

**Analysis of social and power dynamics of stakeholders
for the implementation of multi-year MultiPurpose
Cash Transfers in North Mali.**

– *Conclusions of the final report*–

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Laurence Touré
Fabrice Escot

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Conclusions and main findings

The stakeholders involved in the study are moving towards a “post-crisis” intervention strategy and are considering a shift in the configuration of transfers, from emergency assistance to more mixed “emergency and post-crisis”, via development aid. The positioning of the intervention itself, its objectives/expected impacts and monitoring and evaluation indicators reflect an initial focus on emergency aid, with a clear evolution towards social and economic development assistance. The Bamako component and the two case studies provide very consistent results on the perception of certain mechanisms of local dynamics; yet, the case studies help to put into perspective certain stakeholder perceptions, including some strategic orientations.

- **It seems irrelevant to speak of “post-crisis” when qualifying the situation in North Mali**

Although the political and security crisis is less acute than during the 2011-2013 peak, the intervention context is still marked by a persistent climate crisis, by very strong political and governance instability, by the prevalence of illegal powers and criminal activities in most areas, which do not provide the security conditions necessary for truly effective interventions (access to sites, to the most vulnerable) that are safe for field stakeholders. Many staff, managers of national teams, who participated in the study, express the necessity for their organisations to place the security and risk analysis issue at the forefront; they also express anxiety concerning the conditions in which they and their field teams work. The impacts perceived as the most dangerous and the most recognised are largely related to the political and security fields, and, to a lesser extent, to the social sphere. The people in charge of monitoring and evaluation admit their fear about the prospect of integrating security and political type indicators, given the difficulty and the risk associated to the dissemination of this type of information.

The first impact attributed to the crisis is the loss of real control over territories and populations by the State and its representatives, with a fragmentation of areas according to the rebel/armed/jihadist groups involved, which are sometimes difficult to dissociate. A political map that is all the more blurred and complex due to the opposition between State and supposedly anti-state forces, and which is perceived as “surface”, with State and political leaders sometimes, or at certain levels, in (necessary) collusion with armed groups and the criminal economy. In this context, the power of traditional leaders is weakened if they are not affiliated to political/armed authorities, with the corollary of a concentration of local power in the hands of mayors if the latter are able to meet both conditions (in addition to an elective power that is sometimes challenged: ballot stuffing): customary filiation and symbolic power, as well as patronage with armed and “non-state” groups and power of force. As regards to the economy, the major impact associated to the crisis is the loss of mobility (linked to insecurity), detrimental to communities whose activities, whether agricultural or pastoral, are linked to displacements, mobility or even nomadism. The dominance of mafia-type powers hinders the possibility to rebuild economic dynamics outside the “grey area” or criminal economy.

The case studies indicate that the living conditions of the communities in question are still marked by an unstable context. The four sites concerned by the case study show a wide potential diversity in the region. Beyond the very specific nature of Diré circle, the situations appear to be largely determined not only by livelihoods but also by the degree of homogeneity and social cohesion of the communities, especially ethnically-wise, but also economically-wise, equally linked to the size of villages/fractions, and finally by the relationship between local leaders and the populations they administer.

The communities under study in the two circles are very different concerning these factors. Pastoral communities are structurally those which suffer the most from the economic crisis. In terms of livelihoods, access to land (and especially irrigated areas) is the main factor of economic security of families and/or households. From this perspective, “indigenous” communities

(especially Sonray but not exclusively according to the history of each site) are today better able to (re)build their development on a stable basis. Pastoral communities, especially displaced ones, who have lost their livestock and generally have fewer land rights to agricultural land, are the most disadvantaged. The economic situation of numerous households without few resources is extremely precarious (i.e. the Benguel fraction). Moreover, several strong signs show a certain degree of high social tensions, mainly to the detriment of women in Tuareg environments. Pastoral communities are also those who suffer the most from governance instability and the lack of social cohesion. Cohesion affects the structure of local powers, their mode of governance, the way they relate between each other and with citizens, and the latter's acceptance of the rules they promote. In the two communities of Diré circle, which are relatively homogeneous (large Sonray majority, essentially agricultural activities, fairly common values and lifestyles between the poor and non-poor, between nobles and casted), local leaders are organised according to a very uncompetitive and rather pyramidal hierarchy (mayor, village leaders – councillors, representatives of groups/associations); this hierarchy is strongly based on customary legitimacy (almost all leaders are from chieftain families) accepted by all communities.

