



MALI

High-Priority Country Plan

GLOBAL WATER STRATEGY | 2022-2027

Mali has made progress in expanding access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) to its rapidly growing population of 22 million people. However, over 9 million Malians still do not have access to a reliable water supply, and over 12 million lack access to adequate sanitation. The U.S. government (USG) designated Mali a high-priority country in 2020 under the revised Global Water Strategy (GWS). To address these challenges in alignment with the U.S. GWS and USAID Agency Plan, USAID/Mali has programmed interventions to strengthen governance and institutions in the urban and rural WASH subsector and increase access to WASH services in targeted regions. Over the next five years of implementation of the GWS (2022–2027), USAID/Mali will focus on the Anka Jiko Activity in Sikasso, Bougouni, and Kotiala regions, Yanude, a new urban activity, and a water resource management activity. These activities include USAID/Mali humanitarian WASH response in Northern and Central Mali. Under the GWS, USAID/Mali will invest over \$30 million over the next five years to achieve the following results of the plan: 185,000 people gain access to a basic drinking water service; 100,000 people gain access to a safely managed drinking water service; 35,000 gain access to safely managed sanitation; and \$5 million of funding mobilized.

CONTEXT

National access to water increased from 70 percent in 2017 to 72 percent in 2020. Although access to drinking water has increased in Mali, according to the National Water directorate (*Direction Nationale de l'Hydraulique* [DNH]) in 2019, in urban areas managed by the Malian Potable Water Heritage Society (*Societe Malienne de Patrimoine de l'eau potable*, SOMAPEP, the state-owned assets company) and Malian Drinking Water Management Company (*Société Malienne de Gestion de l'Eau Potable*—SA, SOMAGEP), only 41 percent of the population has access to piped water.¹ To add to the challenge, an estimated 30 percent of water facilities in rural areas and small towns are not operational due to poor construction, age of the infrastructure, lack of maintenance, and difficulties harnessing water resources, among other reasons.

In addition to the lack of drinking water, only 45 percent of Mali's population has basic sanitation, and 20 percent of the population uses safely managed sanitation services.² Many communities, schools, and health care centers lack proper sanitation facilities, and open defecation is common, especially in rural areas.

Inadequate sanitation systems, municipal solid waste, and effluents from mining, tanneries, and dyeing industries degrade water quality and ecosystems in the Inner Niger Delta. Chemical contaminants (especially lead) in surface water can bioaccumulate and affect public health, as fish-based diets represent a crucial pathway for toxin ingestion. Groundwater is the primary source of drinking water and domestic use nationally. Insufficient groundwater quality monitoring and protection schemes increase public health risks, particularly in cities like Bamako. Poorly-constructed and unprotected wells and infiltration of latrine waste cause pathogenic contamination in shallow aquifers.

Child malnutrition exacerbates and is affected by multiple determinants, including lack of access to clean water, inadequate sanitation, and poor hygiene practices. Despite the degraded water quality, Mali continues to make

progress in addressing undernutrition. Stunting among children under five years old declined from 38 percent in 2013 to 27 percent in 2018 and 21.9 percent in 2022. The Sikasso region has one of the highest stunting rates in the country despite extensive farming activities. However, the prevalence of wasting among children under five years of age is worrying. The 2022 SMART survey³ indicates that between 2020 and 2022, no progress has been made on wasting among children, which remains high at 10.8 percent.

Urban Growth: The demand for water and sanitation services in urban areas is rapidly growing due to a high growth rate (estimated at an average of 5.2 percent per year) and the influx of internal migrants in certain cities. A persistent migration tendency toward the more fertile South means that the cities in the South are growing faster than in the North and the Center of the country. According to a World Bank-funded study from 2023, the population in the SOMAPEP/SOMAGEP service area will increase to 12.4 million in 2030 and to 18.6 million in 2040 or by 50 percent, thus requiring the construction of more than 48,000 household connections and 13,100 public standpipes and water kiosks per year to meet the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6—access to safe WASH as the most basic human need for health and well-being. Billions of people will lack access to these basic services in 2030 unless progress quadruples in 2030.

