SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE CRISIS IN NORTH MALI ON DISPLACED PEOPLE

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Johannes Hoogeveen
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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the impact of the 2012 crisis in Mali on internally displaced people, refugees and returnees. It uses information from a face-to-face household survey as well as follow-up interviews with its respondents via mobile phones. This combination was found to present a good and robust way to monitor the impact of conflict on hard-to-reach populations who at times live in areas inaccessible to enumerators. Results indicate that better educated and wealthier households as well as those exposed to less violence fled the crisis. Significant amounts of durable goods (20–60 percent) and animals (75–90 percent were lost and the welfare of the displaced declined considerably as a result of the crisis. Yet over time its impact has diminished. By February 2015, most eligible children were going to school and employment levels and number of meals consumed were at pre-crisis levels. The paper finds that different ethnic groups chose different places of refuge. Depending on location, the narrative of the crisis and the solutions that are envisaged differ diametrically.
Socioeconomic Impact of the Crisis in North Mali on Displaced People

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JEL Classification: I31 General Welfare; I32 Measurement and Analysis of Poverty; O15 migration

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1. Introduction

After two decades of multiparty democracy Mali was viewed as a democratic success story. The fifth presidential elections were scheduled to take place in March 2012 and another peaceful and democratic transfer of power was widely anticipated. Reality was different, however. A secessionist movement sparked by a Kel Tamasheq rebellion led to a political and constitutional crisis culminating in a coup d’etat in March 2012 and an attempt to take over the country by force. The three northern regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal became occupied by various rebel and Islamist factions until early 2013 a coalition composed of the Malian Army, French troops and the ECOWAS-led African-led International Support Missions to Mali (AFISMA) recaptured the occupied areas. Most rebel fighters melted into the civilian population or retreated into the mountains, caves and inhospitable desert terrain. Fighting between the Malian Army and rebel factions broke out again in May 2014 and ever since northern Mali remains insecure and contested.

At the height of the crisis over 500,000 people were displaced, almost half of the population of the north estimated at 1.2 million in 2009. As of October 2014, the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) was estimated at 86,026 and the total number of Malian refugees at 143,471 with around 55,414 residing in Mauritania and 53,491 residing in Niger, 32,771 in Burkina Faso and 1,330 in Algeria.

Socio-economic data on refugees and IDPs are rare and longer-term consequences of displacement on household welfare are not well researched and understood. Data are often limited to the economic impact of refugees on host states and the ways in which refugees and IDPs engage in income-generating activities. Information on returnees, once back in their place of origin, is hardly available. This paper addresses these lacunae by providing data on the welfare of IDPs, refugees and returnees that includes economic impact but also security, social cohesion, education,
trust in the government and its institutions and perspectives on conflict resolution. By analyzing the impact of the crisis on welfare, the consequences of returning home versus remaining in displacement and by comparing immediate with longer term impacts, this paper contributes to the literature on refugee, IDP and returnee populations.

The paper combines data from a face-to-face baseline survey with information collected via mobile phone interviews from respondents identified during the baseline. This innovative approach to data collection makes it possible to collect welfare data with high frequency (monthly) –important in a volatile crisis situation– and allows measuring changes over time. It also permits following displaced and refugee households once they return, even if they return to areas that are inaccessible to enumerators.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the methodology, the sample and sample selection. Section 3 discusses the characteristics of the displaced and returnees, looking specifically at ethnic composition, place of origin, household size, education, asset ownership and employment status. Section 4 considers how the crisis affected food consumption, employment, assets and school attendance. Section 5 is devoted to the specificities of returnees who turn out to be, on aggregate, less affected by the crisis and better off than IDPs or refugees. Section 6 presents the differing views of IDPs, refugees and returnees on what happened during the crisis and prospects for peace. Section 7 concludes the paper.

2. The Listening to Displaced People Survey

The Listening to Displaced People Survey (LDPS) combines a baseline face-to-face survey with mobile phone follow-up interviews. During the baseline survey respondents were identified and information on household and respondent characteristics was collected. Once the baseline interview was completed, respondents were given a mobile phone and started to receive, at monthly intervals, phone interviews from a call center in Bamako. During these phone interviews structured questions were asked about welfare of the household.

