

Donor dilemmas in the Sahel

How the EU can better support civil society in Mali and Niger

Delina Goxho and Assitan Diallo

March 2023

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SPAN

This paper has been carried out in the framework of the Security Policy Alternatives Network (SPAN). The US, European countries, the UN Security Council and other powerful nations and coalitions are heavily invested in military, technical, financial and diplomatic 'security' initiatives that often end up worsening and perpetuating the very conflicts they are supposed to stop or prevent. Decisions about these initiatives are made without consulting the people most affected and those working to promote peace and rights. If we are serious about keeping people safe, protecting their rights and building just and lasting peace around the world – this must change.

SPAN is an initiative of expert voices from countries badly affected by current trends, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Mali and the Sahel, the Philippines, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen, and their colleagues working on security policy in Western policy centres such as Washington DC, New York, London, Brussels, Paris and Berlin.

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------------|--|
| CSO | Civil society organisation |
| EDF | European Development Fund |
| EU | European Union |
| EUCAP | European Union Capacity Building Mission |
| EUTF | European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa |
| FPI | Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (EU) |
| GBV | Gender-based violence |
| INGO | International non-governmental organisation |
| SSR | Security sector reform |
| UN | United Nations |

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Cover photo – A French soldier walks among women shopping in a covered market. Gao, Mali.

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A view of central Agadez next to the mosque.
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Executive summary

The European Union (EU) has positioned itself as an important partner to civil society in the Sahel region.¹ The EU's 2021 revised Sahel strategy² and the accompanying N'Djamena Communiqué³ demonstrate its aspirations to promote stabilisation through rights-based human security, accountability in all security interventions based on a 'do no harm' approach, as well as funding mechanisms that prioritise 'bottom-up initiatives' through local civil society organisations (CSOs). However, the experiences of civil society in Mali and Niger do not currently reflect these intentions.

In this report we analyse the stabilisation dilemmas facing the EU, some of which are clearly of its own making, and the steps it needs to take in order to fulfil its aspirations to support a 'civilian surge' that can contribute to improving human security and governance, and a robust civil society presence across the region.⁴ As these dynamics represent a vast area of policy development and implementation, we focus on one particular strand: how the EU has supported CSOs in Mali and in Niger, especially regarding funding for peacebuilding, community security and conflict prevention programmes. We highlight how the current funding status quo has negatively affected civil society in both these countries, how this represents a missed opportunity for the EU, and the value for the EU in addressing this through a strategic shift in how it partners with Sahelian civil society. These lessons are also relevant to discussions about partnering with CSOs elsewhere in the world.

The EU has long-standing partnerships with some CSOs in the Sahel, occasionally soliciting civil society conflict analysis and advice about the areas in which it operates.

But these partnerships are being undermined by the funding status quo. "Taking into account the stances of local civil society amount [sic] to nothing if priorities are not mirrored in financing."⁵ **Our findings strongly indicate that current EU funding mechanisms effectively exclude many Sahelian CSOs from managing peacebuilding and security initiatives in their own countries. For example, between 2019 and 2022, just two Nigerien CSOs received direct EU funding for implementing projects.**

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In the cases of Mali and Niger, when CSOs do receive EU support, this is overwhelmingly done via consortia with larger international agencies or international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), or else CSOs are contracted as third-party implementers, with international entities acting as intermediaries between them and the EU. This approach is not only costlier for the EU but it also marginalises Sahelian civil society from participating in debates and decisions regarding the future of its region.

The impacts of this funding approach include depriving civil society of its voice and its agency to manage violent conflicts and community security in contextually appropriate ways,

through local ownership (the only truly sustainable way to work in partnership), and to promote lasting change. It also contributes to a growing perception of the EU's distance from political developments in Mali and Niger, with European officials relying on feedback from international intermediaries. The case for the EU to change its approach is compelling, and this report strengthens it further. We conclude our analysis with practical recommendations on how the EU can strengthen its partnerships with civil society across the Sahel, contribute more effectively to building more conflict-resistant communities across the region, and foster more accountable governance structures, as laid out in the aspirations of its 2021 Sahel strategy.

Methodology

The main methodology for this research was qualitative, involving a mixture of interviews and desk-based research. Instead of basing our main findings solely on European programme documents or policy statements, we interviewed Brussels-based policy officials, EU representatives in Mali and Niger, including European diplomatic staff based in the region, and members of CSOs and NGOs.⁶ The fieldwork took place in Brussels from January to September 2021, and in Niger (Niamey and Agadez) and Mali (Bamako) from November 2021 to September 2022.

Our analysis focuses on EU financing of Sahelian CSOs, particularly the implementation of the stabilisation and governance components of the EU Sahel strategy. The current context in the central Sahel seems to be a case of 'biting the hand that feeds you'. Indeed, a common complaint among people in the Sahel is that the EU is following its own agenda while ignoring people's real concerns. In this report we sought to examine the facts through a close look at direct EU funding in the Sahel, and to understand various stakeholders' perspectives. Above all, we wanted to understand the challenges the EU faces in directly funding CSOs in the region. EU staff perceptions of international and local partners (INGOs as well as Sahelian CSOs and consortia) were therefore of particular interest to us. When we met with CSO representatives working on governance and stabilisation, we asked whether they receive direct funding from

an EU structure. Our interviews also focused on the types of projects being financed, CSOs' relations with EU funders and their experiences of consortia. When interviewing members of INGOs receiving direct EU funding for programmes or projects on governance and stabilisation, we asked about their challenges working with local CSOs and their perspectives on local organisations' ability to deliver similar projects with similar results.⁷

*'Stabilisation could be defined as a set of swift actions aimed at creating conditions supportive of a **political process**, helping countries and/or communities to prevent or reduce violence, and initiating efforts to address the drivers of conflicts and the consequences of a crisis.'*

European External Action Service, 2017⁸

However, although stabilisation is mentioned over 20 times in the 2021 revised Sahel strategy, the term is open to a diverse array of interpretations and continues to be a major topic of discussion. EU Member States, such as Germany, have recently developed an integrated support model for stabilisation,⁹ and – based on the EU working document and ongoing discussions on the EU stabilisation – the EEAS is currently developing an action plan on the subject. CSOs often advocate for a wider definition that better reflects the experience of people in conflict-affected countries and what they feel 'stability' looks like, rather than one with a narrow security perspective. The definition may therefore evolve.

