



IEDA Relief

2013 ANNUAL COUNTRY REPORT – MALI

Bamako, Mali

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*Prepared by
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ABOUT IEDA RELIEF

International Emergency and Development Aid (IEDA Relief) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, international non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Houston, Texas. IEDA Relief is registered in the United States of America and in Belgium and is incorporated in the US state of Texas under the Federal Tax ID (EIN/Tax ID Number: 26-3977484).

Since its inception, IEDA Relief has led operations in Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and the Philippines. As of March 2014, IEDA Relief is active in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and the Philippines and maintains regional offices in Dakar, Senegal and Arlington, Virginia.

Mission

The mission of IEDA Relief is to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable people by tackling the underlying causes of poverty so that people can become self-sufficient and achieve their full potential.

Vision

Our vision is to establish a stable environment with sustainable solutions that benefit the population in need. We empower communities to become self-sufficient and to decide how to improve and save lives while bringing about change that is culturally acceptable and building upon existing efforts and successes.

Values

We are committed to working in the most difficult conditions to reach the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. We believe that investing in people and their abilities to support themselves and their families is critical to the long-term process of reducing poverty. We work to empower communities in conflict-torn and disaster-affected areas to save lives, sustain human dignity and restore a healthy community. We serve vulnerable people in need, regardless of their belief, culture, language, custom, sect, ethnicity and/or political affiliation.

IEDA RELIEF IN MALI

Statement from the Head of Mission



IEDA Relief's unique organizational model allowed our staff to be present and alongside citizens in the hardest-hit areas of the north, many of which were still unstable, to identify incidents of post-conflict protection, as well as ensure the continual monitoring and follow-up of incidents of protection that have been documented from the 2012-2013 conflict. IEDA Relief is therefore on the humanitarian "front-line", creating and reinforcing an early warning system that shares critical and timely information to ensure the rapid mobilization and effective response of humanitarian actors for victims of human rights abuses.

IEDA Relief Mali's protection activities for 2013 focused on timely identification, documentation, and referral of victim of protection incidents to specialized actors that could provide direct service. We also carried out information and awareness campaigns to reinforce prevention at the community level using facilitated focus group discussion, video projection and mass awareness campaigns on human rights and the importance of peaceful coexistence. The project assessed the level of access to basic rights and services in refugees' and IDPs' areas of origin and shared this information with the humanitarian actors for better programming and targeting.

IEDA Relief's highly flexible program model enabled us to rapidly deploy deep into the field to respond to the Malian crisis and provide critical and timely information on protection issues. Our recruitment model, which privileges the use of local staff from each region that have an understanding of the unique characteristics of the communities where we work, enabled us to access conflict-prone areas and document protection issues. The cultural and geographic proximity of our monitors to project beneficiaries has allowed our teams to detect and document incidents of protection that would otherwise have gone unaddressed.

- David Hershberg, Head of Mission 2013

About the country program

IEDA Relief has been present in Mali since March 2013, when the organization led a multi-sectorial assessment in the northern regions affected by armed conflicts. In April 2013, IEDA Relief signed a sub-agreement with the UNHCR for the implementation of the Protection Monitoring and Profiling of Zones of Return in the North of Mali project. In 2013, IEDA Relief employed over 110 international and national staff and had field offices in the northern regions of Gao, Timbuktu, Segou, and Kidal, with a coordination office located in Bamako.

Operational context

The end of 2013 found Mali recovering from a complex humanitarian emergency that significantly impacted the social and political life of the country. In January 2012, armed conflict broke out between rebels of the National Liberation Movement of Azawad (MNLA) and the Malian army. MNLA acted with the support of known terrorist groups, including Movement for the Oneness of Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Ansar Dine, and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). On March 22nd, 2012, the Malian army staged a coup on the government, which caused mass confusion and political uncertainty. Shortly thereafter, the Islamists sidelined the MNLA and imposed varying degrees of theocratic governance, including Sharia law, on local populations. During the occupation, rebels committed atrocities against

the civilians in the occupied territory, triggering massive displacement of the population both within the country and outside of Mali in neighboring countries such as Burkina Faso, Niger, Algeria, Mauritania, etc. In January 2013, French troops and a multinational peacekeeping force reconquered the north and dispelled terrorist elements from major population centers.

As Mali recovered from conflict and stability was gradually restored, the country faced a new set of challenges compounding the post-conflict reality. Northern and central Mali has seen large movements of spontaneous returns of both refugees from neighboring countries, as well as IDPs from southern Mali. As of December 2013, an estimated number of 140,000 IDPs returned to their areas of origin and 14,000 Malian refugees returned from neighboring countries¹. IEDA Relief's rapid community appraisals of zones of return carried out in 2013 demonstrated the precarious conditions and limited social services many returnees face when they return to their communities. Moreover, due to persistent insecurity in areas of return, IDPs and returnees were faced with human right abuses and threats such as arbitrary arrests, kidnapping, unexploded remnants of war, racial discrimination, lack of access to documentation, and threat of ethnic conflict.