Phone interviews are standard practice in developed countries and they are increasingly being used in less developed countries, as the coverage of cell phone networks expands. Not only do these kinds of surveys allow for low cost, high frequency representative data collection (Hoogeveen et
al. 2014), mobile phone surveys also turn out to be remarkably flexible and adaptive. New questions can be introduced on a needs basis and in-depth qualitative interviews can be carried out at a moment’s notice. These qualities make mobile phone surveys well suited for monitoring welfare in volatile environments: they have been used for welfare monitoring during the ebola crisis in Liberia (Himelein 2014) and for welfare monitoring in conflict-affected areas such as South Sudan (Demombynes et al. 2013). Unique about using a mobile phone survey with a displaced, mobile population is that it allows tracking welfare during displacement, and upon return.\(^8\)

Three target populations were identified for the purpose of this survey: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) living in Bamako, refugees in refugee camps in Mauritania and Niger, and returnees in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal, the capitals of regions that bear their names. The sample does not include those who were not displaced by the crisis nor those who returned to places other than the three regional capitals in the North. While the sub-sample of IDPs includes exclusively IDPs in Bamako, and the refugee sub-sample only refugees in Niger and Mauritania, the returnee group includes people who were displaced elsewhere (33%).

The sample size was capped at 501 respondents (distributed as shown in Figure 1). Taking this into account as well as the coverage of the mobile phone network in northern Mali, the survey was

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\(^8\)
implemented in six areas: Bamako, the regional capitals of Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal as well as one refugee camp in Mauritania and one in Niger. Bamako was selected because it is home to a large number of IDPs. The refugee camps were selected to obtain a sample of refugees. Returnees were identified in the regional capitals of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal where the phone network was (still) functional.

The approach to selecting respondents differed by location and depended on the availability of pre-existing population information.

- **Bamako**: Listing information of all households with IDPs was obtained from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Based on this data 10 districts were selected and in each district 10 households were randomly identified.
- **Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal**: No listing data was available and the cities were divided into different sectors. The enumerator was assigned a starting point in a sector, a direction (North, South, East, West) and based on the code of the day\(^9\) the enumerator selected the first household. If the code of the day was 4, the enumerator would choose the 5\(^{th}\) house to conduct the first interview. No more than 6 houses were to be interviewed from one starting point. If 18 interviews had to be conducted, the enumerator was assigned three different points of departure.
- **Mauritania and Niger**: In the refugee camp in Mauritania the same method was followed as in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal. Listing data were available for the camp in Niger, thus a similar methodology to that in Bamako was adopted.
- **The method used to select a target individual within the household (who would also receive follow up interviews by phone) was uniform across the survey. To attain a 50/50 balance, all males or females above the age of 18 in the household were assigned a random birthdate using a prefabricated table. The male or female whose artificial birthday was closest to the actual date was selected as the individual to participate in the survey.**

\(^9\) The code of the day is the sum of the numbers of today’s date but it always has to equal less than 10. For example, Sept 13 = 1+3=4. But if it were Sept 29 = 2+9=11 – which would have to be converted to 1+1=2.
In Bamako, Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal and Mauritania baseline interviews took place between 4 and 23 June 2014. Baseline interviews in Niger were conducted from 1-10 August 2014.\textsuperscript{10} Phone interviews started in August 2014\textsuperscript{11} and are ongoing: for this paper we use those implemented till February 2015. The phone interviews were relatively short (they last about 20-25 minutes) and follow a pre-defined set of questions. Most questions were the same every month but some changed to capture new developments. Upon completion of the phone interview, respondents were rewarded with airtime credit worth approximately $2 (FCFA 1,000).

The baseline survey was conducted shortly after a violent incident in Kidal where on the 21\textsuperscript{st} of May 2014 fighting broke out between the Malian army and rebel groups, which led to the latter retaking control of large parts of the north of Mali. The enumerator team reported that this event might have influenced people’s perceptions about the quality of the Malian army and their confidence in the government. Another issue that may have created biases is that refugees and IDPs may have answered strategically to certain questions hoping this would bring aid or opportunities. The age of the target population is not very exact since many respondents do not know their precise age, but relate it to historical events such as the 1973 drought.

Table 1: Number of Responses and Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDPs</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returnees</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference (n)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate (%)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>99.4</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>99.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{10} Due to difficulties with authorities in the camp in Burkina Faso (which was originally selected for the survey) had to be dropped and replaced by the camp in Niger. This delayed the fieldwork by a few weeks.

\textsuperscript{11} No phone interview was conducted in September 2014 during which the data collection team was processing data from the baseline survey and the first monthly phone survey in August. In the refugee camp in Mauritania cell phone coverage is too sporadic and interviews are carried out by an enumerator who relays the responses back to the call center.
All data collection is done by GISSE a research institute in Bamako. The anonymized unit record data of the baseline and the monthly surveys can be downloaded from www.gisse.org. The response rate for the phone interviews has been very high (Table 1): after 6 rounds of monthly interviews the original sample is almost entirely intact. The low level of attrition demonstrates that mobile phone samples can be maintained over prolonged periods without being unduly affected by (non-random) respondent drop-out.

