

Mali

Country Overview

Politics

Mali is a landlocked, semi-presidential republic in West Africa. In the aftermath of a coup in 2011, rebel groups expelled the Malian military from the country's three northern regions and permitted Islamic militants to establish strongholds.¹ Political instability caused the migration of hundreds of thousands of northern Malians to the south and neighboring countries which contributed to widespread food shortages. With the help of an international military intervention, the northern regions were re-taken in 2013.

In the country's most recent election in 2013, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita won the presidency in an election which was deemed to be "free and fair" by international observers.²

Economy

Mali is classified by the World Bank as a low-income economy.³ Mali has a relatively undiversified economy, leaving it vulnerable to commodity price fluctuations in gold and agricultural exports like cotton—the country's main sources of revenue.⁴ In addition, other economic vulnerabilities include access to electricity and infrastructure, which limit production capacity.⁵ Over the last decade, Mali's GDP growth rate has been around 4.5 percent but growth accelerated to 7.0 percent in 2014 and remained competitive at 6.0 and 5.4 for 2015 and 2016 respectively.⁶

It is estimated that 80 percent of the labor force is engaged in agricultural activities.⁷ The other 20 percent of the labor force is engaged in industry and services.⁸ The unemployment rate in 2015 was estimated at 30 percent.⁹

The government of Mali is looking to increase investment throughout the country, particularly in the north, in the mining and renewable energy sectors but also in infrastructure, agriculture and tourism.¹⁰



Social/Human Development

Mali is considered one of the most impoverished countries in the world. Poverty rates vary regionally, with 90 percent of all poor living in rural areas in the south where population density is the highest.¹¹ With a population that is expected to double by 2035, access to resources and delivery of services over the country's vast territory remains a development challenge.¹²

Mali is ethnically diverse. The largest ethnic group is the Bambara (34.1 percent), followed by the Fulani (14.7 percent), Sarakole (10.8 percent), Dogon (8.9 percent) and Malinke (8.7 percent). Other minority ethnic groups include the Bob (2.9 percent), Songhai (1.6 percent) and Tuareg (0.9 percent).¹³ The U.S. Department of State reported that men and boys of Songhai ethnicity were subject to the practice of debt bondage in the salt mines of Taoudeni, located in the north of Mali.¹⁴ It was also reported that Bellah, or so-called "black Tuaregs," were subject to forced labor in the eastern and northern regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal.¹⁵ There were reports of slave masters kidnapping the children of their Bellah slaves as masters viewed them as their property.¹⁶

U.S. Department of State TIP Report Summary (2017)

U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 3

According to the *Trafficking in Persons Report*, trafficking and trafficking risk was noted in potentially exported supply chains including mining (especially artisanal gold and salt) and agriculture (especially rice).

Read the full TIP Report at: <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2017/271237.htm>