Increasing Water Insecurity: Total renewable freshwater resources in Mali are well above the average in sub-Saharan Africa, and most renewable water supplies are from surface water. Mali has abundant water resources along the Niger and Senegal rivers and the Inner Niger Delta in the country's center. Almost all of Mali's major urban centers are along these rivers; these cities will continue to have adequate access to potable water as long as the necessary funds are provided for water treatment and distribution infrastructure. However, populated areas located away from rivers face significant water stress. Due to climate change, Mali's central and northern regions face lower rainfall, higher temperatures, and increased rainfall variability. These factors threaten agricultural production and undercut the reliability of surface and groundwater resources. Additionally, climate change is affecting Mali's water resources, with increased temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns leading to more frequent droughts and floods, affecting the availability and quality of water. The duration and severity of droughts will increase, while hotter temperatures will raise evaporation rates and reduce the overall surface water supply. The highly variable inter-seasonal and inter-annual flow of the Niger River, combined with more frequent and severe droughts, have reduced dry season water availability in central and eastern Mali. Specifically, upstream irrigation and hydroelectric power generation reduce downstream flows required to sustain river stages and flood levels critical to fluvial transportation, agriculture, fisheries, and viable animal husbandry in the dry season.

Reliance on Rainfed Agriculture: Mali's economy is highly dependent on rainfed agriculture and pastoral activities. Agriculture accounts for over 40 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and 80 percent of livelihoods. Unfortunately, year-to-year growth rates have been highly variable due to vulnerability to weather irregularities and external shocks. Despite Mali's dependence on agricultural production, most of Mali's cultivated land remains subject to seasonal variations in rainfall. Due to climate change and rapid population growth, the traditional methods of rainfed farming cannot guarantee sufficient income and food. The Government of Mali (GOM) estimates that only 34 percent of Mali's irrigation potential has been realized.

NATIONAL PRIORITIES

The Malian transition government's water sector priorities are outlined in its National Drinking Water Program 2022–2030 (*Programme Nationale d'Accès à l'Eau Potable*). The National Sanitation Policy (*Politique Nationale d'Assainissement*) governs the sanitation sector. The documents lay out infrastructure needs and priorities for the entire country. SOMAGEP is responsible for services in over 90 urban centers. In addition, the GOM created a financial and technical monitoring unit (*Suivi Technique et Financier*, STEFFI) on October 9, 2018, to support rural services. To achieve this, six zones were created, each with a primary operator supporting rural systems.

Mali's decentralization process transferred asset ownership and contracting authority for WASH services to the communes; however, structural weaknesses in local authorities' procedures and personnel systems still hinder implementation, including the lack of funding transfers from national and regional tax revenues to the communes. Since Mali's parliament passed the landmark 2017 decentralization law, communes, the lowest level of formal government, have been delegated responsibility for planning, financing, constructing, and overseeing water and sanitation infrastructure. Fecal sludge collection services and treatment are also the responsibilities of communes.

The process for devolved services and funding at the commune level starts with a five-year planning process (*Programmes de Développement Économique Social et Culturel* [PDSEC]) that outlines development objectives, medium-

term investment needs, challenges, and opportunities. The Malian transition government's funding for communal PDSEC plans is the responsibility of the presidentially-appointed governor of each region. The Malian transition authorities signed a bylaw in 2018 that requires all piped water systems in rural and semi-urban areas to be managed under a three-way contract with the water operator, the commune, and an independent contractor who monitors the technical and financial performance of the water systems and reports back to the stakeholders (*Suivi Technique et Financier*, STEFI).

There is a significant need for investment in water and sanitation infrastructure in Mali. This is an opportunity for private sector investments and public-private partnerships to improve access to clean water and up-to-date sanitation facilities. The transition government's allocation to WASH was 2.62 percent of the national budget in 2018, doubling from 1.23 percent in 2017. This rate constitutes 10 to 15 percent of the total financing of the sector by all actors. In 2017, Mali estimated the cost to achieve SDG 6 to be \$162 million per year for essential services and \$668 million annually to meet universal access to safely managed water and sanitation services, a deficit of \$415 million per year.