3. Characteristics of the Displaced and Returnee Population

According to the 2009 population census, the two most sizeable ethnic groups in northern Mali are the Songhai (45%) and Kel Tamasheq (32%) --see Table 2. The crisis brought about an ethnic divide, which is reflected in the composition of the three sub-samples. The majority of IDPs and returnees are Songhai (75% and 71% respectively), while the majority of refugees are Kel Tamasheq. Results suggest that the decision of where to flee was determined by ethnicity: Kel Tamasheq and Arabs left the country; Songhai fled towards Bamako.

Table 2: Ethnic composition of IDPs, refugees, returnees in the North

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>IDPs in Bamako (%)</th>
<th>Refugees Niger (%)</th>
<th>Refugees Mauritania (%)</th>
<th>Returnees (%)</th>
<th>Total I+R+R (%)</th>
<th>Ethnic composition of the North (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kel Tamasheq</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peulh</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (n)</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>81</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>220</strong></td>
<td><strong>501</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,268,009</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The ethnic composition of IDPs and returnees is almost identical. This is a reflection of the fact that 94% of returnees were displaced within Mali. Only 6% returned from outside the country. The reason why few returned refugees are in the returnee sub-sample is explained by their place of residence prior to the crisis: only 5% of the refugees in Mauritania and Niger lived in Timbuktu town before their displacement; 2% lived in Gao town and 1% in Kidal town. The remaining 92% lived in 27 different towns and villages in northern Mali, locations not covered by the survey.
Table 3: Place of residence by town of respondents before the crisis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>IDPs in Bamako (%)</th>
<th>Returnees in Gao, Timbuktu &amp; Kidal (%)</th>
<th>Refugees in Niger &amp; Mauritania (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timbuktu Town</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gargando Town (Timbuktu Region)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goundam Town (Timbuktu Region)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gao Town</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outagouna Town (Gao Region)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidal Town</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total %</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total n</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>220</strong></td>
<td><strong>181</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.

The majority of displaced people left in April 2012 when the towns of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu were taken over by rebels (Figure 2). There was another wave of displacement in June of the same year when major fighting broke out between the MNLA and Jihadist factions. A third wave occurred in January 2013 following the French intervention.

**Figure 2: Patterns of Displacement (percent)**

![Figure 2: Patterns of Displacement (percent)](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.
The crisis split many households in that some household members stayed behind while others fled. This holds particularly for IDPs and returnees for whom in 43% of the cases household members remained behind. Refugees on the other hand tended to flee with their whole family and only in 10% of the refugee households did a household member remain behind. When fleeing, household members moved together and rare are the IDPs who report that some members of their household left the country (average 0.4 persons) or the refugees who report that members of their family were displaced inside Mali (average of 0.2 persons).

**Table 4: Household size before and after the crisis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household size prior to conflict</th>
<th>Number of people that were displaced within Mali</th>
<th>Number of people that were displaced to outside Mali</th>
<th>Deaths as a result of the crisis</th>
<th>Household members who stayed behind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDPs</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returnees</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.

Before the crisis the average size of an IDP household was 13 persons (Table 4). Of these 7.7 fled, 2.5 remained, and 1 household member died in 8% of the households. Returnees had an average household size of 8 before the crisis of whom 5.8 became internally displaced, 1.5 remained behind, and 5% reported that 1 to 3 people in their household died. Refugees, with an average household size of 8, reported that on average 7.3 household members left the country, while 0.3 stayed behind. 5% of the refugees reported that 1 to 3 members of their household died.

IDPs and returnees tend to be relatively well educated and their education is more comparable to that of people living in Bamako than to that of people living in northern Mali. The large majority of the population in the North has no formal education but the majority of IDPs and returnees have at least primary education. Refugees on the other hand do have the same level of education as the average person in the North. This can be seen in Figure 3 which presents levels of education for IDPs, refugees and returnees, but also for the population of Bamako and the regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal. The latter information is from the 2009 census.
With regards to ownership of consumer durables, IDPs, refugees and returnees were better endowed than the average citizen of the North (see Figure 4). As was the case for education, they are more comparable to the average citizen in Bamako than to the average citizen in the regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal.

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014 and EMOP 2011 (INSTAT).