In the two very heterogeneous communities of Rharous circle (Sonrays, Tuaregs, Moors, Fulanis; indigenous and non-indigenous people with different rights over resources; farmers – traders – herders; very different values and lifestyles; very strong and highly unequal social hierarchies), local leaders compete between each other and are organised in a more “mosaic” fashion, both vertical and horizontal (tribal, fraction, village chiefs, holders of customary, economic and electoral power, etc.). These holders of diverse forms of power themselves endure pressure on resources and are engaged in very tense and even conflicting power relations (mutual challenge of legitimacies, accusations of corruption, etc.). These leaders maintain relationships with their citizens sometimes grounded on customary legitimacies but to which are juxtaposed potentially more opportunistic patronage relationships. Citizens are thus compelled to recognise certain systems (i.e. State powers) at the expense of others (i.e. the clan bond, allegiance, economic or opportunity bonds). In the end, some of these leaders seem to actually exacerbate inter- and intra-community tensions, and can play a role of regulator/organiser of society and justice/conflict resolution. The terms used to qualify society and its leaders in the two locations of Rharous and Benguel reveal significant violence in social relationships and attitudes linked to intimidation and isolation/submission reactions in the face of arbitrary demonstrations of force.

The emergence of “democratic” forces is perceived by some stakeholders as levers that accelerate the emancipation of dependent/submissive groups (former slaves), especially in the very conservative “Tuareg” area. Without calling into question this point, which is purely demographic in certain cities (i.e. Timbuktu) or areas (i.e. Menaka), the case studies tend to show that at a more village level and in a city such as Rharous, marked by strong ethnic conflicts instrumentalised by politics, these mechanisms allow a plurality of representations at the communal level. Nevertheless, in all cases, they exclude minorities (in the demographic sense of the term), and potentially the most disadvantaged social groups. Furthermore, even for the dominant groups, they are based on conflicting relationships and do not allow these conflicts to be resolved; they can even become an additional issue, the ballots (real or not) becoming a weapon to handle relationships governed by the “law of the strongest”. The case of Rharous is relatively symptomatic of this type of situation, with a Sonray village chief, a Tuareg mayor and tribal chief, and an influential Moor town councillor, also fraction chief, all openly in conflict.

The internal organisation of stakeholders intervening in North Mali must therefore take into account how the teams relate in a context of crisis. Respecting the “do no harm” principle is an embarrassing and poorly considered issue: “*Choosing between Satan and the Devil?*”. The political situation leads to an inevitable collusion of the humanitarian sphere implemented by cash transfer stakeholders with the “grey areas” and criminal activities, which are in clear violation of the “do no harm” principle. This collusion occurs at all levels and all phases of the interventions,

with non-State/mafia groups wanting NGO assistance to be effective, but also wanting to control it (supervision, orientation), to yield profit, to make the most of the advantages it provides, and even divert it at least partially to directly benefit from it. The “political” authorisation to intervene in the area implies negotiations beforehand and, consequently, deals with armed groups. This further implies for NGOs and partners to recruit local agents able to dialogue with communities and leaders (mayors, chiefs), with two possible biases: agents too external, not considered or even too easily manipulated, or agents too little external and possibly corruptive (manipulators). It also involves the forced use of service providers and intermediaries “clientelised” by armed groups and paying them a share of their income/profits: car rental companies, traders authorised to receive vouchers, supplies. This collusion therefore raises two major ethical issues: a problem of ties with illegitimate powers, and the issue of direct or indirect funding of mafia groups by humanitarian aid. How to manage the inevitable collusion of humanitarian action with illegal powers and the criminal economy? In this context, we sometimes speak of “crisis exit” or “post-crisis” management (implying a settlement of the context), which could indicate a desire to evacuate or bypass the intervention question “at the heart of the crisis”.

