

Oxfam in Mali

In Mali, Oxfam focuses on secure livelihoods, humanitarian assistance, and essential services – primarily the quality of education and water and sanitation



The situation

In Mali, poor land management policies and deep-rooted traditional practices are a constant source of tension between farmers and nomadic herders who struggle to share the increasingly scarce resources of the northern regions. Life is still a daily struggle for most people. Global climate change and desertification are leading to recurrent drought resulting in chronic food shortages, especially in the northern part of the country. The northern region is having its second consecutive year of food deficit requiring a major humanitarian intervention for poor families.

In numbers*...

200,000
total people helped



Photo: Ami Vitale

Diversifying crops

We work to support poor rural farmers and cotton producers, to secure their income and improve their livelihoods.

We work to help rural men and women cotton producers diversify their crops, and promote alternative crops (such as sesame, shea, maize, bean and biological cotton) which can help reduce farmers' vulnerability. We've reached 200,000 poor farmers, especially women in cotton growing areas in the south of Mali. Working with more than 100 farmers' co-operatives – with nearly 10,000 members, of whom more than 50% are women – Oxfam has contributed to increasing and diversifying people's income sources, and reducing their dependency on cotton.

Left: Safietu Waled Alla Hussaini waters her plants in a garden Oxfam supported in the village of Intadeynen

Climate change

We give special attention to climate change as it affects poor people's ability to achieve sustainable livelihoods. We work to increase women's income through access to agricultural equipment, input and training; and advocate for the integration of climate change dimensions into local development planning process. We are focusing on promoting women's ability to adapt to climate change.

We have been working with women's associations to strengthen their capacity to adapt to climate change through crop diversification. More than 1,000 women from 30 co-operatives are direct beneficiaries, and are supported through two local partners. We're reaching 30,000 indirect beneficiaries, including 50% of women in the cotton production areas in south Mali (Dioila, Sikasso and Bougouni districts).



Photo: Helen Palmer

Gender

We're working to promote strategies that foster and support women's collective action to access local and regional markets for their agricultural products. We aim to find ways to reduce inequality of access to agricultural markets by women; find effective ways to support women's collective action; and design tools to support women's development efforts.

Food

With funding from the EU, we're working to mobilise communities to reduce food insecurity and malnutrition in the Kolondieba district in southern Mali – particularly children aged 0-2 and women at childbearing age. We work with local authorities and Government technical services to boost food production and promote nutritional education, focusing on efficient and effective use of local products.

Education

We're supporting the Government and civil society organisations to achieve the Millennium Development Goals on education, working in communities, and through advocacy at local, national and international levels. We aim to increase partners' capacity to hold the Government to account to deliver better and more relevant quality primary education to all children. We particularly emphasise girls' education, and address the challenges of gender inequalities in the education system and within society at large.

Food prices

We've implemented an innovative pilot project on "social safety nets" in Mali, with the aim of strengthening rural poor communities' resilience to the significant increase in food prices, and reducing famine among the poorest families. We're focusing on increasing the poorest families' purchasing power to meet their basic needs, and boosting poor families' potential for agricultural and livestock production.

We've reached 1,000 very poor women, who received cash transfers in three instalments. In addition, 1,450 poor farm households received agricultural equipment and inputs. The transfers are made at three critical times of the year: the onset of the cropping season, the lean season (when food prices are at their

peak), and after the harvest (to mitigate the effects of poor harvest). The project, funded by the EU, involves three implementing partners and has captured a significant interest from the Government, the World Bank, and other institutions such as the World Food programme.

We closely monitor the food security situation in Mali. We work closely with the Government at national, regional and district levels, to collect information and analyse the situation, especially in disaster-prone areas (floods, droughts or locust invasions), sharing and receiving information from various authorised sources, and preparing informed responses.



Children eat lunch, often their only meal of the day, after school in the village of Intadeynen. Oxfam's work includes providing school meals.

Photo: Ami Vitale

Water and education



Photo: Oxfam

Fatouma draws water from a well funded by Oxfam Unwrapped

Our water and sanitation programme in Mali is closely integrated into our education programme, and is tied to the overall objective of improving access to education. The programme acknowledges the strong correlation between access to water and access to education, especially for girls.

We work with local authorities to build boreholes in schools, to provide clean and safe drinking water to children, as well as promoting school hygiene and reducing waterborne diseases.

Water and sanitation in schools is also being addressed by training school management committees, associations of students' mothers, and school administrators. We're teaching them about the responsibilities of promoting

good practices in hygiene and sanitation, the management of infrastructures (latrines, water points), and ensuring that gender dimensions are clearly integrated in their hygiene and sanitation activities as part of the strategy to promote girls' education.

We help produce culturally sensitive hygiene training materials and train teachers and students to promote good practices. The availability of water in schools creates an opportunity to support school gardens and canteens, as well as providing materials and training on gardening and promoting healthy dietary practices. Increased access to clean water at a reasonable distance also frees up time for girls to focus on school, and allows mothers to use their time for more productive activities.

Governance

In Bourem, in the northern region of Gao, we promote citizens' management and involvement in controlling basic social services. With local NGOs, we aim to improve living conditions and reduce poverty among rural poor populations. We work with the newly established local Government, and support them in making a participatory diagnosis of their development context; identify and develop strategies to effectively mobilise local resources to support local basic services; promote a culture of

transparency in the management of local budgets through a sound monitoring and evaluation system; and build the capacity of local governments to negotiate with national Government and development actors for more resources in favour of supplying quality social services.

The Government is building a dam on the Niger river in Taoussa, in the Gao region. We aim to build the communities' capacity to claim their rights and maximise their benefits from the dam. We are collecting

and sharing best practices around similar infrastructures in the region (in Burkina Faso, Senegal and Mali), and adapting relevant ones to the context of Taoussa. The project, supported by the International Institute of Environment and Development, is bringing together key environmental institutions to identify and recommend the best environmentally sound practices, which will promote a sustainable use of the dam for the benefit of the communities.