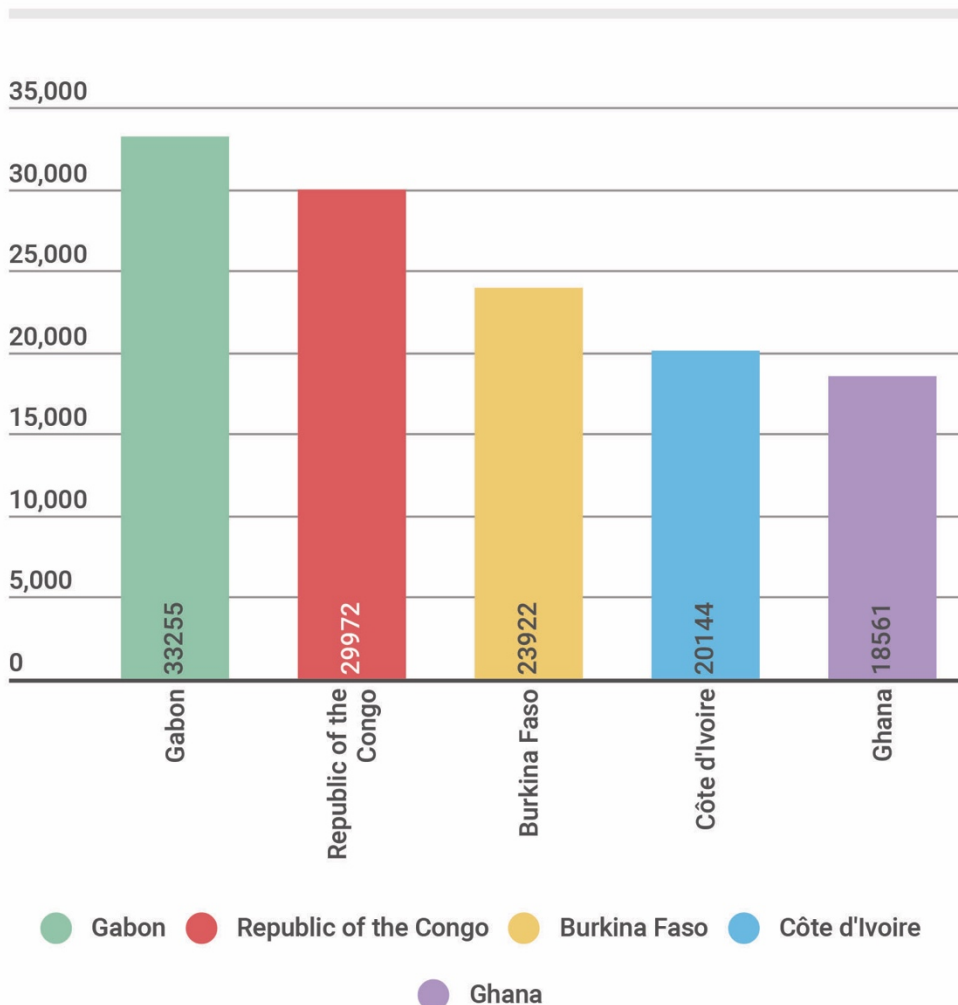
Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

Mali has negative net migration.¹⁷ According to 2015 data, migrants destined for Mali mostly came from Gabon, Congo and Burkina Faso. In addition, large populations of migrants came from Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, France, Guinea, Mauritania, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.¹⁸ According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Mali is characterized by migration trends including cultural practices that promote migration as a rite of passage for young men, to circular and seasonal migration including pastoral and nomadic movements.¹⁹



There were an estimated 100,247 persons of concern in Mali at the end of 2015 of whom an estimated 17,512 people were refugees and 301 people were asylum seekers. There were an estimated 36,690 internally displaced persons in the country at the end of 2015.²⁰ There were 13,539 registered refugees in Mali of Afro-Mauritanian descent who had been expelled from Mauritania in 1989.²¹

