MALI

Some 130 schools were looted, destroyed or used by armed groups and government forces during fighting in the north of the country, notably in 2012 and early 2013.The conflict caused widespread disruption of education.[1041]

CONTEXT

Conflict erupted in northern Mali in early 2012 when Tuareg insurgents began pushing for autonomy. A military coup in March undermined the government's response to the conflict, leading to considerable political instability,[1042] and by April the armed groups had consolidated control over the northern regions of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal.[1043]

The Tuaregs drove the Malian army out of the north in April 2012, formed an alliance with armed Islamist groups – Ansar Dine, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa – and declared the area to be an Islamic state. Ansar Dine began imposing strict Sharia law and the armed Islamist groups soon turned on their Tuareg allies, taking control of most of northern Mali's cities.[1044] In January 2013, after the armed Islamists launched an offensive southward, the Malian government asked France for assistance in driving back the armed groups. Within several months, the joint efforts of the French, Malians and other African troops had largely cleared the Islamists from their strongholds.[1045]

The armed conflict in the north caused hundreds of thousands of civilians to flee, including most teachers and school administrators, and temporarily reversed gains in education access and quality.[1046] In February 2013, 86 per cent of pupils remaining in the north were still without education.[1047] By October 2013, tens of thousands of civilians had returned to the northern regions but the conflict, large-scale displacement and the accompanying disruption of schooling adversely affected education for hundreds of thousands of children.[1048]

In 2011, net primary enrolment was 71 per cent, net secondary enrolment was 34 per cent and gross tertiary enrolment was 7 per cent.[1049] Approximately 31 per cent of adults were literate.[1050]

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

The Education Cluster reported in March 2013 that 130 schools had been occupied, looted or destroyed, although it is not specified whether all of the latter were targeted.[1051] Schools throughout the north were damaged while being pillaged, primarily by the Tuareg insurgents, but also, to a lesser extent, by armed Islamist groups and local populations.[1052] Landmines and unexploded ordnance located in and around schools in conflict-affected communities also placed thousands of children at risk and, in at least one case, damaged a school in Bourem in 2012.[1053]

MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS

In August 2012, NGOs reported that armed groups were using 21 schools.[1054] According to the UN, in September 2012, military troops and pro-government militia, notably the 'Ganda-koi', were using at least 14 schools in the region of Mopti, affecting 4,886 students.[1055]

Human Rights Watch identified 18 places, including private, public and Koranic schools, where armed Islamist groups were reportedly training new recruits, including children as young as 11. For example, one witness described seeing some 20 children both studying the Koran and receiving weapons' training at a Koranic school in a northern town in July 2012.[1056]

ATTACKS ON EDUCATION IN 2013

During the first part of 2013, French aerial bombardment was reported to have damaged several schools allegedly being used by armed groups[1057] including one in Bourem, one in Douentza, one in Timbuktu town and at least one other in Diabaly.[1058] In early January, a schoolyard shared by a primary school and a secondary school in Konna was occupied by Malian Armed Forces as they prepared for combat, closing the schools for nearly a month.[1059] Landmines and unexploded ordnance located in and around schools continued to place students and teachers at risk.[1060]

ENDNOTES MALI

[1041] This profile covers attacks on education in 2009-2012, with an additional section on attacks in 2013.

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[1043] Scott Baldauf, "Mali coup leaders pledge to hand over power as Tuareg rebels take Timbuktu," The Christian Science Monitor, 2 April 2012.

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[1045] "French troops in Mali take Kidal, last Islamist holdout," BBC News, 31 January 2013.

[1046] Information provided by Human Rights Watch on 30 May 2013; and Rick Gladstone, "U.N. Official Sees Desperation, Hunger and Fear on Visit to Mali," New York Times, 26 February 2013.

[1047] "Schools Re-open in Mali's Timbuktu," IRIN, 4 February 2013; UNSC, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/67/845– S/2013/245, 15 May 2013, para 97.

[1048] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and Norwegian Refugee Council, "MALI: Stability slowly returning but durable solutions a remote possibility for many IDPs," 11 October 2013, 7, 11; and information provided by Human Rights Watch on 18 November 2013.

[1049] UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), "Education (all levels) Profile - Mali," UIS Statistics in Brief (2011).

[1050] The World Bank, "Literacy rate – Adult, total," The World Bank Data (2010).

[1051] Global Education Cluster, "Mali 2013: Education Cluster Bulletin – March 2013".

[1052] HRW, "Testimony of Corinne Dufka before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on African Affairs," 5 December 2012.

[1053] Global Education Cluster, "Mali 2013: Education Cluster Bulletin – March 2013"; Global Education Cluster, Evaluation

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rapide à distance - Situation et besoins éducatifs au Nord du Mali (Gao – Kidal – Mopti – Tombouctou) Août 2012, August 2012, 7.

[1054] Global Education Cluster, "Mali 2013: Education Cluster Bulletin – March 2013"; and Global Education Cluster, Evaluation rapide à distance - Situation et besoins éducatifs au Nord du Mali (Gao – Kidal – Mopti – Tombouctou) Août 2012, August 2012, 10.

[1055] For detailed list of schools occupied and number of students affected, see Ministère de l'Education de l'Alphabétisation et de la Promotion des Langues Nationales and Mali Education Cluster, "Analysis of Flood Affected and Occupied Schools in Southern Mali – September 2012"; UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Mali: Complex Emergency," Situation Report No.16, 26 September 2012, 5; and UNICEF, "Mali Situation Report," 30 September 2012, 2.

[1056] HRW, "Mali: Islamist Armed Groups Spread Fear in North," 25 September 2012.

[1057] Ministère de l'Education, de l'Alphabétisation et de la Promotion des Langues Nationales and Mali Education Cluster, Rapport d÷ valuation des besoins éducatifs dans les régions du Nord du Mali (Gao et Tombouctou), July 2013, 12.

[1058] Mali Education Cluster, "Task Force Meeting Minutes," 31 January 2013; ACTED, Evaluation de la situation humanitaire – Cercle de Niono (Mali), 12 February 2013; Ministère de l'Education, de l'Alphabétisation et de la Promotion des Langues Nationales and Mali Education Cluster, Rapport d÷ valuation des besoins éducatifs dans les régions du Nord du Mali (Gao et Tombouctou), July 2013, 12; and information provided by Human Rights Watch on 18 November 2013.

[1059] Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, Where are they…?: The situation of children and armed conflict in Mali (New York: Watchlist, June 2013), 26.

[1060] Global Education Cluster, "Mali 2013: Education Cluster Bulletin – March 2013".