The main occupation of IDPs, refugees and returnees before the crisis was commerce (Table 5). This held for over half of the IDPs, 37% of refugees and 34% of returnees. 18% of the refugees
were civil servants compared with 14% of the returnees and 9% of the IDPs. Agriculture was the main occupation of 5% of IDPs, 4% of refugees and 1% of returnees. 9% of the refugees were pastoralists. The dominance of people who used to work in commerce among the displaced may be a reflection of the fact that the rebel groups targeted the cities—places of commerce by definition. It may also be that for people who work in commerce it was easier to move, possibly because their social networks expanded over larger areas or because certain types of commerce can be done even while displaced. Farmers and pastoralists, on the other hand, may have more locally confined social networks and they may have greater incentives to stay put to take care of their herds and to tend their fields. In addition unlike civil servants, who were a direct target of the rebels, farmers and pastoralists may have had less to fear from the rebels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>IDPs (%)</th>
<th>Refugees (%)</th>
<th>Returnees (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Craft</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Servant</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoralism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Employment</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL (%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.

The vast majority of IDPs and refugees indicated to want to return home (81% and 91% respectively) but the majority of IDPs (82%) and refugees (97%) who stated this have not yet started planning their return. The primary condition for return for IDPs and refugees is a viable peace accord (35% and 59% respectively); for 27% of the IDPs it is better financial means; for 20% of the refugees the independence of Azawad is critical. Of those refugees who do not intend to return (3%), insecurity in the North makes them stay away; for IDPs in Bamako better job prospects are the main reason for not returning.
4. Impact of the Crisis

The crisis had a negative impact on the welfare of refugees, IDPs and returnees. There is a notable shift towards feeling poorer amongst the three sub-samples, which is corroborated by a decrease in the quality and number of meals consumed, a reduction in income and employment, decreases in assets and livestock owned and the fact that many children were taken out of school.

Figure 5: Levels of poverty before the crisis and in June 2014 (%)

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.

Before the crisis, the majority of IDPs, refugees and returnees considered themselves as neither poor, nor rich (a likely underestimation of their actual wealth status as they were better educated and owned more assets than the average person in the North). But after the crisis, the majority of respondents consider their household to be poor and hardly anyone considers their household as rich (Figure 5).

Table 6: Comparing the quality of diet before the crisis and June 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Better before the Crisis (%)</th>
<th>Same (%)</th>
<th>Better today (June) (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDPs</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returnees</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.
The vast majority of IDPs, refugees and returnees report that their diet was better before the crisis than it was in June 2014 (Table 6). Since June 2014, the nutrition situation has improved markedly. Before the crisis, the majority of IDPs (94%) consumed three or four meals a day. By June 2014 only 54% had three meals a day. But by February 2015 90 percent had three meals a day (Figure 6). The findings for returnees and refugees in Mauretania are comparable. Only refugees in Niger are worst off in February 2015 than they were in June 2014 or prior to the crisis. 86% consumed three meals per day before the crisis; in February 2015 this had decreased to 30%.

**Figure 6: Number of Meals per day**

![Figure 6: Number of Meals per day](image_url)

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014 and 2015.

The crisis had a negative impact on income. In June 2014, 92% of the refugees, 74% of the IDPs and 65% of the returnees reported that their income had declined as a result of the crisis. While 70% of the IDPs, refugees and returnees were employed before the crisis, only 26% were employed by June 2014 – a drop of 44 percentage points. Breaking this down by group, refugees in Niger were the ones with the highest number of employed before the crisis (89%), followed by IDPs (79%) (Figure 7). IDPs are also the group with the highest number of employed during
displacement. 55% of the returnees reported to have been employed before the crisis and 36% in June 2014.

Over time the employment situation among the displaced has improved steadily and by December 2014 more people reported being employed than prior to the crisis. All the returnees were able to regain employment after returning. The employment situation of IDPs, returnees, and refugees in Niger is steadily improving; only for refugees in Mauritania does one notice a steady decrease, with 100% reporting no employment during January and February.

**Figure 7: Employment status over time (%)**

The ownership of livestock and consumer durables was reduced significantly as a consequence of the crisis. Table 7 demonstrates this by showing the Tropical Livestock Units (TLU)\(^\text{12}\) owned prior to the crisis and in June 2014 as well as the percentage of ‘yes’ responses on a question whether a given asset was owned by the household.\(^\text{13}\) The loss on livestock has been enormous particularly amongst IDPs and refugees who lost respectively more than 90% and 75% of their animals.

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\(^{12}\) TLU is a common unit to describe livestock numbers of various species as a single figure that expresses the total amount of livestock present – irrespective of the specific composition.

\(^{13}\) This was a ‘yes/no’ question meaning that if 56% of the IDPs owned a ventilator before the crisis, 46% did not, etc.
Returnees, who had significantly less livestock to begin with, lost less but still about half their animals. The loss in the value of consumer durables is less, but none the less very significant. Using prices from the 2012 Mercuriale (INSTAT 2012) to value assets and assuming that a ‘yes’ response meant ownership of at least 1 durable good, the IDPs and refugees lost at least 60% of the value of their assets, and returnees about 20%.