The recurrent problems raised by organisation staff fall into four categories: corruption, opacity and internal misinformation, lack of harmonisation of practices, and staff insecurity. Each of these factors is cited as both cause and consequence, in a very negative dynamic system associated to a poor identification of needs, to an attitude of negotiation versus intransigence, to ethical misconducts, to non-compliance with the law, and finally to a loss of control of the situation. The concerns expressed on the “internal” aspect reveal a feeling of frustration of the part of the teams about their own work (i.e. do no harm and perceived insecurity); at the same time, they also illustrate a certain dramatisation of the capacity of cash transfers to influence beneficiary communities: a “superiority syndrome” or a psychological “shifting effect” in the face of a loss of confidence in one’s own work? Whatever the real mechanisms, the staff’s anxiety-provoking discourses are a clear sign of the need to internally re-mobilise teams around a more coherent, well communicated and more reassuring message on the consideration of risks, and more credible in terms of taking into account the context, the objectives and the means available to achieve them:

- Reinforcement of context analyses,
- Formulation of an ideology/ethical framework of reference,
- Definition of the context, positioning, and especially of the objectives and related indicators.

In terms of methodology:

- More moral, logistics and financial commitment from donors,
- Develop intra- and inter-organisation implication and communication.

In terms of interactions between Cash Transfer Programmes and local, State and non-state actors:

- Better collaboration between NGOs and State structures / promotion of elected representatives / more involvement of State authorities without any (financial) compensation,
- Reduction of the influence of leaders,
- Sensitise local leaders on the principles that NGOs must respect.

In this context, KEY’s perspective (“consortium of consortia”) and the strategy of harmonisation of practices can become a new antagonism (or they can enhance the antagonism already present within the Common Framework for Social Transfers): necessary but not feasible? The perspectives set out above are confronted, on one hand, to a structural reality difficult to overcome: how to move away from “proprietary” logics? The ideologically planned harmonisation by KEY resonates with the

expressed need to revise the “theory” but also with a difficult alignment of stakeholders and their “doctrines”. These perspectives are, on the other hand, also questionable on their temporality versus the history of interventions/programmes: they certainly give the opportunity to better negotiate with illegal or manipulative powers, to better manage political and security constraints, but do they take into consideration the potential danger to field workers who will have to manage very diverse political, inter- and intra-community tensions, insecurity, impose more conditions and perhaps even question the conditions already negotiated in the face of violent powers/personalities/organisations?

The main elements suggested by the working group on the do no harm issue:

- *More moral, logistics and financial commitment from donors*
- *Collaboration between NGOs and State structures / promotion of elected representatives / more involvement of State authorities without any compensation*
- *Adoption of more conflict-sensitive approaches that take into account the interactions between intervention and conflict*
- *Reinforcement of context analyses*
- *Reduced influence of leaders*
- *Sensitise local leaders on the principles that NGOs must respect*
- *Develop intra- and inter-organisation implication and communication*

• **The positioning and configuration of cash transfers today seem to be moving away from the context and the basic needs of beneficiary populations.**

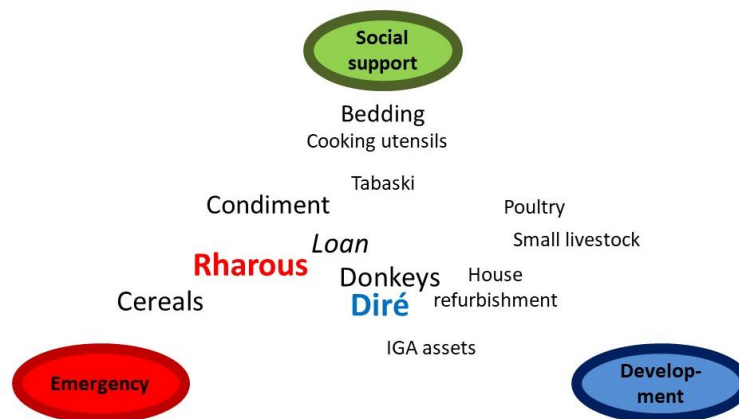
The evolution towards resilience objectives and economic impact indicators must be reviewed versus emergency requirements. Intervention strategies are divergent, including on the very nature of the assistance. All stakeholders assign a primary lifesaving/assistance objective to social nets and cash transfers. For implementing organisations (SI, ACF, HI, JSJ), this objective is central and is anchored in an “emergency” strategy: responding to the food crisis, which implies identifying the most vulnerable people/households. The donors (ECHO, World Bank) express higher expectations in terms of cash transfer impacts, with an additional line of development beyond subsistence (amounts superior to the current annual 120,000 Francs) linked to investment capacity. This vision is more rooted in a development strategy with an “IGA” logic: economic structuration around these financial flows, tontines, cooperatives, etc.; individual development objective, breaking the “cycle” of poverty. This evolution seems very coherent with the situation of communities in Diré (the exception) but less so with communities in Rharous (a more generalisable case) where emergency conditions are still very significant:

- At the individual level, the necessity to meet food and social lifesaving needs,
- A need for social stabilisation and easing of community tensions,
- Communities not yet engaged in economic reconstruction.

