurity

The overwhelming majority in all three locations state a high level of insecurity. Only 8.8% qualify the insecurity as low or very low compared to 90.8% who consider the level of insecurity as very high or high. All respondents in Ménaka indicated a high level of insecurity.

On securing the Northern regions

Half of the respondents in Gao (50.4%) have a very positive or positive opinion of the Malian armed forces and their mission to secure the country, compared to only 40.3% in Ménaka and 3.4% in Kidal.

The majority (about 60%) of the residents of Kidal and Gao appreciate the French military intervention (SERVAL and BARKHANE) to secure the northern regions and to fight terrorism. In Ménaka only a minority of 32.6% considers their intervention very positive or positive whereas 8.6% judge it very negative.

In all three regions, only 6.2% have a very positive impression of MINUSMA and only 21.8% a positive appreciation. 29.87% consider MINUSMA a bit positive and 30.39 % consider MINUSMA negative. The general impression of MINUSMA is better in Gao and Kidal than in Ménaka, where only (38.2%) have a rather positive appreciation of the MINUSMA.

In terms of nationality, a great majority of respondents in the three towns have confidence in the Chadian military (86.1%), followed by the Nigerian (58.3%), French (55.3%), Chinese (55.1 %), Dutch (52.5 %) and American (50.6%) military.

A great majority of the population surveyed in the three localities have confidence in religious leaders (84%) and village chiefs (73%) to secure their towns. Only the populations of Kidal have great confidence (75%) in the armed groups and local militia. Representatives of the state are lacking overwhelmingly confidence. Only 31% have confidence in the mayors, only 26.7 % in the police, 23.0% in the gendarmerie, 27.6% in armed forces and 42.7% in customs officials.

On sustainable management of the post-crisis and sustainable reconstruction

In all the zones surveyed, more than half of the respondents are of the opinion that not all the armed combatants should be reintegrated into the army or into the civil service. In Gao and Kidal, a large minority of 45% feels that the armed combatants should be reintegrated, compared to 16.5 % who believe so in Ménaka.

On the current economic situation

In all zones, nearly half of the respondents are unsatisfied with the economic situation of Mali. Overall 1.3% are “very satisfied” and 14.4% “satisfied”. However, dissatisfaction with the economic development is much more notable in Kidal (62.2%) and Ménaka (49.2%) than in Gao (31.7%).

On the organization of municipal elections

In Gao and Ménaka, more than half of the respondents i.e. 60% and 66% respectively, believe that local elections should be organized immediately after the negotiations. This opinion is shared by only 37% of the population of Kidal where more than one quarter feels that local elections do not concern them.

On regionalization

In Gao and Ménaka, a majority of respondents, 64% and 60.7% respectively, consider regionalization as a solution to their local development problems, whereas in Kidal, more than 70% of respondents believe that regionalization will not help to improve the development of their region.

On payment of more taxes for the development of the Northern regions

The majority of the population of Gao (71.7%) is in favor of paying more taxes in order to sustain the development of their region, whereas only a minority, albeit large, agrees in Ménaka (48.6%) and Kidal (39.7%).

On Mali's major challenges

According to nearly all the populations surveyed in the three towns, insecurity (94.5%), unemployment (80.6%) education (79.7%) health (78.6%), injustice (73.64%), corruption (67.8%) and inequality (65.1%) are the major challenges that have to be tackled.