Table 7: Consumer durables and livestock owned before the crisis and in June 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IDPs Before (%)</th>
<th>IDPs June (%)</th>
<th>Refugees Before (%)</th>
<th>Refugees June (%)</th>
<th>Returnees Before (%)</th>
<th>Returnees June (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ventilator</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio/Cassette Player</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD/DVD Player</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrigerator</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorbike/scooter</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car/Motorized Vehicle</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Phone</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical livestock units</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total n</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>220</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Despite the loss of consumer durables due to the crisis IDPs, refugees and returnees still own more or similar amounts than the average population in the North did prior to the crisis. This is demonstrated in Figure 8, which presents the lower bound of the value of consumer durables owned by IDPs, refugees and returnees after the crisis, as well the lower bound of the value of consumer durables of households in the three regions of the north (Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal) prior to the crisis in 2011. The value of assets owned by IDPs and refugees is comparable to that of households between the 3rd and 4th wealth quintile. The value of assets owned by returnees is higher and comparable to that of households in the 4th wealth quintile.

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14 The value is a lower bound because we only measure whether or not a household has a durable good. So for households who own more than one of a given durable good, the value assigned to them is the equivalent of one durable good.
Figure 8: Estimated value of assets after the crisis compared with regional averages prior to the crisis

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey 2014/ EMOP 2011.

The final element that corroborates the shift towards a greater sense of poverty amongst the displaced is the discontinuation of schooling. 19% of those residing in refugee camps, 7% of the returnees and 5% of the IDPs took their children out of school (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Did your children continue their education during displacement (%) 

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.

School attendance improved and between August 2014 to February 2015 most children attended school, though school attendance varies over time (particularly in Kidal) and remains relatively low in the refugee camp in Niger (around 75% --Figure 10).
Figure 10: Children aged 7-12 attending school (%)

Returnees reported fewer victims; fewer returnees reported to have lost income as a consequence of the crisis; more of their children were able to continue schooling; and relative to IDPs and refugees, fewer perceived being poorer in June 2014 than before the crisis. Returnees are also the group that feels most secure, that has high levels of trust in the Malian army and police and that has a positive attitude towards most government policies.
94% of the returnees were displaced inside Mali and 6% outside the country. 67% went to Bamako, 11% in Koulikoro, 9% to Ségou, 5% to Mopti and 3% went elsewhere (Kidal, Gao and Sikasso). The majority returned between June and October 2013 a period that followed the signing of a peace deal between the interim government and rebel factions to allow presidential elections to be held in July (first round) and August (second round) 2013. In October security in the North worsened again and ever since the number of people returning has been very limited.

The main challenges reported by returnees in June 2014 were (i) poverty and food insecurity; (ii) lack of infrastructure (including lack of safe drinking water) and (iii) unemployment. 11% of the returnees stated not to be facing any challenges (Figure 12). Very few reported difficulties living together, that they had to start their life from scratch or that their main challenge was loss of goods and property (as we saw in the previous section, the sub-sample of returnees lost significantly less than the IDPs and refugees).
Figure 12: Two main challenges since returning home (%)

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.

Figure 13 shows regional differences of the challenges faced by returnees. Those who returned to Gao faced fewer challenges than those returning to Timbuktu and Kidal. In Kidal, the major challenge was the absence of infrastructure and drinking water, followed by unemployment. In Timbuktu, poverty and food security were at the forefront of returnees’ concerns. 31% of the returnees in Gao stated that they faced no challenges since returning home; 19% said they do not know and 18% state insecurity.

Figure 13: Main challenge since returning home, by region (%)

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.
4% of returnees reported that their households were victims of the crisis,\textsuperscript{15} compared with 14% of IDPs and 1% of refugees. Returnees thus not only experienced fewer losses in terms of life, consumer durables and livestock, they also left fewer people behind during the crisis, and reported the less trauma from the crisis: fewer victims in the household, neighborhood and/or ethnic tribe conveys a lower level of prosecution, trauma and mistrust and a lower level fear that might be conducive to returning home.\textsuperscript{16}

Looking at the sense of security returnees in Kidal feel less secure than returnees in Gao or Timbuktu (to offer a frame of reference, Figure 14 also includes responses by IDPs in Bamako to the security questions). 86% of returnees to Kidal feel very insecure or insecure at night (Figure 14). Even during the day, 64% of the returnees in Kidal feel very insecure or insecure compared to 31% in Timbuktu and 19% in Gao. During the day, the majority of returnees in Kidal feel very insecure or insecure at home (68%). The sense of insecurity is also very high in Gao at night, where around 83% feel either very insecure or insecure compared with 53% Timbuktu. During the day and at home at night, the majority of returnees feel secure or very secure in Gao and Timbuktu.