Notes

- 1 For the purposes of this report, the 'Sahel' refers to Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.
- 2 Council of the European Union (2021), 'Council conclusions on the European Union's Integrated Strategy in the Sahel', 19 April (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/04/19/sahel-council-approves-conclusions-on-the-eu-s-integrated-strategy-in-the-region/>)
- 3 Office of the French Presidency (2021), 'Communiqué final du Sommet de N'Djamena', 16 February (<https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2021/02/16/communique-final-du-sommet-de-ndjamena>). Prior to the publication of the 2021 EU Sahel strategy, heads of state of the Group of Five (G5) countries met with partners on 16 February 2021 in N'Djamena, Chad, to review the situation in the Sahel and take stock of the commitments made at the Pau Summit on 13 January 2020.
- 4 The term 'stabilisation' has been criticised in peacebuilding literature, mostly because of the lack of clarity around what the term means. See Mac Ginty R (2012), 'Against Stabilisation', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 1 (1), pp 20–30 (<https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.ab>); and Raineri L, Strazzari F (2019), '(B)ordering Hybrid Security? EU Stabilisation Practices in the Sahara-Sahel Region', *Ethnopolitics* 18 (5), pp 544–559 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2019.1640509>), who choose to analyse EU stabilisation *practices* instead of *discourse*, precisely because of the lack of clarity around the term. Despite this, we recognise the need to use this term when discussing European interventions in the central Sahel, since the new EU Sahel strategy mentions the word approximately 20 times.
- 5 Goxho D (2021), 'Unpacking the EU's New Sahel Strategy', Egmont Institute, 22 April (<https://www.egmontinstitute.be/unpacking-the-eus-new-sahel-strategy/>)
- 6 In Mali, the interviewees included nine representatives of European institutions and 12 from Malian CSOs/NGOs.
- 7 The questionnaire used during the interviews can be found in Annex I.
- 8 European External Action Service (2017), 'EEAS/Commission services' issues paper suggesting parameters for a concept on Stabilisation as part of the EU Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises', EEAS(2017)1554, 8 December (<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15622-2017-INIT/en/pdf>)
- 9 German Federal Foreign Office, 'Shaping stabilisation: Foreign and security policy strategy for an integrated action for peace', December



A women's gardening group
in Diaba Peul in the circle of
Sofara, Mopti.

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1

The European Union stabilisation mantra

There are major discrepancies between Brussels' rhetoric on the European Union's (EU) unwavering support for Sahelian civil society and the experiences of civil society organisations (CSOs) in Mali and Niger of dealing with EU representatives and institutions.

The EU rhetoric – from those representing, among others, the European Directorate-General for International Partnerships (INTPA), the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) – is that the EU supports Sahelian CSOs to contribute to ‘stabilisation’.¹⁰ However, Malian and Nigerien CSOs report feeling marginalised both from debates on stabilisation policy and from funding opportunities to implement stabilisation-related projects or programmes.

As previously noted, the EU has positioned itself as an important partner to CSOs in Mali and Niger. The arrest and detention of prominent civil society activists in Mali and Niger, including the Malian anti-corruption campaigner Clément Dembélé in May 2020,¹¹ show just how much Sahelian civil society is in need of this support. But these efforts have been undermined by a lack of opportunities for civil society to discuss its priorities directly with EU policymakers, and for Sahelian CSOs to design, and directly implement, programmes that can address the complex issues they face.¹² For example, when the then-EU Special Representative to the Sahel, Angel Losada, was seeking to address violent conflict in the region, he focused exclusively on lobbying EU Member States and engaging with the Group of Five (G5) Sahelian governments, and failed to engage meaningfully with civil society or substantially promote the role of civil society.¹³ Talk of a ‘civilian surge’ and a better role for Sahelian CSOs, as highlighted in the 2021 Sahel strategy as essential to long-lasting stability, seems increasingly hollow.

When the Council of the EU adopted a European strategy for security and development in the Sahel in March 2011, its main objective was to promote a nexus between development and security in the region in order to reduce insecurity.¹⁴ Four years later, the EU Foreign Affairs Council adopted the Sahel Regional Action Plan (2015–2020), which focused more squarely on security and less on development. The EU Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF) for Africa was also established in 2015, after the Valletta summit,¹⁵ to fund programmes addressing the root causes of migration into Libya, Algeria and Europe, and to contribute to better migration management, with a focus on three regions: the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa.

From 2015, violence escalated across the Sahel, especially in Mali and the Lake Chad Basin, fuelled by military coups, intercommunity conflicts and increasing abuse of civilians by non-state armed groups, as well as by national security forces.¹⁶ These dynamics, alongside a chronic lack of economic opportunities, pushed some civilians (mainly men) to defend themselves by organising self-defence groups – thereby contributing to further civilian casualties. Data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) shows that the impetus for counter-insurgency continues to have a disastrous effect on the civilian population.¹⁷

In response to the deteriorating security landscape, in April 2021 the EU redesigned its Sahel strategy.¹⁸ The new strategy crystallised a long-term vision for the Sahel, with a stronger focus on stabilisation and governance.¹⁹ Delving deeper into the strategy, two new areas of focus emerge: mutual accountability and a ‘civilian surge’. This surge, according to the strategy, would emerge from increased collaboration between the EU and Sahelian civil society. For the EU, stabilisation extends beyond the

humanitarian-security-development nexus; it also includes diplomatic and political actions. The four main areas of focus in the Sahel strategy are:

1. development, good governance and internal conflict resolution

2. politics and diplomacy

3. security and the rule of law

4. the fight against extremist violence and radicalisation

Each of these components arguably includes elements of stabilisation, complicating the situation for Sahelian CSOs wishing to access EU funds – who must now (in the words of one Nigerien CSO member) give their projects a “stabilisation twist”, making them about “community cohesion, addressing insecurity, stemming violent extremism”.²⁰ At the time of writing, there have been two institutional, in-depth analyses of EU stabilisation actions in the Sahel: a 2018 evaluation by the Court of Auditors of EU Common Security and Defence Policy missions in the Sahel,²¹ and a 2020 analysis by the European Parliamentary Research Service. Both noted a lack of transparency, especially regarding the allocation of resources.²²

The graph below illustrates the EU Action Plan for the five-year period between 2015 and 2020. EU stabilisation actions, funded by mechanisms such as the EUTF, the European Development Fund (EDF) and the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), are conceived at the European level as a mixture of security and development actions – which, it might be assumed, would involve funding community-level projects. However, we found that the majority of the funding is allocated to Sahelian governments, United Nations (UN) agencies and INGOs.