Stories from the field: San

I joined the IEDA Relief Mali family in June 2013. As a new staff member, I was surprised to find that the organization was present in areas where no other humanitarian actor was operating. I found a team of committed individuals working to ensure people affected by armed conflicts had access to basic services, even in the insecure areas of Northern Mali. It makes me really proud to work for IEDA Relief because of the commitment I see in my colleagues to provide aid to those in need, wherever they are, and the light of hope that our work inspires in the people that we help. The entire Mali mission works as a single unit determined to improve the lives of our beneficiaries. After all we are just one big family that is doing our best to assist those in need.

San M. Njona, Information and Database Assistant, IEDA Relief Mali

Project activities

During the ten months of occupation, the population of northern Mali experienced a traumatic period of generalized insecurity and grave human rights violations committed primarily by groups of coalition rebels. These abuses included summary and extrajudicial executions; gender based violence and deliberate gender-based discrimination and deprivation of health, education, property, and economic opportunities; forced recruitment of children for sexual exploitation and trafficking, abduction, and

¹ UNHCR Mali, January 2014.

engagement in armed conflict; deprivation of the rights of freedom of expression and assembly; and looting, occupation and destruction of public infrastructure (schools, hospitals, government buildings). These arbitrary acts of violence against civilians triggered the significant displacement of northern populations both within the country and outside of Mali's borders in search for protection. At the end of July, 2013 it was estimated more than 521,651 individuals were displaced, including 342,033 IDPs and 175,627 refugees in neighboring countries.²

In Mali, IEDA Relief projects focused on two main activities in 2013:

- i. **Protection Monitoring**, which included working at the circle, commune, and village level with citizens in the northern regions who have been affected by the 2012-2013 conflict. We carried out information campaigns on human rights and peaceful coexistence through film, radio, and focus group discussions. Our protection monitors identified, monitored, and referred cases of human rights abuses to the authorities and international humanitarian actors for appropriate response.
- ii. **Profiling of zones of return** consisted of carrying out rapid community assessments and other ad hoc evaluations to inform the UNHCR and the humanitarian community on the conditions and the availability of basic services in the communities affected by the conflict. The project shared findings of these evaluations on the security conditions, level of availability of basic services like access to water, and functionality of public institutions such as hospitals and schools with the UNHCR and international humanitarian community for appropriate and targeted interventions. This information also enabled the UNHCR to better inform the refugee population and IDPs so that could make informed decisions on their voluntary return.



Film event promoting peaceful coexistence in Sankore, Timbuktu

Impact

In 2013, IEDA Relief teams identified and documented 204 protection-related incidents. Victims of these incidents were referred to service delivery structures for appropriate responses and IEDA Relief Protection Monitors continuously monitored their situation to ensure effective response. To assure a more dynamic

² Mali Protection Cluster, Revised Strategy 2014.

presence at the community-level in order to monitor incidents of protection and share critical information with beneficiaries, IEDA Relief also opened and ran 26 consultation centers (*centres d'écoute*) at the community level in each region wherein IEDA Relief field staff carry out sensitization activities, protection incidents documentation and victim referral.

Our protection monitoring activities contributed to the establishment of an early warning mechanism that continuously collected and shared disaggregated data on protection incidents, mobilizing various actors for timely, appropriate and effective response to protection issues. The database on incidents of protection generated by the project allowed the UNHCR and other humanitarian actors to analyze and better understand the trends of different protection issues and thus better orient their advocacy and protection interventions.

Highlights of IEDA Relief's impacts in Mali in 2013 include:

- IEDA Relief's carried out a widespread media campaign on human rights utilizing local radio stations and traveling throughout communities in the northern region to project films on peaceful coexistence, reconciliation, and human rights for all. In total, we carried out **864 radio transmissions** on local radios and **60 film projections** that reached **100,000 people**.
- In 2013, IEDA Relief organized **229 focus groups** and sensitization sessions on the conditions in communities of return. These sessions reached a total number of **122,985 people** affected by armed conflict. We also carried out rapid needs assessments in **447 villages** in northern Mali and shared the reports with the UNHCR and the humanitarian community to help mobilize resources for people affected by conflicts.

In summary, this project has enabled vulnerable people to find solutions to their protection problems as identified by IEDA-Relief protection team in the most conflict affected areas in the north of Mali. The project served as a source of reliable information for displaced persons enabling them to make informed choice on their voluntary return to their areas of origin. The project also helped mobilize support for basic services in return areas.