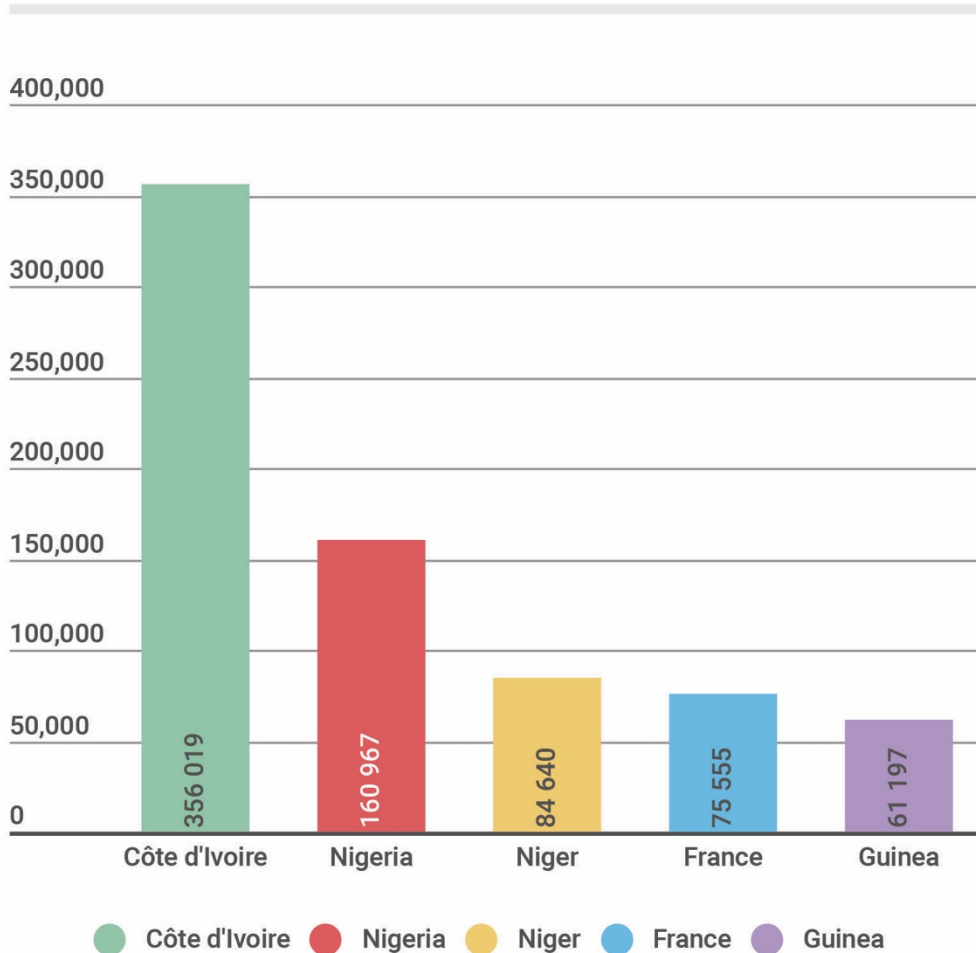
Migrants to Mali



The top destination country for migrants from Mali is, by far, Côte d'Ivoire, followed by Nigeria. During the conflict between 2012 and 2013, most Malians who took refuge abroad remained in the region, destined for Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso. Mali's role as a transit country for regional migration flows and illegal migration to Europe has increased since the 1990s.²²