Notes

- 10 Saferworld interviews with Brussels-based policy officials (INTPA, EEAS), April–June 2022.
- 11 Daniel S (2020), ‘Mali: arrestation de Clément Dembélé, figure de la lutte anticorruption’, *RFI*, 11 May (<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20200511-mali-arrestation-cl%C3%A9ment-demb%C3%A9l%C3%A9-lutte-anticorruption>)
- 12 Guiryman O, Montanaro L, Rätty T (2021), ‘European Security Assistance: the search for stability in the Sahel’, Saferworld, September (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1368-european-security-assistance-the-search-for-stability-in-the-sahel>)
- 13 Pye K (2021), ‘The Sahel: Europe’s Forever War?’, Centre for European Reform, March (<https://www.cer.eu/publications/archive/policy-brief/2021/sahel-europes-forever-war>)
- 14 European External Action Service (2016), ‘Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel’, 21 June (https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategy-security-and-development-sahel-1_en)
- 15 European Council, ‘Valletta Summit on migration, 11–12 November 2015’ (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2015/11/11-12/>)
- 16 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (2020), ‘The impact of the Malian crisis on the Group of Five Sahel countries: Balancing security and development priorities’, 18 May (<https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-background/2020/impact-malian-crisis-group-five-sahel-countries-balancing-security-and-development-priorities>); Human Rights Watch (2019), ‘“We Found Their Bodies Later That Day”: Atrocities by Armed Islamists and Security Forces in Burkina Faso’s Sahel Region’, March (<https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/03/22/we-found-their-bodies-later-day/atrocities-armed-islamists-and-security-forces>); Guiryman, Montanaro, Rätty, op. cit.; Montanaro L (2022), ‘Insecurity in the Sahel: rethinking Europe’s response’, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, April (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1387-insecurity-in-the-sahel-rethinking-europes-response>); Waugh L (2022), ‘How not to lose the Sahel: Community perspectives on insecurity and international interventions in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso’, Saferworld, February (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1385-how-not-to-lose-the-sahel-community-perspectives-on-insecurity-and-international-interventions-in-mali-niger-and-burkina-faso>)
- 17 The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) (2020), ‘State Atrocities in the Sahel: The Impetus for Counterinsurgency Results is Fueling Government Attacks on Civilians’, May (<https://acleddata.com/2020/05/20/state-atrocities-in-the-sahel-the-impetus-for-counter-insurgency-results-is-fueling-government-attacks-on-civilians/>); ACLED (2021), ‘Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines’, June (<https://acleddata.com/2021/06/17/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines/>)
- 18 Office of the French Presidency, op. cit.
- 19 Thurston A (2021), ‘The Hollowness of Governance Talks in and about the Sahel’, Italian Institute for International Political Studies, April (<https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/hollowness-governance-talk-and-about-sahel-30026>)
- 20 Author interview with a Nigerian CSO member.
- 21 The evaluation concludes that progress in the Sahel with regard to European external action has only been ‘slow and limited’: European Court of Auditors (2018), ‘Special report no 15/2018: Strengthening the capacity of the internal security forces in Niger and Mali: only limited and slow progress’, June (<https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=46030>)
- 22 EPRS (2020), ‘Understanding the EU Strategy for the Sahel’, September ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)652050](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2020)652050))



Members of the Malian army
march through a town square.

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2

EU funding for security assistance and peacebuilding

As previously noted, each of the four European priorities in the Sahel strategy contains a stabilisation element. One tenet of stabilisation (both in the Sahel and globally) is supporting security sector reform (SSR); in Mali and Niger, this is being sought through the 2016 EU-wide Strategic Framework to support Security Sector Reform.²³ This framework emphasises human security, inclusive governance, accountability of security institutions, and the important role of civil society in ensuring that EU security engagements support lasting peace and stability.

Out of the €710 million worth of projects supporting security forces in the Sahel since 2012, around €490 million has been allocated towards training and equipping security forces and strengthening ‘porous’ borders.²⁴ Between 2013 and 2019, EU Member States also provided donations in the form of military equipment and sold arms worth over €400 million to the region.²⁵ As we clarify below, carrying out the same analysis with regards to funding for civil society was impossible. However, we know that in Mali the funding available to CSOs and local authorities is barely eight per cent (representing around €25 million). These CSO funds are primarily allocated to programmes promoting SSR, implementation of the 2015 peace agreement, political decentralisation projects, and the promotion of an independent and equitable justice system. Regarding development projects, the largest portion of funds is earmarked for infrastructure, with an emphasis on roads to connect the northern and central regions of the country. Again, it is hard to determine how much of this funding is dedicated to peacebuilding projects.

In the Liptako-Gourma region (where Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso share a border) and the Lake Chad Basin – which includes Niger – national security forces are under-equipped to face non-state armed groups, although Nigerien and Malian security forces have received training and equipment from EUTF-funded programmes. These programmes have also supported the creation of military intelligence units embedded in national security systems (army, gendarmerie and police) to enhance the deployment and fighting capacities of national armies.²⁶

The EU's approach to stabilisation through security assistance also includes peacebuilding activities. Peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities in Mali and Niger have been implemented under the EUTF to rebuild trust between communities and improve state–citizen relations. In Niger, these activities included trust-building exercises involving community representatives and members of security and defence forces. However, while many of the participants and implementing partners were from Sahelian CSOs, only one such organisation – the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) – has been a direct recipient of EU funding for these activities since 2018.²⁷

The picture is slightly different in Mali, where a larger number of peacebuilding projects have been funded by European donors, but these are mostly managed by the Malian state or by international intermediaries (INGOs, the UN or through bilateral cooperation with EU Member State agencies). These projects have aimed to reduce insecurity through awareness-raising and information-gathering activities carried out by local CSOs; for example, a Norway-funded project on 'Research on Jihadism and Governance', or a European-funded project examining the role and extent of women's involvement in the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism. While all these projects retain a strong civilian component, they have significant flaws – in every case, they failed to empower the implementing CSOs and squandered opportunities to build trust between all parties.²⁸