The individual uses of the funds indicate that the needs covered by cash transfers depend on the direct or indirect (spouses, recipients of redistributions) perceived needs of beneficiaries, and not on the theoretical “vocation” of assistance.

- In Diré, essential needs but also social and economic needs (particularly within a context of economic development focused on remote irrigated perimeters, i.e. the acquisition of a donkey),
- In Rharous, lifesaving needs, basic necessities: food and shelter.

Qualitative mapping of cash transfer uses by beneficiaries
and global positioning of study areas according to the identified uses



The amounts of cash allocated through the transfers are one of the issues expressed by organisation staff. The amounts are judged insufficient, some for the survival of populations with no resources, others to reach objectives of economic resilience.

The case studies confirm that, even in more “favourable” environments such as Diré, these funds enable certain beneficiaries to engage in economic activities, but with low prospects of economic sustainability after the intervention. Moreover, in an extremely precarious environment such as in Rharous, the allocations contribute in a significant yet insufficient way to beneficiaries’ economic and social survival. The amounts are often criticised, especially in Rharous circle, which corresponds to two realities:

- The fact that beneficiaries only receive a part (even significant) of the 120,000 CFA Francs provided for by the programmes,
- The fact that poor people in this area are objectively poorer than in Diré, and that the allocated funds, especially used for economic and social survival, are seen as essential but very limited.

- **Targeting is emblematic of the difficulties encountered by CCTS partners to apply the “doctrine”**

The principle of community targeting is largely challenged by stakeholders in Bamako. Targeting is theoretically justified by the need to focus on the people the most in need, regardless of the term used (poverty, vulnerability). Numerous organisation staff currently in charge of cash transfers question the relevance of targeting processes, and testify to the difficulties encountered at several levels: the targeting methodology and objectives, the definition of targets and identification criteria, the actual identification of beneficiaries (poor versus indigent, or even non-poor). All interviewees in Bamako who spoke of this issue admit both the unsatisfactory nature of the methodologies currently used, and the unsatisfactory nature of other hypothetical methodologies. It must be noted that each method (HEA or PMT) is considered more reliable than the other by the staff of the organisations using them. The unsatisfactory nature of currently used methodologies is due to four very different levels:

- The low degree of reliability and relevance of the criteria used,
- Political and security conditions, especially the impossibility to access the sites,
- The low relevance of methods (manipulation by leaders and by populations themselves),

- The very high cost of human and financial resources compared to the reliability considered very low.

Several voices suggest more pragmatic, less costly targeting, including closer geographical targeting with higher or even progressive coverage rates depending on the sites. This strategic orientation to a “rationalised” or even “rationalist” resources allocation mode is, in its very principle, problematic: how to choose communities? On which criteria?

The case studies, very limited geographically and thus little generalisable to the whole of North Mali, nevertheless provide information on the difficulty to formulate relevant area indicators:

- Displaced pastoralists can be considered as priority targets. Nevertheless, a village such as Soudoubé, stable but without any internal resources, can also be eligible on very different bases (agricultural, stable, homogeneous...)
- It appears that isolated sites should be favoured in comparison to cities and to communal capitals... Targeting at a village/fraction level versus a communal level? What political acceptance? What about the “urban” poor?

Targeting, especially when carried out through community-based approaches, is seen as highly manipulable, especially by leaders, at all levels. As regards to State representatives, the process can be manipulated to divert from certain sites, or to concentrate on others, in the perspective of political, electoral and/or patronage exploitation. As regards to village or fraction chiefs, as well as to targeting committees, one can fear social (dependants) or political exclusions (opponents, with the creation of internal dissidents and the desire to create independent fractions). Finally, at all levels, including that of NGO staff and their partners, embezzlement and misappropriation of funds (fictitious sites or beneficiaries, mechanisms of partial distribution or forced redistributions, etc.) are apparently suspected.