USAID APPROACH AND RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The USAID/Mali country plan will span the GWS and cover elements in each of the four strategic objectives. Over the next five years of implementation of the GWS (2022–2027), USAID/Mali will focus on the Anka Jiko Activity in rural and peri-urban areas of Sikasso, Bougouni, and Kotiala regions, Yanude, a new urban activity, and a water resource management activity. These activities include USAID/Mali humanitarian WASH response.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE I

Strengthen Water and Sanitation Sector Governance, Financing, Institutions, and Markets

To increase governance and respective support institutions in the sector, USAID/Mali will provide technical assistance to SOMAPEP and SOMAGEP in urban areas and STEFFI in rural areas. Support will focus on the planning, financing, and implementation of infrastructure and related services. Emphasis will be on reliable operations and maintenance arrangements and equity and accessibility of the resulting services in urban and rural areas. Our program will combine all infrastructure support with capacity building in planning, operations, and maintenance to increase the sustainability of services. USAID/Mali will seek to ensure proper tariff setting in all infrastructure work. USAID/Mali will support measures that bolster the sector's institutional framework and provide sustainable fecal sludge management services.

USAID/Mali will also leverage the work of other bilateral donors, such as Germany, Netherlands, and Belgium, in the water sector to achieve sustained results. USAID will collaborate with Germany and the service authorities to support fecal sludge management. USAID/Mali will also support reform of policies and regulations, institutional procedures, and tariffs and provide technical assistance to develop and build capacity for viable business models for existing infrastructure.

Generally, USAID interventions will promote viable business fundamentals for service providers, including a focus on collection fees, cost-recovery, and customer services. In the sanitation sector specifically, USAID will work with local authorities to advance collection and disposal fees and seek opportunities for further private sector participation in safe transport and disposal. To increase funding flows, USAID/Mali will promote sustainable business models, advocate for increased public investment, and seek to expand market finance for investments that allow for performance gains, cost savings, and short pay-back periods.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Increase Equitable Access to Safe, Sustainable, and Climate-Resilient Drinking Water and Sanitation Services and Adoption of Key Behaviors

USAID/Mali will support the development and scaling of viable drinking water and sanitation service models, including those that focus on or ensure at least basic services for low-income and marginalized populations. USAID/Mali will strengthen water safety, quality, and quantity monitoring systems and build the capacity of service providers to undertake routine water quality testing. Additionally, USAID/Mali will improve access to water in institutional settings, including health care facilities and schools, by working with government partners to integrate WASH into overall planning and monitoring processes. Activities will complement nutrition-specific interventions and address WASH objectives that are required to improve nutrition and health outcomes.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Improve Climate-Resilient Conservation and Management of Freshwater Resources and Associated Ecosystems

USAID/Mali will promote more sustainable and holistic use of water resources and more equitable, robust water resource planning and allocation of water across users and ecosystems within river basins. A broad range of stakeholders will be engaged to identify water-related risks and trade-offs, develop solutions to improve the quantity and quality of available resources, and advance more equitable and efficient water allocation. Activities will support improved collection and routine use of hydro-meteorological data, including surface and groundwater, to understand water availability and use at multiple spatial and temporal scales. USAID/Mali will also facilitate the development of catchment and basin water management plans and support capacity development for government, the private sector, and civil society professionals responsible for creating and implementing inclusive water resources management policies and procedures. USAID/Mali will promote low-cost solutions to help retain water in the soil to increase vegetation in pastoral areas and crop productivity in agricultural fields, including rainwater harvesting to conserve groundwater and provide options in arid regions. USAID/Mali will facilitate joint efforts and partnerships among key actors, development agencies, and humanitarian partners and participate effectively in the technical and financial partners' operating group regarding water resources management. Finally, USAID/Mali will support the construction of small-scale irrigation structures and provide technical assistance for improved on-farm water management, maintenance, and operation of the infrastructure and equipment.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Anticipate and Reduce Conflict and Fragility Related to Water