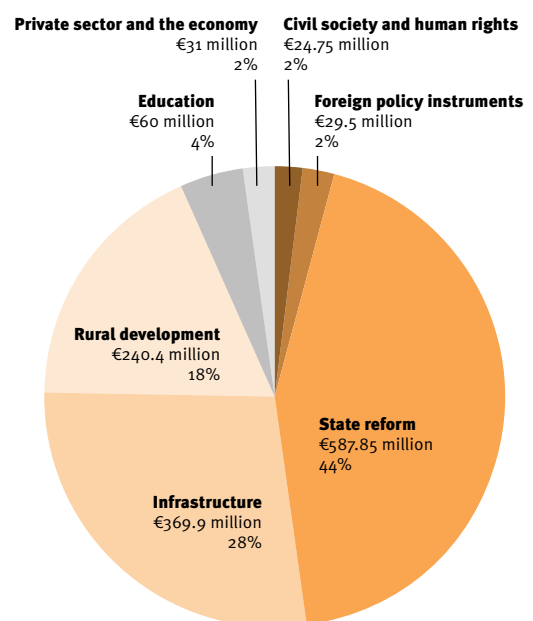
In Niger, civil society representatives have also been largely excluded from the design and implementation of the EU's security assistance and SSR efforts. In the (approximately 20) security assistance projects that we analysed, only a few included local organisations as implementing partners. One Nigerien civil society representative working on gender and peacebuilding explained, "[one INGO] provided us with support for a project in 2020, and this was great; but we had some problems with the deliverables. They asked us mostly to work in areas that we did not think were relevant regarding the potential radicalisation of youth. The money they offered [us] for setting up trainings with 2,000 youth representatives was less than ten per cent of what they received from the [EU] donor just for managing us, and [for] quality assurance."²⁹ Another Nigerien NGO member commented on receiving funds only through large consortia, saying, "coordination

problems are huge and the lead organisation for this project is unreliable. They exclude us from all communication with the donor".³⁰ As we clarify in the recommendations section, donors such as the EU must work to change this unequal relationship.

EU delegations in Mali and Niger provide small pots of funding for local civil society, particularly women's rights organisations. However, these CSOs noted that this funding is mainly for the implementation of pre-defined objectives, such as preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) programmes aimed at reducing recruitment by non-state armed groups, with less focus on empowerment, resilience and reform. Because of the lack of direct EU dialogue with these CSOs, especially regarding their priorities, local peacebuilding perspectives are less visible in European policy discussions on Sahel stabilisation initiatives.³¹

While the EU has the tools to push for reform within the security sector – especially in Niger, where the Bazoum government has confirmed Niger's status as a European ally – it also has a responsibility to fund civil society to take part in SSR initiatives. Many EU-funded projects in Niger focus on SSR, and include a significant gender perspective; however, EU funding for SSR programmes is once again mainly delivered in partnership with large international organisations, which poses significant ownership and coordination problems.

Areas of funded interventions



Source: the EU Mission in Mali³²

A lack of direct funding to CSOs translates to less local ownership (and ‘buy-in’) of activities, and damages prospects for long-term, incremental and transformative change.

For example, we have witnessed how a lack of funding for CSOs generates fewer opportunities for dialogue between communities and security forces.

In both Mali and Niger, direct funding from the EU is not delivered through a bottom-up approach: funding is almost exclusively top-down, managed by the state or international intermediaries (INGOs, UN agencies or via EU Member State agencies in bilateral cooperation with the Malian state). For example, the Malian state receives a total of €912.05 million from the EDF. International intermediaries (again, INGOs, UN agencies or individual EU Member States) receive €375.2 million of EDF funding. Local authorities at the level of territorial communities, however, receive just €16.5 million. EDF support for civil society and human rights (€24.75 million) represents less than the budget for the FPI, which is €29.5 million.³³ The EU programme for Harmonisation and Innovation for the Benefit of Civil Society Initiatives of Social Utility (HIBISCUS) receives €4.75 million, while the remaining €20 million is managed by international intermediaries.

2.1 Community-led security

Civil society groups in the Sahel have long criticised the EU for prioritising short-term security interests while turning a blind eye to undemocratic leanings in the region.³⁴ The establishment of the EU Capacity Building Mission in the Sahel (EUCAP Sahel) civilian mission³⁵ to support both SSR and the rule of law was an attempt to have a more holistic approach to security. EUCAP Sahel currently has a budget of €87.47 million in Mali and a little over €72 million in Niger.³⁶

‘SSR can be seen as the EU’s main line of action in the region. In the EU’s support for SSR in the Sahel local ownership does not significantly feature. Border control and curbing migration have gained space, at least on paper, and SSR risks being hampered by limited local ownership and a transforming political mandate.’³⁷

In Mali, EUCAP Sahel is an important element of operationalising the EU Sahel strategy at the local level, including through the creation of security consultative committees – dialogue platforms for communities in areas particularly affected by armed violence. EUCAP does not provide CSOs with funding, but works instead with people from different institutions and sectors involved in community security programming to identify and find practical solutions to security threats. For this agenda to function, EUCAP Sahel has a civil society focal point as well as an expert in civil-military relations, who work closely with SSR commissioners, governors and mayors to foster trust between communities and national security forces.³⁸ However, in a national sample of 2,344 Malians, only 13 per cent had heard of EUCAP Sahel,³⁹ and the mission has been criticised by CSOs who claim it largely excludes them. What’s more, studies by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung have revealed the security consultative committees to be essentially non-functioning.⁴⁰

Some positive examples of EU funding can be found at the community level, regarding women’s rights in Mali. The EU has funded a variety of organisations, including regional councils, civil registry centres and CSOs, as well as individuals (especially young women and girls). Projects managed by intermediaries as part of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in Mali include ‘Anw Ka Ta’, which supports Koranic education, and the Spotlight Initiative, which promotes women’s and girls’ reproductive rights and fights against gender-based violence (GBV).

2.2 Gender and security assistance

EU gender-related funding does not always match the EU’s explicit commitment to gender equality in its institutions and actions implemented abroad. ‘To operationalise its normative commitment to gender equality and gender mainstreaming in third countries, EU missions use several strategies, such as “gender balancing” (promotion of equal participation of

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A lack of direct funding to CSOs translates to less local ownership (and ‘buy-in’) of activities, and damages prospects for long-term, incremental and transformative change.”