The case studies demonstrate that relationships between leaders and “constituents” are largely reflected in the overall administration of external assistance programmes, including cash transfers, by leaders. In Diré, the management is relatively transparent, leaders are rather committed to the effective implementation of interventions, even if, according to a customary or opportunistic conception, some may manipulate funds and/or assert “royalty” rights (i.e. members of targeting and distribution committees). Leaders demonstrate a wish to understand targeting mechanisms, which falters on the double community-based targeting and individual questionnaire method. In Rharous, there is an acceptance of rules only on the surface, but with the attempt to reconfigure them according to three objectives: leaders’ reconstitution of economic assets (direct levy), patronage (motivated inclusions and exclusions), but also the perceived need to distribute assistance funds to a larger group (more beneficiaries) than what is planned in programmes and seen as “imposed”. All this is not linked, or independent to the fact that the amounts are transversally perceived as insufficient, both issues (targeting and amount) being dissociated.

It must be noted that the data strongly resonate with the preliminary results of the study on the governance of targeting methods conducted in Gao circle by Miseli on the NGO-HEA component.

Populations and village leaders function as reciprocal countervailing powers (General Assembly vs targeting committees, individual questionnaires vs community choices).

Most of the non-leader persons interviewed show a real lack of information on issues related to targeting, but more generally to cash transfers (principle, amounts). Populations can get to grips with targeting mechanisms and take a stand during community-based targeting General Assemblies by rejecting the lists suggested by members of targeting committees. This point is particularly addressed by leaders who defend more “democratic” values of governance and the

respect of targeting protocols (Diré, Sonray Rharous village chief). However, the more informed the population is, the more it can itself manipulate the surveys (false declarations on assets). In this perspective, communicating cash transfer principles to populations appears to be both a necessity (ethics, countervailing powers to leaders) and a source of bias (manipulation). The first distribution could be the opportunity to communicate to beneficiaries the terms of their rights (amounts, duration, period, intended uses).

The notion of household is integrated and managed in various ways by stakeholders. Issues are posed differently and the answers vary widely regarding the definition of the household itself, the size of households and the question of women heads of households. The data provided by the CCTS tools do not, in a tangible way, take polygamy into consideration (the number of wives in a household), and the issue of polygamous marriages is managed differently: either only one household or one household per wife.

The definition of the household unit appears in the case studies as a major issue on three levels. Upstream: the “large family” (the often “forgotten” unit in cash transfers). Numerous households function as production units (2 to 4 households), including or remaining in very strong ties with economic migrants (brothers, sons, etc.), and with intra-family tensions and conflicts that are quite frequent and sometimes very harsh, in the “urban” sites and Rharous circle especially. The “nuclear” household unit (theoretical target of cash transfers, still little documented as regards to M&E data), which must include polygamy, divorce, remarriage, functional marriages or remarriages (formal, levirate, younger sister of a deceased woman, etc.) and child custody or even “child donation”. In its internal functioning: relationships between spouses (nominal beneficiaries of cash transfers), which are founded on hierarchy and the subordination of the wife, but which admit respective rights. There are different levels of understanding and solidarity between spouses: some cases of harmony and sharing, cases of break-ups, even pressures. In general, poor women are more “isolated”: women from chieftaincy families and/or wealthier families are more respected and have a greater social surface; it is among them that women’s presidents can be found. The observed cases of redistribution/sharing/uses of cash transfers illustrate these complex relationships that are not always taken into consideration during the targeting, i.e. the sharing between households in a production unit, between different “sub-units” within a household that has one unique head but which is large and complex, redistribution to the divorced husband in charge of the children.

The question of the status of women is far from being consensual among organisations’ staff. In some cases, it is recognised that women in the north have a real economic or even political decision-making power, with women’s involvement in political and community life; in some cases, their inferiority and submission to the masculine world is deplored; in other cases, in an intermediate vision, their decision-making power is recognised but only in the domestic sphere. The case studies provide information on the sharing between spouses, and indicate that women nominal beneficiaries or wives of beneficiaries can largely access the funds and define how to use them themselves. From this point of view, strategies for targeting women specifically are of course favourable to them. Nevertheless, women benefit directly (through the sharing) or indirectly (using of household funds by men) from the transfers of which men are the indirect beneficiaries, in both environments under study.