USAID/Mali will seek opportunities to increase the complementarity and integration between humanitarian response and development programming. The Mission's humanitarian programming focuses on emergency interventions such as water supply in internally displaced persons sites and communities, sanitation, hygiene promotion, environmental health, and distribution of non-food items (e.g., soap, water containers) in northern and central Mali. Its WASH development programming will focus more on supporting service providers to prioritize infrastructure repair/rehabilitation post-disaster through analysis of needs or helping authorities establish cost-recovery tariffs or user fees, including special provisions to reach vulnerable populations in shock-affected areas when appropriate. USAID/Mali, through its Resilience Food Security Activity (RFSA), will strengthen Water Management Committees' capacity in the areas of water infrastructure operations and maintenance, water resource conservation, conflict management between water users, and micro-watershed management. USAID/Mali will also conduct analyses of the impacts of

conflict on access to water and sanitation services for marginalized groups and use the findings in water service planning, infrastructure development, and scale-up efforts similar to the assessment conducted in Menaka.

USAID/Mali, through its development and humanitarian programming, will also take a shock-responsive approach in all its water investments, which means considering including the ability to employ WASH assets in anticipation of a shock to mitigate its impact and speed recovery once conditions subside. A shock-responsive approach to program design and implementation is also an adaptive approach, through which USAID/Mali will proactively anticipate and plan for shocks and changes in context and build in a high degree of programmatic and operational flexibility to be able to respond quickly and effectively at the appropriate scale. An adaptive, shock-responsive approach will be used in several situations, such as a drought or flood, and changing focus from one crop to another. In addition, USAID/Mali will focus on developing and strengthening water, sanitation, and service delivery systems, which are also necessary in shock-affected communities.

PRINCIPLES

USAID/Mali will integrate the Operating Principles of the GWS into its programming. Through Anka Jiko and the new urban activity, the Mission focuses on **strengthening national and local systems** as both activities seek to increase the capacity of local stakeholders to provide sustainable water services. USAID/Mali will also **leverage data, research, learning, and innovation** by strengthening STEFFI and SOMAGEP and working together with other donors. Through its shock responsive programming and the collaboration between humanitarian and development programming, the Mission ensures that it focuses on **meeting the needs of marginalized and underserved people and communities and those in vulnerable situations** and on **incorporating resilience**.

MISSION RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The country plan also aligns with the new USAID/Mali Country Development and Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) through:

Development Objective (DO) 1: Improved governance for more vital democratic institutions (Intermediate Result (IR) 1.3 Institutional capacity in crucial sectors strengthened to improve public services).

DO 2: Solidified and deepened development gains in targeted areas (IR 2.1 Improvements in health status sustained and IR 2.2 Inclusive and sustainable agricultural and economic growth strengthened).

Special Objective: Improved outcomes across humanitarian, development, and peace nexus to save lives and increase resiliency (IR 3.2 Respond to humanitarian needs and reduce vulnerabilities for populations most severely impacted by conflict and climate-induced shocks and stresses).

KEY RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Conflict: Mali has been experiencing conflicts and instability since a coup in 2012. Terrorist elements inhabit the country's north, and the insurgency line has progressively moved southward. Conflict affects programming as some regions of the country are inaccessible, and thousands of internally displaced people converge into less conflict-prone areas. In addition, water resource use and depletion are fundamental sources of inter-community conflict in central Mali.⁴ The Civil Society White Book on Peace and Security, released in 2019, results from three years of quantitative and qualitative studies on local civil society actors' needs and perceptions of security. The book noted that the root causes of the current Mali peace and political crisis, including structural state weakness, are yet to be addressed. Access to water (along with electricity and health care) was among the listed security-linked concerns of Malians.

USAID/Mali will continue to monitor the situation.