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men and women in security institutions), “gender inclusion” (creating oversight bodies with equal gender representation) and “gender mainstreaming” (assessing the gendered impact of all SSR measures).⁴¹ A case study of EUCAP Sahel Mali shows that the mission is having little impact on gender equality as it is too focused on technical details. The findings revealed that ‘a subtle approach to promoting gender equality norm [sic] via SSR has been adopted because any potential backlash from gender equality promotion interventions could alienate Malian political and military elites’.⁴²

The EU’s gender approach appears embedded within a larger effort at damage control to preserve its strategic objectives in the Sahel and avoid the potential adverse consequences of a strong engagement in gender mainstreaming. Critics claim that women are being used as ‘new security actors’ in a further example of the instrumentalisation of gender issues in security interventions. The call for including women to achieve sustainable peace is rationalised by the belief that women can intervene where traditional security actors are mostly absent. This notion of ‘new security actors’ promotes an operationalisation of gender mainstreaming which presents women as appropriate and competent participants in both securitisation and peacebuilding. ‘The focus is on combining a traditional security response with “soft” preventive policies, and efforts to include women as part of the response.’⁴³ It is time for the EU to go beyond ‘gender balancing’ and make use of the other identified gender strategies, namely ‘gender inclusion’ and ‘gender mainstreaming’. For example, gender units and focal points within EUCAP Sahel Mali should be given a clearer mandate and substantial funds for gender equality.

As an example of such commitment, the Spotlight Initiative – based on a partnership between the EU and the UN – devotes substantial resources, and musters various partnerships and strong political will, towards supporting systemic change in the legal instruments used against GBV. The Malian Association for the Monitoring and Orientation of Traditional Practices is implementing the Spotlight Initiative with European funding and under the umbrella of UN Women and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). The aim is to eliminate gender-based sexual violence and obstacles to accessing sexual and reproductive healthcare for women and girls. The impact of the Spotlight Initiative has been evaluated by the UNFPA as having nationwide positive results, and described as ‘a comprehensive model that engages a wide range of social and cultural partners, such as academia, media, influencers, religious institutions, traditional leaders and the private sector’.⁴⁴ National ownership and civil society engagement throughout implementation have ensured equitable access to resources and opportunities.

To conclude, our research shows that stabilisation through security assistance at the community level is a vision that is yet to be realised. Assumptions by EU officials that they are working in symbiosis with communities to ensure the success of projects and programmes are undermined by the fact that Sahelian CSOs are frequently involved only at the end of the financial process, as third parties, or as beneficiaries of actions designed and managed by others. They often do not receive direct funds and do not participate in the management of the allocated funds. Moreover, efforts to transform harmful gender norms risk being undermined by the EU’s stabilisation mantra.

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Traders at a livestock market examine the animals on sale there. Falwel, Doso, Niger. © Tim Dirven

3

EU funding for development and humanitarian aid

The picture is even more uneven regarding humanitarian aid where EU funding is distributed between UN agencies, INGOs, national organisations and CSOs. In 2020, a clear majority of EU humanitarian funding across Mali and Niger was funnelled through the UN (68 per cent in Mali and 85 per cent in Niger). Twenty-seven per cent of funds were allocated to international organisations in Mali, and 15 per cent in Niger.⁴⁵ Even more strikingly, national and local CSOs in both countries received no direct humanitarian funding at all. A growing number of CSOs, especially women's organisations, have been forced to consider closing due to lack of funds.⁴⁶

These dynamics are underpinned by a deeper EU trend. In Mali, EDF allocations to local NGOs and CSOs focusing on humanitarian action fell from €20 million in 2011 to €3 million in 2016.⁴⁷ Combined with recent cuts by the French Government following diplomatic tensions with the Malian military-led government (which has cracked down on external funding for NGOs and CSOs, especially those financed by France),⁴⁸ some Malian NGOs and CSOs are finding themselves in a difficult position.

In Niger, just two national organisations – Garkua and Karkara – received direct EU funding between 2019 and 2022. Garkua supports rural communities to manage inclusive, sustainable development projects, including building basic social infrastructure such as schools and sanitation facilities.⁴⁹ It is present in all eight regions of Niger. In September 2019, Garkua successfully implemented a major EDF-funded project to ‘contribute to the social economic stability and peace in the region of Agadez’, under the supervision of the Nigerien High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace (HACP). Approximately 26,000 people benefitted directly or indirectly from the project. From conversations with beneficiaries in three different areas in which the project has been implemented, as well as feedback from Garkua,

“**Providing Sahelian CSOs with more direct funding is ... likely to have a sustainable, positive impact on human security, and would also complement the EU’s investment in public and state-level institutions.**”

it appears this was a successful project – especially from local perspectives. However, Garkua was obliged to repackage its proposal as a ‘socio-economic stability project’ in order to access these EDF funds. This illustrates how it is often buzzwords, rather than a demonstrable response to local needs, that can result in successful funding for national organisations. It also helps to explain why many community-based CSOs do not apply for funding, in order to avoid compromising their work and their credibility. A representative from a small CSO, also based in Agadez and focusing on access to natural resources and salt extraction, said they do not apply for EU funding because “we do not work on stability and security, so why should the EU be interested in us?”⁵⁰

In Mali, EU-funded projects strive to target young people considered vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment by armed groups.⁵¹ Such projects aim to increase employment and foster social cohesion and socio-economic and cultural development to promote peace and stability. Other projects carry out rehabilitation work on buildings such as schools and markets, or provide capacity-building sessions to help young people find work. All these activities focus on ensuring better access to basic social services and economic opportunities, as well as fighting corruption and working on broader issues of governance and accountability. What these all have in common is the EU commitment to use local or community development activities to restore peace and stability.

The EU Member States who fund these projects seem to have chosen an approach that aims to tackle structural issues widely seen to be among the root causes of armed conflict and terrorism in the Sahel. **Providing Sahelian CSOs with more direct funding is therefore likely to have a sustainable, positive impact on human security, and would also complement the EU’s investment in public and state-level institutions.**

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Students from the local school receive computer lessons. Tombo Kasso, Niger. © Tim Dirven

4

Challenges with following through: an analysis of funding limitations

4.1 Conceptual challenges

One challenge we encountered lies in the way that EU programming is presented: despite repeated claims by EU officials in both Brussels and Dakar that EU funding mechanisms are transparent,⁵² this does not mean that they are easily accessible or understandable. We asked 12 Malian and 15 Nigerien CSOs if they had applied for EU funding and, if so, whether they had faced challenges. They confirmed that they all had faced challenges, and identified two common reasons. Firstly, the EU has different types of programming around what it calls ‘stabilisation funding’. Some of these funds are split across seven years, while others are ‘quick impact projects’ that might last only a few months, adding another layer of complexity to project applications.

Secondly, there is some confusion about the term ‘Sahel’ when it comes to European programming. While at the political European level this commonly refers to the five countries of the G5 (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger), in some EU programming it also includes Nigeria and Senegal. Understanding how much of the EU funding goes into which exact geography poses its own challenges.