Migrants from Mali

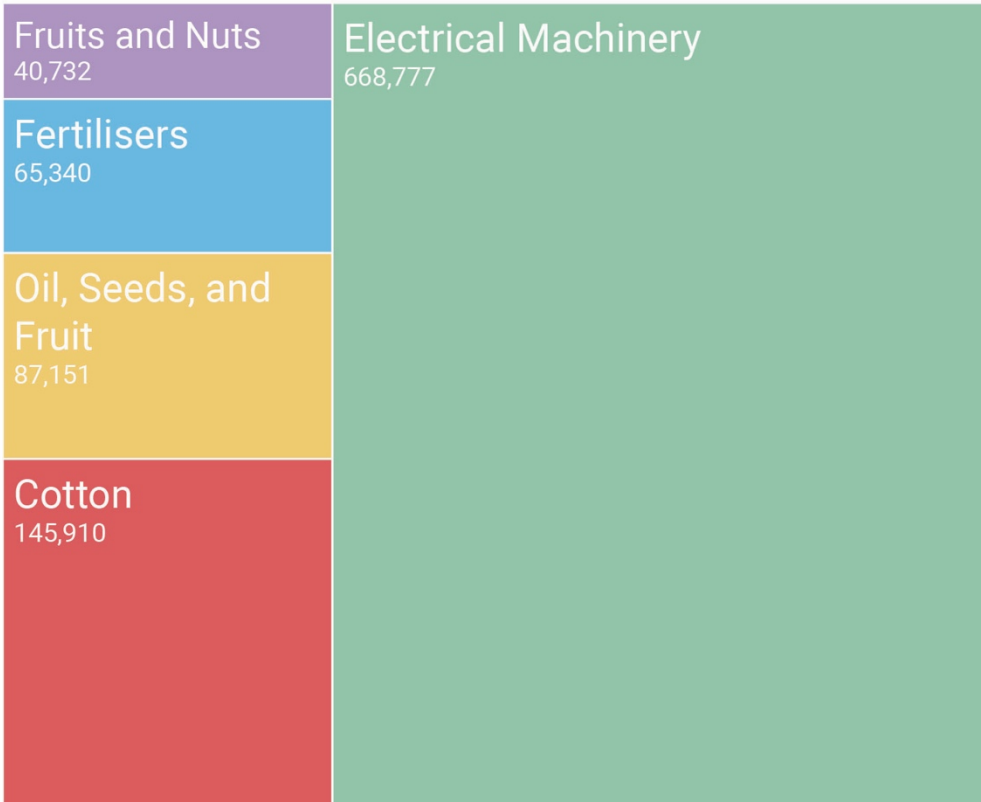


Exports and Trade

Mali's top exports in 2016 include gold, cotton, oil seeds, fertilizers and edible fruit and nuts.²³ Other top exports include machinery, lac, raw hides, preparations of vegetables and wood.



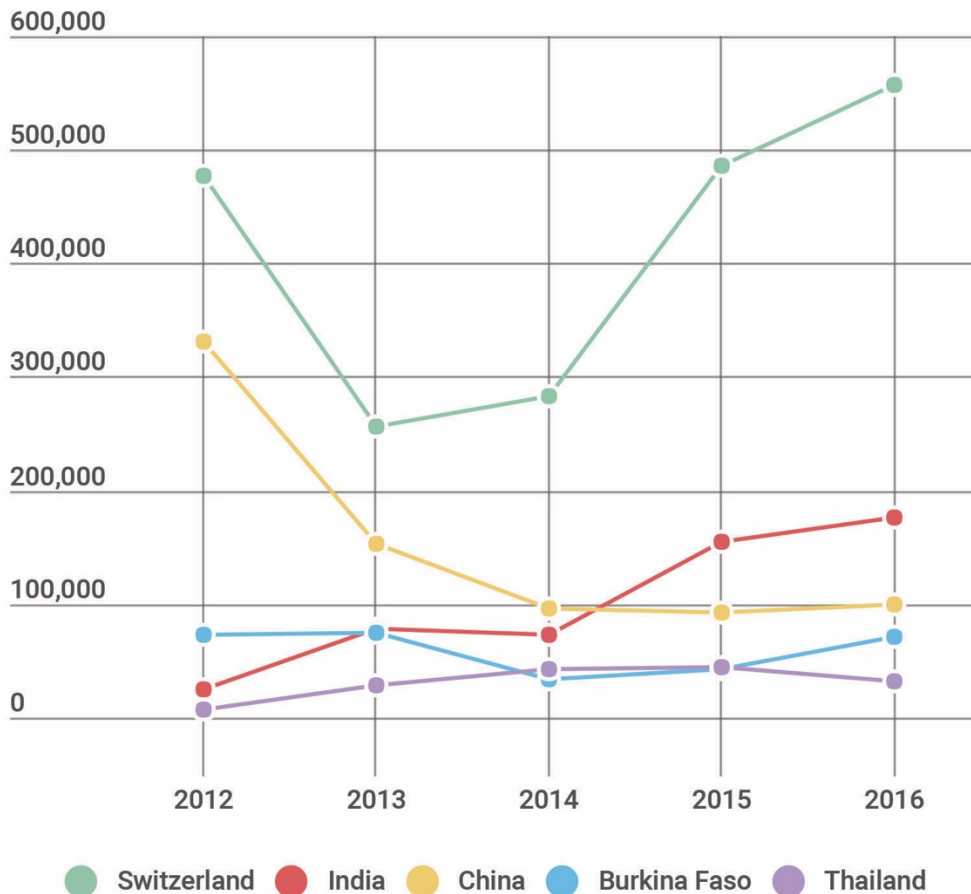
Top Commodity Exports (USD/Thousands)