**Figure 14: Perceptions of security of returnees and IDPs, by region (June 2014) (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How secure do you feel alone at home during the day?</th>
<th>How secure do you feel alone in the street during the day?</th>
<th>How secure do you feel alone on the street at night?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDPs Bamako</td>
<td>Gao</td>
<td>Tombouctou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very insecure</td>
<td>Insecure</td>
<td>Secure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.

\textsuperscript{15} Victims of the crisis refers to death as well as physical violence.

\textsuperscript{16} Respondents in our survey have been exposed to less violence than the average population in northern Mali. Comparing our results to Afrobarometer findings, the latter finds that 15% of the population in Timbuktu and 8% in Gao reported death in their family as a result of the conflict. In our survey, the 5% of those originating from Timbuktu do so and 7% for those from Gao.
Results suggest that 66% of the returnees trust the Malian police and army most when it comes to providing security in the North. Almost half believe that the Malian army is brave and well trained. The vast majority of returnees believe that the government’s policies regarding reconciliation, security and social cohesion are good or very good. They also support the government’s approach towards decentralization and providing infrastructure such as access to potable water and electricity. As the next section will illustrate this differs strongly with the opinions of refugees.

6. Prospects for Peace

IDPs, refugees and returnees have comparable opinions with regard to the requirements for peace: (i) addressing the ongoing crisis, (ii) improving security and (iii) reconciliation. Although there is agreement on what needs to be done, there is little consensus on what happened during the crisis, who the culprits are and who the main victims.

Figure 15: What is the most important problem the Government needs to resolve today? (%)

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.

For instance 80% of the IDPs and returnees and 63% of the refugees in Niger report that the rebels hurt or harmed the black population in the northern Mali (Songhai, Peulh and dark skinned Kel
Tamashek (Bella)), but 95% of the refugees in Mauritania disagree with this statement. They (97%) support the claim that the Malian army hurt or harmed the Arab and Kel Tamashek populations. 60% of the refugees in Niger also support this claim, but the majority of IDPs and returnees (66%) do not. It shows that the three sub-samples have an almost opposite reading of the crisis. Returnees and IDPs believe they have been the main victims and that the rebels have been the main culprits; refugees claim they are the main victims and that the Malian army is the main culprit. 94% of the refugees in Mauritania state that the Malian army is responsible for the victims in their ethnic group. 94% of the returnees, 62% of the IDPs and 79% of the refugees in Niger claim that the MNLA, the rebels and the Islamists are responsible for the victims in their ethnic group (both may be correct!).

Trust in the government, important for a peace accord, is absent amongst refugees in Mauritania: 93% state not to trust government officials at all. This in contrast with refugees in Niger, IDPs and returnees among whom, respectively, 85%, 71% and 72% trust government officials. The lack of confidence in the state among refugees in Mauritania is reflected in answers to questions like “how do you think the new government is handling decentralization, how is it addressing access to electricity and potable water, security, reconciliation”, etc. and what respondents think about the improvement in living conditions in the North. While the majority of IDPs and returnees agree that the government is doing a good job, refugees in Mauritania consistently state the opposite. Refugees in Niger are more critical than IDPs and returnees but much more positive than refugees in Mauritania.

A second issue that is a priority for peace identified by refugees, IDPs and returnees is security. 92% of the refugees, 81% of the IDPs and 73% of the returnees state that the North is not secure or not secure at all. Again, while all agree that the North is insecure, they differ in their view of who could be trusted to provide security. According to 90% of the refugees, 60% of the IDPs and 55% of the returnees the Malian army alone cannot provide security in the North. Confidence rises significantly in a scenario where the Malian army is supported by African and international forces.

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17 Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) was sworn in as Mali’s president on 4 September.
86% of the IDPs, 91% of the refugees and 88% of the returnees are confident or fully confident that a coalition like this would be capable of providing security.

In an open-ended question on who can be trusted most when it comes to ensuring security in the North, survey results suggest that the majority of refugees in Mauritania (86%) trust the armed rebel groups as opposed to the army or police. This does not hold for refugees in Niger of whom 75% trust the army and police. Similar results hold for IDPs and returnees, who put much more confidence in state authorities when it comes to securing the North: most trust is placed in the army and police (72% of the IDPs and 66% of the returnees) while little to no trust is placed in armed rebel groups (3% of IDPs, 1% of returnees).