4.2 Procedural challenges

All of the CSOs we interviewed in both Mali and Niger expressed an interest in EU funding. However, they told us that they face difficulties in finalising their applications due to long, complex forms and technical procedures. For instance, many CSOs do not meet the selection criteria for EU funding because they are not members of an official CSO forum or federation, or are not in consortium with other national entities. One challenge for them is therefore understanding EU selection criteria, as well as how to comply with the EU’s complex standards. One way to learn about the EU system and become familiar with its procedures is through taking part in a consortium first, which is an option only available to some – as it depends on multiple factors, including their size, history (whether they have worked in consortia before), and finances. This, as one Nigerien interviewee who received European funding pointed out, is a bit of a “dog chasing its tail scenario: you get EU funding only if you have gotten some large funding before”.

One EU staff member who designs programmes for the FPI said, “I must admit our system, despite being transparent, is not so easily accessible for externals.”⁵³ A Nigerien CSO representative described the situation as the EU officials “avoid[ing] engaging directly with the people whose lives they impact through their programming”.⁵⁴

“The system is built precisely to keep us out of the loop ... we only find out the EU is funding programmes similar to ours later on, and then it’s too late to be able to join in”

Member of a Nigerien CSO, Agadez, April 2022

4.3 Management challenges

Another representative of an EU-funded CSO in Niger commented that one way to get direct EU support was by being visible at the local level – especially in remote locations like the Kawar in Niger – to demonstrate the capacity to mobilise and manage resources outside of the capital. This risks creating yet another vicious cycle: the EU will often provide direct funding only if organisations show that they are able to manage this funding – something which under-resourced organisations will find it difficult to demonstrate. If a CSO can show a track record of having obtained and managed funding from other institutions, and of working in consortia, then its chances improve. A representative of the CSO H.E.D. Tamat, which recently concluded an EU-funded trans-border project focused on community cohesion building in the Agadez and Diffa regions, said that they were able to win the project “because we had staff already present in some remote locations in the region, but also because we partnered up with Oxfam, which is leading the project, International Alert and Care”.⁵⁵

4.4 Resource challenges

In order to be funded by one of the EU Directorates-General, a CSO must also be ‘pillar assessed’, which involves a series of bureaucratic screening measures to analyse whether an organisation is transparent enough, including whether it has an accounting system that demonstrates a positive track record of managing funding. “We already know that IOM [the International Organisation for Migration] is pillar assessed, and yet every so often we check whether everything is in order,” said one EU funder.⁵⁶ One Malian CSO interviewee told us, “It is already challenging enough for large international NGOs or CSOs to keep reporting [to the EU], but for us this is a real struggle, as we also need the capacity to go through all the materials that the EU send us.”⁵⁷ **The current funding procedures and reporting requirements do not facilitate CSOs’ access to EU funding.**

Another CSO representative reported that, “We were so overwhelmed by the amount of reporting [even] before the project, during the project and after it, that we had problems within our consortia, especially with the international NGO that was heading the group. But they were ten times our size! They had so many people reporting back to the EU, and they were expecting that we do the same.” **According to a Nigerien CSO representative, whose organisation had recently received EU funding, there are “running stories in Niamey” about how demanding a partner the EU is. “We like the idea of being monitored ... it is important to be accountable. But we felt like we were made to jump through hoops. In the end, I am not even sure they even read our reports!”**

Large NGOs are not only considered credible because they are ‘assessed’ – they are also likely to have experience in dealing with several different donors. “When they say they will be able to deliver on time, we believe in them and their track record,” said an EU funding representative in Brussels.⁵⁸ But INGOs use the ‘resources’ of local CSOs in order to maintain their track record of delivering on time – if the EU reduced the resources required for compliance and reporting and funded the local CSOs more directly, not only would they have access to their resources but the work itself would be more sustainable and rooted in the community.

A Nigerien organisation made up of ten staff members countered that INGOs are often only able to deliver their programmes because they hire consultants based in the community. Local CSOs have this access to the community built in, as they often have staff members based in hard-to-reach zones. Local CSOs are also often better placed to design conflict-sensitive projects.⁵⁹ As analysed in other conflict scenarios such as the Balkans, '[local] NGOs' strengths include their political independence, flexible mandates, impartiality and credibility ... Civil society actors have important potential for peacebuilding at the international, regional and local levels. They are indispensable in facilitating reconciliation between hostile communities, and can promote citizens' identification with the polity.'⁶⁰ One interviewee from a large INGO acknowledged the advantage of local organisations managing projects themselves:

*"Of course we have established some staff members here, and a lot of local consultants. But since most of the stabilisation programmes were carried out by us, once we leave, all that know-how will be lost. Projects that are designed, implemented, and evaluated by local organisations have more of a chance of representing a sustainable pot of knowledge, one that is context sensitive and that will carry on working even after the internationals leave."*⁶¹

4.5 Coordination assumptions

Another rationale presented by EU officials working with INGOs in the Sahel is that these organisations are based in-country and are used to coordinating with other organisations. This is true to some extent (CSOs may not, for example, have the same access to UN agencies); however, CSOs often have a more nuanced understanding of how to navigate public administration and the ever-changing political landscape of Sahel governments.

The perception that only INGOs can coordinate larger projects is based on an assumption that is influenced by Brussels-based EU officials making only fleeting visits to the region, usually for just a matter of days, leaving little time to have meaningful consultations with CSOs.

The EU delegation in Niger also acknowledges that it does not have many exchanges with local peacebuilding organisations: "We are severely lacking in staff and we are not encouraged to spend time speaking with small local organisations," one delegation official in Niamey told us.⁶² This lack of direct contact means that EU staff are often unaware of more complex local dynamics, in a region where local leadership is frequently dominated by chiefs and traditional and religious leaders. In this sense, CSOs can be much more fluent in contributing to and coordinating more conflict-sensitive programming.

This logic has other long-term consequences: **INGOs often call upon local consultants to overcome challenges of access. These consultants have easier access to insecure areas, access to authorities and local communities, and have a granular understanding of the political and social dynamics. As the pay is higher than CSOs or local government can offer, these temporary positions tend to attract more experienced national experts and can drain locally based talent, leaving many posts empty of expertise.** This can lead to a vicious cycle, whereby CSOs have trouble recruiting the staff who could help them attract international funding.