The top importer of all goods from Mali is Switzerland, followed by India, China and Burkina Faso.²⁴



Mali Export Partners (USD/Thousands)



Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis

Legal/Policy Risk Factors

Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers' Rights

Freedom of Association

The constitution permits workers the right to form unions and to strike, yet this right is limited regarding essential services and compulsory arbitration.²⁵ The constitution also provides workers the right to bargain collectively, although there are restrictions placed on these rights. The government has



discretionary power over the registration of unions and may deny trade union registration on arbitrary and ambiguous grounds.²⁶

The law prohibits anti-union discrimination and provides for reinstatement of workers fired for union activity. However, it has been reported that the government does not enforce relevant laws and penalties for violating anti-union discrimination provisions are not sufficient to deter violations. Despite the government's inability to consistently respect workers' rights with regard to freedom of association and collective bargaining, workers have persisted.²⁷

Working Conditions

The minimum wage is CFA 28,465 (USD 48) per month but this is reserved for formal workers. Most of the labor force is employed in the informal or subsistence sectors where such provisions do not apply.²⁸

The legal workweek is 40 hours; for the agricultural sector, it ranges between 42 and 48 hours. The law applies to all workers, including migrants and domestics, but it is reported to be routinely ignored in the informal sector.²⁹

The Ministry of Labor and Public Service is unable to uphold these standards effectively due to a lack of resources, and, in the northern region of the country, due to the government's suspension of services following the 2012 occupation of the region by terrorist organizations.³⁰ The U.S. Department of State has also reported that "labor rights are generally not observed" because of the size of the informal sector and as a result of the formal sector implementing informal hiring practices to reduce employee fees like social security.³¹

Discrimination

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, disability, religion, political opinion, national origin, citizenship, social origin, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, age, or language, but the U.S. Department of State reports that these laws are not always enforced and that discrimination occurs in practice on ethnic grounds against Tuaregs.³² The Labor Code mandates equal pay for men and women for work of equal value.

Forced Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor yet those who are found to have used persons without their consent are subject to penalties and ten years' imprisonment, subject to hard labor.³³ Penalties are seldom enforced and the government has made minimal effort to eradicate forced labor.³⁴



Child Labor

The constitution of Mali provides that children are entitled to tuition-free, universal and compulsory education from ages seven through 16.³⁵ The minimum age for employment is 15 but employment may occur at age 14 with certain exceptions. According to the Education and Policy Data Center, 76 percent of girls and 56 percent of boys are out of school by age 16, commensurate with the age at which compulsory education is completed. However, by the age of 15, 70 percent of girls and 53 percent of boys are out of school at the minimum age for employment.³⁶

With regard to hazardous work, children under 18 are not allowed to be employed in what are deemed to be hazardous activities unless they receive adequate specific instruction or vocational training in the activity and are between the ages of 16 and 17.³⁷ However, the U.S. Department of State has noted that the law conflicts with the protections provided in the Hazardous Occupations List, as it is possible for children the age of 14 to be working in hazardous conditions.³⁸

In Mali, child labor is prevalent, especially in its worst forms. The U.S. Department of State reports that 46 percent of children in Mali engage in child labor.³⁹ It has been reported that child labor is concentrated in the agricultural sector, for commodities such as rice and cotton, domestic services and other sectors of the informal economy.⁴⁰ The U.S. Department of State notes that the most pressing issue regarding child labor is children's employment in artisanal mining sector, where some 20,000 children worked under harsh and hazardous conditions.