The hypotheses of the working group on targeting:

- *Reinforce communication to communities*
- *Provide more flexibility to communities in the identification of vulnerability criteria*
- *Let the community do its targeting through a General Assembly process for instance, with no intervention or “correction” by NGOs*
- *Involvement of local authorities, real commitment*
- *Inclusion of social criteria, clear vulnerability criteria*
- *Geographic and progressive targeting, i.e. a range of coverage rates varying according to the vulnerability of villages between 20 and 40%, but with the same amounts for each beneficiary*
- *Updating lists regularly (annually)*
- *Reinforce coordination between stakeholders*

It should be noted that some of these propositions raise (and have raised since their formulation) questions of implementation and feasibility, and reflect the difficulty (if not impossibility) to reconcile the reliability and the means for targeting methods.

- **Negative economic and social impacts on beneficiary communities that seem to be overestimated**

The study only partially allows us to work on the impacts. Overall, the case studies cannot provide much indications on political and security impacts; they were indeed designed to identify impacts on people, and more speculatively on communities (villages, fractions). At the level of individuals, the study demonstrates structurally positive impacts.

As regards to political and security impacts, the “internal” study (perception of national teams) highlights a clear non-compliance with the “do no harm” principles at two major levels: on the one hand, collusion with the criminal economy, i.e. entry rights into territories controlled by rebel and/or illegal groups, recourse to intermediaries and/or subcontractors who are themselves subordinate to these groups (NGOs, car rental companies, “accredited” traders); on the other hand, “laissez-faire” due to a lack of control and institutional support (good faith) or to the fear of publicity (bad faith) of corruption/embezzlement practices, including by NGO agents themselves and community leaders. The case studies indicate that even in the “secure” context of Diré, with the subordination of leaders (in particular mayors, but also village communities via youth groups), security is negotiated and requires important funds (e.g. 200,000 Francs for a mayor for a “worry-less” trip to Timbuktu) for the “normal functioning” of otherwise rather “democratic and benevolent” representatives. On the sites in Rharous, an additional degree of “levy” is also linked to the necessity connoted by certain leaders to reconstitute financial capital for personal and political purposes, as they have been affected by the crisis and are engaged in patronage power relations.

The negative impacts of cash transfers are probably overestimated in terms of infra (on target-populations). The survey with the stakeholders indicate that economic, nutritional and social impacts are perceived as being less effective, especially less serious, than political and security impacts. The case studies present objective evidence on the uses of transfers, including redistributions, which appear as potentially interesting and relevant indicators for analysing impacts on beneficiaries. It thus appears that precise documentation of the uses and their advantages through monitoring and evaluation provide give a relevant impact evaluation.

Redistribution mechanisms are today taken into account by the monitoring-evaluation but little illustrated and documented, and can be differently interpreted. They are seen as either a breach or a failure of the targeting principle (limitation of beneficiaries' funds, challenging the targeting), as an ordinary and positive practice in communities (sharing, cohesion, harmony, creation of social ties, solidarity dynamics), or, finally, as a potential mechanism to "recover" from targeting errors ("indirect" advantages).

The redistribution mechanisms under study in the case studies pinpoint the fact that cash transfers boost solidarity ties. On the one hand, in contexts of strong precariousness where even solidarity providers are at the limit of their capacities when faced with a demand for solidarity assistance that is too great, they stabilise the tension between "needy" and "solicited". They enable the poorest, i.e. the "solicitors" in these mechanisms, to free themselves, even temporarily, from the social discredit that result from these solicitations, and even to become solidarity providers themselves; in parallel, they relieve wealthier "providers" from part of their solidarity social charges. The case studies also indicate that redistribution practices are numerous and reflect a positive social impact, according to three levels of analysis:

- The comparison between solidarity ties and redistribution modes illustrate the integration of cash transfers in pre-existing solidarity networks: apparently no new network has been created, and all pre-existing network have been concerned.
- The advantages linked to redistributions can be explained by the response to statutory needs (voluntary and rewarding) as well as to perceived needs for harmony and empathy.
- The use of funds redistributed by indirect beneficiaries is mainly based on essential needs (particularly food), which strengthens the positive impact of transfers.

Transfers seem unlikely to structurally challenge bonds of solidarity. Redistribution mechanisms more or less imposed to committee members (especially distribution), although little documented, do not appear to be very sustainable as they are more "contractual" and linked to the distribution situation, and do not create specific social ties, although this issue is worth being studied. Transfers therefore do not structurally challenge links of conformity with social practices. Redistribution mechanisms also indicate that part of them are linked to traditional cash flow mechanisms within communities: participation to collective charges intended for leaders in the communities in Diré (refurbishment of the chief's and the imam's houses). Moreover, whatever the targets, the transfers are more subjective in terms of opinion and are associated to the renewal of solidarity networks, to a boost of trade and to greater accessibility of all consumer goods.