Some of the CSOs we interviewed in Mali argue that the bulk of EU grants aim to serve the EU's own interests, especially regarding countering terrorism and irregular migration. This echoes a recent Oxfam study, which states that 'the influence of EU domestic policies is apparent not just in the circumstances surrounding EUTF projects, but [also] in a number of projects themselves ... or even in the list of objectives and indicators. The success of some projects is measured by their contribution to "an improved migration management" and "a reduction to irregular migration flows to Europe".'⁶³

The EU claims to be committed to supporting civil society, good governance and accountability mechanisms.⁶⁴ The EU Civil Society Roadmap commits it to involving civil society as stakeholders in the elaboration of all its strategic documents, and Sahelian CSOs have participated in preparing the new Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) programming (2021–2027). The EU delegation in Mali stressed that different instruments present diverse possibilities to create and adjust inclusion by bringing civil society representatives into all stages of programming and projects.⁶⁵

A mismatch between needs and outcomes: the prevalence of intermediaries

Interviewees at the EU delegation in Mali stated that their rationale is to prioritise efficient and effective work, and to favour activities that have a ‘multiplier effect’ of positive impacts on communities.⁶⁶ This is because the EU is accountable to monitoring and control structures (the Court of Auditors and the European Parliament) to justify the disbursed funds. EU officials have tended to resort to complex, bureaucratic procedures favouring international organisations – and, at the same time, expanding their own capacity for influence. However, there appears to be a mismatch between what is needed for sustainable change and what is currently been offered by the EU – and how. Rigid procedures can be counter-productive and evidence shows that beyond technical support, alternatives need to be further explored to better balance the support for engagement of CSOs.

The EU prefers to fund broad civil society coalitions and consortia, limiting opportunities for those CSOs that (through a lack of

connections or opportunities) work independently. For example, the consortia funded by the EUTF for Africa are mainly made up of INGOs, and the Emergency Programme for the Stabilisation of the Sahel Border Areas,⁶⁷ financed through these funds, is implemented jointly by members of the Sahel Alliance (such as the French, German and Luxembourgish development agencies and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue).

As an EU official candidly said, “the paradigm is more and more projects managed by INGOs in collaboration with national NGOs selected through calls for proposals. If NGOs have the expertise, master our procedures and meet our criteria, all for the best. Otherwise, it is too risky”.⁶⁸

Acknowledging this approach, one Malian NGO representative told us, “most of these proxies for the EU have the tendency to strictly keep the job to providing funds for the activities while considering CSOs as just experts to be paid for services rendered, thus disregarding local capacities and procedures and with zero institutional support”.⁶⁹

Clearly, the EU prefers to disburse its direct funds to consortia. Two different types of civil society consortia emerged from our interviews: those made up solely of Malian or Nigerien CSOs, and those composed of CSOs, INGOs and other types of agency or institution. It appears that setting up consortia is sometimes less about the benefits that cooperation can bring, and more about being best placed to access EU funds.

The preference for working with consortia also disregards the fact that CSOs in Mali and Niger are not homogeneous entities institutionally, financially or managerially. The lack of flexibility in the amount of money allocated for baseline operating costs, notwithstanding the size of the consortium, is a substantial issue. The challenge here is for the EU to move away from a ‘one size fits all’ framework of procedures and criteria, and to focus more on the specific capacities and needs of Sahelian CSOs.

Finally, some of the CSOs we interviewed said that the EU requirement to use its logo at all events it has publicly funded instrumentalises them, especially in the current context of mistrust between many communities and international bodies. This mistrust is so pronounced that some Malian activists believe the EU hopes to destabilise their country, even though the EU remains the most important technical and financial donor towards stabilisation programmes in the region.

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EU official

Notes

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A traditional mosque in Sofara, Mali.

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5

Conclusion: recalibrating EU support for Sahelian CSOs

We interviewed civil society representatives across Mali and Niger regarding EU financing of Sahelian CSOs, and found that the dispersal of EU funds overwhelmingly favours international institutions and organisations – effectively marginalising civil society in both these countries. This denies them the agency to design and implement peacebuilding and conflict prevention projects in their own contexts, where they are the experts with lived experience and direct access to communities and authorities. Clearly, the EU faces challenges to building more closely aligned partnerships with civil society. However, not enough attention has been paid to the evidence of the benefits of funding CSOs directly.

By focusing more on directly supporting Sahelian CSOs working on stabilisation issues, the EU would get a much better return on investment. It would gain a stronger understanding of the contexts and communities it supports and could be more confident that its funding is reaching these communities as opposed to resourcing international organisations. This would also be a more conflict-sensitive approach in a region where conflict sensitivity is vital. In addition, the central Sahel – notably Niger and Mali – could be a pilot for future European programming elsewhere on the African continent or globally. Should such a diversifying approach work in these two countries (and this would need a thorough evaluation and analysis), it would give the EU the courage and motivation to apply the lessons and approaches to other situations around the world.

The exclusion of CSOs from the design and implementation phases of many programmes/ projects, the prevalence of intermediary structures, the preference (if not the explicit requirement) to work with consortia, the lack of community-led security, as well as heavy bureaucratic procedures and assessments, all count against CSOs playing their full role in reducing violent conflict and contributing to sustainable peace in the region.⁷⁰