Number of beneficiaries:

Regions	IDPs	Returnees
Timbuktu	43,959	(data unavailable)
Gao	47,562	
Segou	12,139	
Kidal	34,092	
TOTAL	137,752	14,271

The project activities also benefited non-displaced people that were victims of human rights violations.

Partnership and program funding

IEDA Relief is a lead implementing partner for Protection Monitoring and Profiling of Zones of Return under a Sub-agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) since April 2013. IEDA Relief Mali is an active member of the Protection Cluster and a key member of the Protection Monitoring Technical Working group.

Challenges, gaps, & proposed activities for future intervention

Challenges

- **Logistics** The main challenges during the project implementation in 2013 were related to the vast distances that must be traversed for operations; in total, the northern regions include an area in excess of 750,000 km². More resources are required to ensure broader protection and strengthen IEDA Relief's presence at the community level.
- **Security** Though the security situation has improved since 2013, there are several areas where IEDA Relief operates which remain unstable and undergo periodic attacks from bandits and armed groups. Our access to these areas is hindered at times, and requires attentiveness and prudence for our teams on the ground.
- **Need for more operational partners** During project implementation in 2013 we often found that, although protection cases are identified and reported by our teams, there is often not another humanitarian actor in the area to whom we may report the incident for follow-up, direct service. More advocacy is needed for the deployment of humanitarian partners specializing in area such as GBV and child protection who can directly take on these cases and provide access to justice. Despite limited resources, a concerted effort to strengthen the coordination between implementing partners of the UNHCR and other UN agencies will ensure

Stories from the field: Oumar

I knew this region well before the political crisis of 2012. The drought had weakened the socio-economic fabric of an already vulnerable population. Thus, when armed conflicts erupted in 2012, it plunged the region of Kidal into an unprecedented era of extreme poverty. It was then that we started monitoring informally, I would say. Watching people bury their loved ones – those who once helped maintain a sense of balance in these harsh living conditions – on a daily basis troubled me deeply. I felt I needed to do more.

I was recruited by IEDA Relief in 2013 to take part in their protection monitoring activities in partnership with UNHCR. My job is to educate people about their rights, identify and document protection issues, and advocate for vulnerable populations' access to assistance. Any information that beneficiaries agree to share is due to confidence in me and in IEDA Relief's work, and the hope that sharing information will help resolve the challenges they face. The needs of these populations are enormous, including lack of access to basics like water, food, health care, and education. IEDA Relief's monitoring activities reinforce the hope of positive change, but many reported issues remain unanswered due to a lack of humanitarian funding for this region. I can only provide a limited amount of help to the community myself, and it is frustrating to people lose trust in me when I can't promise direct results. I thank IEDA Relief for its work so far, and I appeal to men and women of good will everywhere to join IEDA Relief's efforts to relieve the misery of these people. They have suffered for too long.

- **Oumar Ag Ahmoudene**, Protection Monitoring Officer, Essouk, Kidal

effective care for a population that remains vulnerable. Adequate assistance for this population will, in the end, be the difference that ensures a peaceful and sustainable resolution to conflict.

Proposed activities for future interventions

In addition to our current protection activities in 2014, much potential exists for IEDA Relief Mali to capitalize on its widespread geographical presence in the north of Mali, as well as the rich contextual knowledge within our staff of most vulnerable populations' needs. IEDA Relief is in a unique position to develop strategies to provide effective and sustainable responses for post-conflict recovery such as improvement of access to basic social services, peaceful coexistence and community re-integration, and strengthening socio-economic activities. Selected project ideas and concept notes that have been developed include:

- **Child protection:** Improve the child protective environment through the rehabilitation of schools in post-conflict communities in the circle of Ansongo and Menaka in the region Gao. Focus on increasing an access to documentation (birth certificates) for children from repatriated households, born in exile.
- **Livelihoods and early recovery:** Build economic resilience of conflict affected communities in northern Mali and facilitate livelihood restoration through income generating activities and skills transfer.
- **Peaceful coexistence and reintegration:** Implement 'Sport for Peace' program to promote early recovery from armed conflict in communities in the north of Mali by using sports as a positive vehicle to connect and successfully reintegrate youth aged 10-25 to their communities.

Recommendations

- Diversify donor base to allow for project funds to retain qualified national and expat staff and create program continuity.

The Mali Country Team 2013

Country management team

David Hershberg, *Head of Mission*

Claude Chofi, *Protection & Program Officer*

Administrative & program staff

Benjamin Mambo, *Information Management and Database Officer*

Kakidja Diara, *Accountant*

Field management team

Siaka Soulama, *Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Head of Field Office in Gao*

Guillaume Coulibalay, *Acting Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Head of Field Office in Timbuktu*

Coumba Samake *Protection Assistant, Acting Head of Field Office in Segou*

Manayet Ag Mohamed, *Protection Assistant, Acting Head of Field Office in Kidal*