Civil Society Organizations

Freedom House reports that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate freely and without state interference. However, international observers report that larger, more established NGOs may have ties with the political elite, which diminishes the ability of smaller NGOs to compete for government funding.⁴¹



Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants

Conventions	Status
ILO 29 Forced Labor	In force
ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize	In force
ILO 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining	In force
ILO 100 Equal Remuneration	In force
ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labor	In force
ILO 111 Discrimination	In force
ILO 138 Minimum Age	In force
ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies	In force
ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor	In force
ILO 97 Migration for Employment	Not ratified

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Immigration Policies Limiting the Employment Options or Movement of Migrants

While there is not conclusive evidence of what policies impact employment options or movement of all migrants, it was reported that in March 2015 that 8,000 refugee children born in Mali were allowed access to public services, sign employment contracts, buy and sell land, set up companies and borrow from banks.⁴³

Political Risk Factors

Political Instability or Conflict

Mali scores a 92.9 in the 2017 Fragile States Index, placing it in the “Alert” category, a slight improvement from the country’s score in 2016 which was a 95.2.⁴⁴ However, instability spread throughout the country as a result of the proliferation of armed groups who carried out attacks, including the killing of 17 soldiers and wounding of 35 others on an army base in the country.⁴⁵ Continued violence in the north extended the country’s state of emergency until March 2017 and impeded the implementation of the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement.⁴⁶



According to the UN, due to ongoing fighting and insecurity in the regions of Gao, Kidal, Ségou and Timbuktu, 296 out of 2,380 schools in the area were closed with no alternatives provided.⁴⁷ Armed groups occupied some schools.⁴⁸

The U.S. Department of State reports that during rebel occupation of northern regions, armed groups recruited child combatants and children remained involved with these groups during the 2016 reporting year.⁴⁹

Level of Corruption

The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2016 scores Mali as a 32 out of 100, where a 0 signals “Highly Corrupt” and a 100 signals “Very Clean”. Mali is ranked 116 out of 176 countries on that same index.⁵⁰ The U.S. Department of State reports that officials engage in corruption with impunity and that corruption is pervasive in “all sectors of the administration.”⁵¹

Level of Crime and Violence

The World Economic Forum *Global Competitiveness Report* ranks Mali at 113/138 and 114/138 for business costs of crime and violence and organized crime, respectively.⁵² The U.S. Department of State reports that the instability in northern regions has permitted terrorist groups to inflict violence on civilians and security forces.⁵³ Peacekeepers were also a target of armed groups, which resulted in the killing of 25 peacekeepers and six civilian contractors working for the United Nations.⁵⁴

State Persecution

Malian women reportedly do not have the right to pass their nationality on to their children in instances where the children’s father is not a Malian citizen.⁵⁵ Per United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 64 percent of Malian children do not have birth certificates.⁵⁶ Lack of birth certificates may impact access to government resources and services, which may contribute to children’s economic need to engage in child labor.

Socio-Economic Risk Factors

Level of National Economic Development

Mali scores in the low human development category, according to the UN Human Development Index, with a rank of 175 out of 188 countries and a score of 0.442.⁵⁷ Most migrants from Mali are destined for Côte d’Ivoire or Nigeria, who have a comparatively higher HDIs of 0.474 and 0.527 respectively.⁵⁸



Level and Extent of Poverty

Mali has a high level of poverty, with 78.4 percent of the population determined to be living in multi-dimensional poverty according to the UN. When adjusted for inequality, the Human Development Index score falls to 0.293, a loss of 33.7 percent due to inequality.⁵⁹ About three million people face food insecurity in Mali and the situation is exacerbated by armed groups who impede access to humanitarian assistance and healthcare.⁶⁰