The impacts related to manipulation at the individual level often expressed by national staff during the numerous working sessions are most likely not very effective: the creation of aid dependency, with the idea that some people would give up economic activities to meet the poverty criteria of targeting. Such a mechanism seems relatively unlikely, at least on a large scale. On the contrary, it seems much more likely that people who do not meet the criteria hide their assets and activities to manipulate the targeting, or by omission (e.g. transfers received from migrants, networks), something which is pointed out by leaders in Diré circle and by a few leaders in Rharous circle.

Finally, the impacts related to security at the individual level very often expressed by national

staff are also most likely not effective: putting beneficiaries at risk versus banditry (at least in the areas of study) is seen as very unlikely; it is never stated spontaneously, and when mentioned again, it is either considered as very unlikely (Diré), or accepted as a possibility but never verified by facts by the interviewees (Rharous).

- **Innovative operational strategy options to limit the negative impacts of the project and maximise the positive impacts in order to ensure that programme objectives are met**

It is not relevant for the study to conclude with “objective” recommendations, as the context intervention is marked by opaque, unstable and manipulable mechanisms of corruption at all levels and by power relations, intimidation, “intoxication”. The lack of adherence to current intervention protocols as expressed by participants in working sessions, and in parallel their difficulty in considering more relevant/efficient solutions, show the complexity to invent and reinvent intervention strategies. Nevertheless, it appears that, as of the date of the study, the mechanisms the most in conflict with the “Do no harm” principle mainly occur a long way upstream of the intervention cycle:

- In the relationships and “negotiations” with local leaders (participating in the criminal economy, mass exclusions, endangering staff)
- In a certainly correlated way, with the internal corruption mechanisms in the first phases of implementation; this corruption has been highlighted at the national level during interviews and working sessions.

Two cross-cutting elements also emerge as options to enable partners NGOs in the CCTS to better integrate the “Do no harm” principle throughout the project cycle:

a. A more inclusive and participatory organisational set-up (or, in the broadest sense, of “management”)

The opacity mechanisms of cash transfer stakeholders in North Mali, both internally (between staff) and externally (in relation to other stakeholders), appear to be a transversal obstacle to the achievement of objectives. The local level appears to be both the most concerned and most decisive. The recruitment of agents, training, the transmission of instructions, but also the reporting and the consideration of perceptions, are all elements to be reinforced. It would, on the one hand, enable each type of person involved (or “staff category”) to have a more accurate perception of interlocutors’ objectives and constraints, and, on the other, to raise awareness on the environment/context of the interventions.

The indicators to develop internally would potentially include:

- The feeling of safety, in the broad sense, of the staff
 - ✓ When facing their interlocutors, especially community representatives (legitimacy, acknowledgement, credibility, persuasiveness)
 - ✓ Within their own organisation (criteria of communication, well-being, belonging, stress awareness)
- The adherence of these same staff to the objectives, ethics, mechanisms, and implemented methods: clarity, relevance, feasibility, effectiveness...

b. A system for taking into account the well-being of target populations

The geographical targeting is today carried out according to criteria that are essentially material (including nutritional aspects), and which are perceived as the determinants of the effectiveness of the action. In this perspective, social and security issues are considered as potential levers or obstacles. Yet, it seems that these social and security questions largely determine the efficiency and/or effectiveness of interventions, and recommendations have emerged on the possibility to

integrate the security/opacity degree (in order to take measures whose recommendations are beyond the scope of this study, but as an example of decisive strategical choices, excluding a site considered too prone to manipulations, or too unsafe to be submitted to control/evaluation).

The indicators to develop would potentially include:

- Scores provided by observation mechanisms, external organisations and local agents
 - ✓ Political and security danger
 - ✓ Governance
- Feelings of safety, in the broad sense, by community members
 - ✓ Personal safety: biological, economic, psychological
 - ✓ Sense of social belonging, social links, economic and social resilience
 - ✓ Recognition of power structures: legitimacy, administration modalities

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 - a. CCTS monitoring tools and M&E reports
 - b. Collection of reference values by Circle
 - c. Collection of reference values by NGO