The findings suggest that refugees in Mauritania have a very negative view of the army. 65% describe the army as criminal traitors and 16% as incapable and weak. 33% of the refugees in Niger on the other hand, have trust and confidence in the army, 20% describe them as incapable

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.
and weak and only 1% as criminal traitors. When asked who they fear most, 96% of the refugees in Mauritania state the army, which is consistent with the fact that they blame the army to be responsible for the victims in their ethnic group. The majority of IDPs and returnees are most afraid of the rebels, the MNLA and the Islamists (95% of IDPs and returnees). The period when the Mauritanian refugees felt most secure in the North was not before the crisis, nor when the Malian army returned to liberate the north from rebel occupation but during Islamist and MNLA rule. This is true for 80% of the refugees in Mauritania. 96% of the refugees in Niger, on the other hand, felt most secure before the crisis, along with 90% of returnees and 84% of IDPs

When looking at the levels of confidence the three groups place in actors besides the army, police or rebel groups, one finds that trust in religious and community leaders is very high and does not change significantly over time. 18

Opinions are split with regard to how well the government is doing with regards to reconciliation. 92% of the refugees in Mauritania state that the government is doing a very bad job. When it comes to supporting a climate of trust between ethnic groups, 96% of the refugees in Mauritania believe that government is doing a bad or very bad job and 98% feel the same about the government addressing the stigma against Kel Tamasheq and Arabs. 19 IDPs, returnees and refugees in Niger on the other hand, are more positive. Over 70% of the returnees and 51% of the IDPs feel that the IBK government is doing a good to very good job at handling reconciliation. 47% of refugees in Niger agree, while 22% state that they don’t know.

Another important element of reconciliation is social cohesion. Remarkably the crisis has had a positive effect on the cohesion of households. Returnees were among those where cohesion and solidarity between household members increased the most: 65% reported more solidarity, for 34% it remained the same and for only 1% there was a decrease. 58% of the IDPs experienced more solidarity between household members, 39% reported that there was no effect and 3% reported

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18 Between 80%-100% of refugees, IDPs and returnees are confident that religious and community leaders can bring peace to the North.
19 The stigma is the assumption that all Kel Tamasheq and Arabs are in some way related to the MNLA or other rebel factions and has developed as a consequence of the crisis.
less cohesion. The increase in solidarity is less apparent among refugees where the majority (53%) stated that the crisis had no effect on solidarity.

Figure 18: Levels of trust, by group (June) (%)

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.

Perceptions that different groups have of others are important elements of peace. When asking for the degree to which neighbors, other villagers and people from other ethnic groups can be trusted the survey finds positive outcomes. Although all groups trust people from other ethnic groups slightly less, the general level of trust is high and it remains stable over time.

Finally, consider how IDPs, refugees and returnees envision the future of Mali. The majority of refugees in Mauritania vie for an independent or autonomous North, while the majority of IDPs, returnees and refugees in Niger wish to see full government control over the North. 20

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20This contradicts, in part, findings of an Afrobarometer perception survey on causes and consequences of the conflict in Mali conducted in December 2013. The secession of the North is stated as an option on how to resolve the conflict
95% of the refugees in Mauritania envision an independent or autonomous North and 26% of the refugees in Mauritania even state the independence of Azawad (=the north) as a main condition for returning home. Stark differences can also be observed with regard to the discussion around a possible federalist solution for the North that was ongoing when the monthly phone interviews were conducted in October. As illustrated in the Figure 20 below, 80% of the refugees in Mauritania support a federalist solution, while the majority of IDPs, returnees and refugees in Niger are not in favor. Of those who do not support a federalist solution (96% of the IDPs, 88% of the refugees in Niger and 95% of the returnees), the majority of IDPs (61%) and returnees (70%) as well as 38% of the refugees in Niger suggest decentralization as a possible solution to resolve the conflict. 13% of the refugees in Niger also mention war and 27% the integration of the North. Nonetheless, 49% of IDPs, 86% of returnees and 89% of refugees believe a stable and sustainable peace accord can be achieved.

Source: Listening to Displaced People Survey, 2014.
Conclusion

The 2012 crisis in northern Mali led to widespread displacement. The welfare of the displaced – and those who returned – is monitored by combining a baseline survey with structured monthly follow-up interviews carried out by mobile phone. This innovative approach allows tracking changes in welfare with high frequency – even for those who returned to areas that are insecure and inaccessible to enumerators. After 6 rounds of follow-up interviews attrition rates are very low (more than 99% response rate), demonstrating that it is possible to collect robust and representative data from hard-to-reach, conflict-affected populations.