Degree of Gender Inequality

In Mali, women face economic discrimination due to societal norms, with particular impact in terms of access to education and employment. The UNDP Gender Inequality Index (GII) scored Mali as a 0.689 and ranked it 156 out of 159 countries in the 2015 index.⁶¹ Girls had lower school enrollment rates compared to boys enrollment due to poverty and cultural preference to educate boys, early marriage of girls and sexual harassment of girls.⁶² There is a disparity between men and women with respect to secondary levels of education; 7.3 percent of adult women have completed secondary education compared to 16.2 percent of men.⁶³

In Mali, men and women legally have equal opportunity to hold title to land through the 2000 Land Tenure Law. To further bolster equality in access to land, the government implemented the Agricultural Law of 2006 which ensures the promotion of gender equality in the agricultural sector, especially among vulnerable groups.⁶⁴ Despite these measures, the laws are not strongly enforced as most Malian women's access to land is subject to customary or religious law, where men enjoy primary rights to land.⁶⁵ Regarding non-land assets, men and women are constitutionally granted the same rights, although this is not practiced in reality due to discrimination and women's lack of knowledge of their rights.

While there are no legal restrictions on women's access to financial services, women have unequal access because of low incomes and inability to provide collateral to access bank loans. Micro-credit programs have improved women's access to credit.⁶⁶

Landlessness and Dispossession

Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced due to conflict in the north. There are 27,250 IDPs in the north, located in Gao, Menaka and Timbuktu. The International Organization for Migration reports that its efforts to reintegrate IDPs will include community stabilization activities, rehabilitation of damaged houses, and promotion of social cohesion.⁶⁷



Environmental Factors

Mali's territory is about 65 percent desert or semi-desert, with the country's average rainfall having dropped by 30 percent since 1998.⁶⁸ The increasing drought – which is thought to be linked to climate change – particularly impacts regions of Northern Mali where political instability can exacerbate challenges in accessing humanitarian aid.⁶⁹ Drought is also contributing to expanding desertification, leaving communities that formerly relied on subsistence agriculture to migrate in search of alternative livelihood options.

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Cotton

Cotton Overview

Cotton in Mali is planted between June and July and harvested between October and December annually.⁷⁰ Nearly 70 percent of the Malian population is employed in agriculture with close to 40 percent of Mali's rural population employed in cotton production.⁷¹ Mali is the largest cotton producer in Africa after Egypt.⁷² Cotton is among Mali's top exports, with raw cotton grossing 197 million dollars and pure woven cotton grossing 119 million dollars in 2015.⁷³ However, despite the cotton's prevalence, many of the smallholder farmers producing cotton experience lack of food and economic security.⁷⁴

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Cotton

The U.S. Department of State has reported that children are trafficked from Mali to neighboring countries to engage in forced labor on cotton and cocoa plantations.⁷⁵ The U.S. Department of Labor reports that cotton is produced with child labor in Mali and that there are instances of worst forms of child labor in other agricultural sectors within the country.⁷⁶

Gold

Gold Overview

Gold is Mali's top export, grossing 570 million dollars in 2015 and accounting for nearly 60 percent of the country's total exports.⁷⁷ Mali is Africa's third largest producer of gold after South Africa and Ghana. Mali's gold sector has expanded far beyond the predictions of industry experts in 2016.⁷⁸ There are several large foreign owned mining operations in Mali.⁷⁹



Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Gold

The U.S. Department of State has reported that boys migrating to Mali from Guinea and Burkina Faso are engaged in forced labor in artisanal gold mines.⁸⁰ The U.S. Department of State has also reported that women and girls are vulnerable to forced labor in gold mining in addition to other sectors.⁸¹ The U.S. Department of Labor's annual report of goods produced with forced and child labor lists that gold is produced with child labor in Mali.⁸² The Department of Labor found that children in Mali are engaged in worst forms of child labor in gold mining. Children are involved in various aspects of the gold mining process, including digging shafts, ore extraction, and mixing gold ore with mercury.⁸³



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Endnotes

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