Geopolitical challenges: Mali has been facing various geopolitical challenges. One of the key issues is the ongoing conflict between the government and different armed groups, including separatists and Islamist militants. This conflict has created a humanitarian crisis, with many civilians displaced from their homes and struggling to access necessities like water and sanitation services. Additionally, Mali is located in a region that is prone to terrorism and other forms of violence, which makes it unstable and insecure. The country also faces economic challenges, with high poverty and unemployment exacerbating tensions. Overall, the geopolitical challenges in Mali are complex and multifaceted and

will require sustained effort from both domestic and international actors to change.

Currently, USAID/Mali operates under a Notwithstanding Authority as outlined in Section 7058(a) of the FY 2020 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Act (SFOAA) and a similar provision in the FY 2019 and prior fiscal year SFOAAs, Section 7032(b) of the FY 2020 SFOAA and similar provisions in previous year SFOAAs, and Section 133 of the Foreign Assistance Act, as amended, using Development Assistance funds related to WASH, and democracy and governance program areas, respectively. The referenced Not Withstanding Authority (NWA) provisions permit funds appropriated by the respective SFOAAs to be made available for assistance with the described Mission's WASH activities.

Political shifts: Political shifts in Mali can have significant risks and implications for the water sector, such as disruption of policy and regulatory frameworks, delayed infrastructure projects, budgetary constraints, limited institutional capacity, and inadequate stakeholder engagement. USAID/Mali will encourage long-term development planning to mitigate these risks. Developing and implementing comprehensive water sector plans that transcend political cycles can provide stability and continuity in water management. In addition, USAID/Mali will support institutional strength and capacity building. Establishing stable institutions with a competent staff is crucial.

Finally, USAID/Mali will continue to encourage multilateral stakeholder participation. Promoting inclusive and participatory decision-making processes, including government agencies, civil society organizations, water users, and local communities is essential. This will encourage diverse perspectives, ensure accountability, and build consensus around water sector policies and projects. By incorporating these mitigation measures, Mali can reduce the risks associated with political shifts and ensure the sustainable development of the water sector, improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation services for its population.

Climate change: Climate change will damage Malian water and sanitation infrastructure, disrupting service delivery to the population. Mitigation measures include conducting vulnerability assessments of existing infrastructure, retrofitting or reinforcing them to withstand climate-related risks, and incorporating climate change considerations into the design and construction of new infrastructure. In addition, USAID/Mali interventions will ensure that institutional capacity and emergency response plans address infrastructure failures. Engaging communities in climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts is crucial. Therefore, USAID/Mali will educate communities on the impact of climate on water supply and sanitation services. We will also encourage water conservation practices at the household level, such as rainwater harvesting and efficient water use, and promote good hygiene and sanitation practices to prevent waterborne diseases and improve public health/nutrition outcomes. It is important to note that implementing these mitigation measures requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, local communities, and international partners. In addition, financial resources, technical expertise, and strong governance are necessary to effectively address climate change risks and ensure water supply and sanitation sustainability in Mali.

BUDGET

Activities will be financed with prior year resources still available for programming, the FY 2022 estimated allocation of \$6 million, and future years' funds.

EXPECTED RESULTS

From 2022 to 2027, USAID activities are estimated to provide Mali with:



Basic drinking water services for **185,000 people**

Safely managed drinking water services for **100,000 people**

Improved service quality from an existing basic or safely managed drinking water service for **150,000 people**



Access to safe sanitation services for **35,000 people**



\$5 million mobilized for the water and sanitation sectors



70 water and sanitation sector institutions strengthened to manage water resources or improve water supply and sanitation service



Access to basic water services for **40 health care facilities**

Endnotes

- 1 Ministère de l'Énergie et de l'Eau de la République du Mali, Programme National d'Accès À L'Eau Potable, 2022
- 2 World Health Organization, [Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2020: Five years into the SDGs](#), 2021.
- 3 Institut National de la Statistique, Enquête Nutritionnelle Anthropométrique et de Mortalité Rétrospective, 12e Édition, Septembre 2022.
- 4 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, [Livres Blanc de la Société Civile pour la Paix et la Sécurité au Mali](#), January 31, 2019.