The results show that those who fled were better educated, better off and less affected by violence than the average population in the North. Those who fled lost significant amounts of durable goods (20-60%) and livestock (50-90%); many of their children ended up being taken out of school and their welfare (measured subjectively and by the number of meals consumed) declined considerably. Over time, the impact of the crisis on welfare has lessened and by February 2015 the majority of eligible children of the displaced were going to school and levels of employment and number of meals consumed were at pre-crisis levels. While we have no updated measure of consumer
durables or livestock owned, it seems unlikely given the size of the losses that in these dimensions too, households are at pre-crisis levels.

The restoration of welfare among the displaced is an illustration of the remarkable resilience of the Malian population—and the displaced in particular. At the same time, not all is well. In Kidal many children do not go to school, refugees in Mauretania fail to find any gainful employment and the fraction of refugees in Niger eating only one meal a day is increasing. For those who promote a return of the displaced, the gradually improving welfare of the displaced may be reason for concern, as it can be expected to reduce the incentive for return—certainly while north Mali continues to be insecure. Indeed, our data suggest that since August 2014 the rate of return has been negligible.

IDPs, refugees and returnees experienced the crisis in different ways and voice contrasting visions for the future. Refugees in Mauritania (mostly of Kel Tamasheq and Arab origin) consider themselves the main victims of the crisis and consider the Malian Army as the main perpetrator and an institution that instills fear and little trust. The period during which Mauritanian refugees felt most secure was under MNLA and Islamist rule and these are the actors they trust most when it comes to providing security in the North in the future. There is no trust in government officials and no support for any presidential policies. For refugees in Mauritania, state-society relations have been ruptured and they envision a future where the North is an independent or autonomous region. To what extent state-society relations were ruptured as a consequence of the crisis, or whether they were already bad prior to it, is difficult to determine, although refugees in Mauritania felt more secure under MNLA/Islamist rule than before the crisis.

Returnees, IDPs and refugees in Niger are mostly comprised of Songhai and Kel Tamasheq. They tend to have more trust in the government, the army and the police and share a comparable vision of the future: the full establishment of government control over the North.

Relative to IDPs (or refugees), returnees are better off and less affected by the crisis: they lost fewer household members, fewer assets and less income and livestock. Most of their children were able to continue schooling and over one-third were able to regain employment after returning home.
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Francis, David (2013): The regional impact of the armed conflict and French intervention in Mali. NOREF, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre


UNOCHA (Nov 2014): Mali: Evolution de Movements de Population


Annex 1: Timeline of the Crisis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall of Menaka</td>
<td>17 Jan, 2012</td>
<td>First rebel attack by MNLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attack of Aguel Hoc</td>
<td>25 Jan, 2012</td>
<td>Massacre of nearly a hundred soldiers by MNLA and Ansar Dine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall of Tessalit</td>
<td>11 March, 2012</td>
<td>The strategic city of Tessalit falls after two months of fighting between rebels and the Malian Army.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coup d’etat</td>
<td>21 March, 2012</td>
<td>Disgruntled military by events in the North overthrow the Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall of Kidal</td>
<td>30 March 2012</td>
<td>Taken by the MNLA and Ansar Dine. The Army leaves without confronting the rebels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall of GAO</td>
<td>02 April 2012</td>
<td>Gao falls to Mujao, Ansar Dine and the MNLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall of Timbuktu</td>
<td>03 April 2012</td>
<td>After the fall of Gao, the military abandons Timbuktu in favor of MNLA, Ansar Dine and other Islamist groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall of Douentza</td>
<td>05 April, 2012</td>
<td>After the rebels are installed, they advance south a few kilometers west of Douanza. At this point the MNLA declares independence Azawad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of Azawad</td>
<td>May, 2012</td>
<td>Negotiations between rebels and Islamists to find a status for Azawad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting between MNLA and Jihadists</td>
<td>25 June 2012</td>
<td>MUJAO launches an assault against MNLA in Gao after the people in Gao rise-up against the MNLA. This generates and offensive of all Islamist groups (Ansar Dine, MUJAO, AQMI) against the MNLA which finally leave Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July and August 2012</td>
<td></td>
<td>Domination of Islamists of the North and application of Sharia Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancement towards Konna</td>
<td>10 Jan, 2013</td>
<td>Konna falls to the Islamists and they prepare to continue southwards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French intervention</td>
<td>11 Jan, 2013</td>
<td>France intervenes to stop the advancement of Islamists towards the South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewed fighting</td>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td>Fighting between rebels and Islamists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewed attacks</td>
<td>Dec 2013</td>
<td>Attacks by Jihadists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidal 2014</td>
<td>21 May 2014</td>
<td>Renewed fighting between rebels and the Malian Army after the visit of PM Mara to Kidal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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