Recommendations for the EU

- The EU needs to encourage a cultural shift highlighting the value of locally led peacebuilding and improving an understanding of what it means. This could be done through actions such as training, awareness raising, and partnership meetings for EU policymakers and programmers with CSOs – in order to develop a greater understanding of CSOs’ ability to understand and navigate local or national contexts in a conflict-sensitive manner; build enhanced networks, contacts and access; and obtain a greater understanding of the challenges CSOs face and ultimately of the bigger sustainable peacebuilding impact that EU funding could have.
 - The EU needs to consider developing national and regional strategies on ensuring that funding mechanisms are more inclusive for civil society, lessons are learnt from the challenges facing both EU institutions and civil society, and that these are applied in future calls for applications. These strategies should be informed by intersectional gender participatory analysis of the context that draws on the expertise and experience of local CSOs as well as external specialists and would bring to light concerns that usually remain hidden or unaddressed, as well as by a stakeholder mapping – including CSOs, informal groups, and activists for gender equality and minorities’ rights – to capture new issues and approaches that can then shape funding opportunities. This also includes considering longer-term programmes and projects, to allow sufficient time for behaviour change, and flexible funding that allows for changes in the context and participants’ needs. It should also include monitoring and evaluation systems delivered by independent experts from the countries the projects are implemented in, to ensure that monitoring and evaluations are contextually responsive; this needs to include monitoring for conflict and gender sensitivity.
 - While acknowledging that there is pressure from both EU Member States and other institutions to demonstrate the EU’s presence, funding opportunities should respond to the needs identified by a diverse range of civil society and should not solely represent the EU’s interests, as this puts CSOs at severe risk of being instrumentalised and not able to address the real needs of the communities they are working with. In particular, GBV programmes must be implemented on their own terms, assessed by national gender experts, and not immediately assumed to come under a ‘security’ umbrella.
- The very positive initiatives that we have referenced in this report need to be expanded in order to begin addressing GBV more systematically. The links between gender equality and GBV should be identified and addressed, and gender advisers in the EU should support the design of GBV-related programmes.
- The EU needs to address the challenges that Sahelian CSOs face when accessing EU funding streams; more specifically, it needs to consider increasing the budgets available for funding CSOs directly. This will clearly be a complex process: it needs to begin with the EU holding a meaningful consultation with CSOs to identify their priorities, and to learn how the application procedures can be simplified so that CSOs, especially those based outside of the capital cities, can more easily apply for funding. This consultation should include smaller CSOs and CSOs that have not applied for EU funding previously, to understand how the process could be more accessible.
 - As part of this process, the EU delegations in Mali and Niger can organise training sessions, including in rural areas, on how to apply for EU funds (for example, by explaining how the new EU funding system OPSYS works). The EU can work in partnership with more experienced CSOs in Mali and Niger to deliver this training to other CSOs and publicise calls for projects in local languages through newspapers, social media and radio. It is important that the training modules include accessible information on the different EU instruments that provide opportunities for short- and longer-term funding. Equally, these training modules need to be developed in consultation with CSOs, and also delivered in local languages. Given the number of trainings and workshops funded by the EU that take place daily in Bamako and Niamey, these would not be particularly complex or costly projects to carry out. It is also important to ensure that a variety of CSOs, including organisations working on gender equality, women’s rights and minorities’ rights, attend these trainings and that the content is also relevant for them.
 - EU application procedures need to be revised, and – with input from CSOs (especially those who have already applied for funding and can therefore offer feedback) – simplified in order to become more accessible. This process needs to be monitored and reviewed, allowing procedures to be modified where necessary, and evaluated for their effectiveness in encouraging

increasing numbers of CSOs to apply for EU funds. This process could then be applied elsewhere, with a potential for Sahelian CSOs to deliver training to CSOs in other parts of the world.

- The EU needs to prioritise partnership approaches for existing and new consortia that actively promote strengthening the capacities of CSO consortia members. It must ensure that they address power imbalances between INGOs and CSOs (including women-led organisations) in order to ensure as much equality as possible between these different bodies.
- The EU needs to adopt a strategic approach to encouraging young women and men in CSOs to become leaders. This could take the form of leadership programmes, or mentoring of young CSO leaders by more established CSOs and/or INGOs.
- The EU should fund capacity building and peer learning among CSOs from the same context and across contexts, particularly smaller CSOs that would benefit from the lessons and good practices of more experienced ones. They could fund networking events, learning exchanges and peer-to-peer mentoring, in order to strengthen connections between CSOs working on similar issues.

Recommendations for INGOs

- INGOs should share resources equally with CSOs and national NGOs (such as sharing overheads equally), and commit to investing resources in demand-driven capacity exchange between INGOs and CSOs, and between CSOs themselves as a way to support peer-to-peer learning that is responsive to CSO priorities. Commitments to ‘shifting power’ should be reflected in INGOs’ organisational strategies and monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
- INGOs should also use their position and access to advocate for commitments to shifting power, with the EU and Member States promoting strengthened support to CSOs and national NGOs.

Recommendations for Sahelian NGOs/CSOs

- Sahelian CSOs could consider developing an alternative CSO roadmap for the EU, in the form of a document outlining what they require from the EU in terms of training, communication and funding application procedures.

Notes

⁷⁰ De Sardan J-P O (2021), *La revanche des contextes: Des mésaventures en ingénierie sociale en Afrique et au-delà* (Paris: Karthala).

Annex I: Questionnaire

To produce this report, from June 2021 to September 2022, we asked each interviewee the following questions:

Questionnaire for European officials working within the Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI – IcSP division), Directorate General INTPA and the EEAS.

1. Could you share what your opinion is of the civil society and Sahelian NGO landscape?
2. Have you funded/worked with Nigerien/Malian NGOs or CSOs that focus on governance/stabilisation in the past?
3. What was your experience funding a Nigerien/Malian CSO or NGO that focuses on governance/stabilisation?
4. Could you provide another example?
5. How many of these funds are managed by a consortium?
6. Has this been a positive experience so far?
7. Do you have consortia that work across the region?
8. The new Sahel strategy encourages funding local CSOs in the Sahel. Do you think this is being done enough?
9. If not, why?
10. How much do you think this is an EU limit and how much is it a Sahelian CSO/NGO limit?
11. Do you think this could be improved?
12. How?

Questionnaire for Nigerien/Malian CSOs/NGOs:

1. Do you work on governance/stabilisation?
2. If yes, could you provide an example of a project funded by a European country?
3. Do you receive funds from the EU directly?
4. If yes, could you say more on the amount of funds, the type of project, the relationship with funders?
5. If not, why? What are the challenges?
6. Do you get EU funding through a consortium? Could you say more on the amount of funds, the type of project, the relationship with funders and other members of the consortium?
7. Have you ever discussed EU funding with other CSOs/NGOs that work in the same field?
8. Is there only one channel through which the EU disburses money?
9. Do you know of other CSOs/NGOs in Niger/Mali that get direct EU funding?
10. Would you be interested in getting funded by the EU?

Annex II: EU spending in Mali (€ millions)

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| State reform: | | | |
| 587.85 | | | |
| Malian state | Local authorities | Intermediary structures | Malian authorities and partners from the EU |
| 470.65 | 8.2 | 81 | 28 |

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Infrastructure: | | | |
| 369.9 | | | |
| Malian state | Local authorities | Intermediary structures | Malian authorities and partners from the EU |
| 273.2 | 0 | 96.7 | 0 |

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Rural development: | | | |
| 240.4 | | | |
| Malian state | Local authorities | Intermediary structures | Malian authorities and partners from the EU |
| 83.2 | 0 | 151.2 | 0 |

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Education: | | | |
| 60 | | | |
| Malian state | Local authorities | Intermediary structures | Malian authorities and partners from the EU |
| 60 | 0 | | 0 |

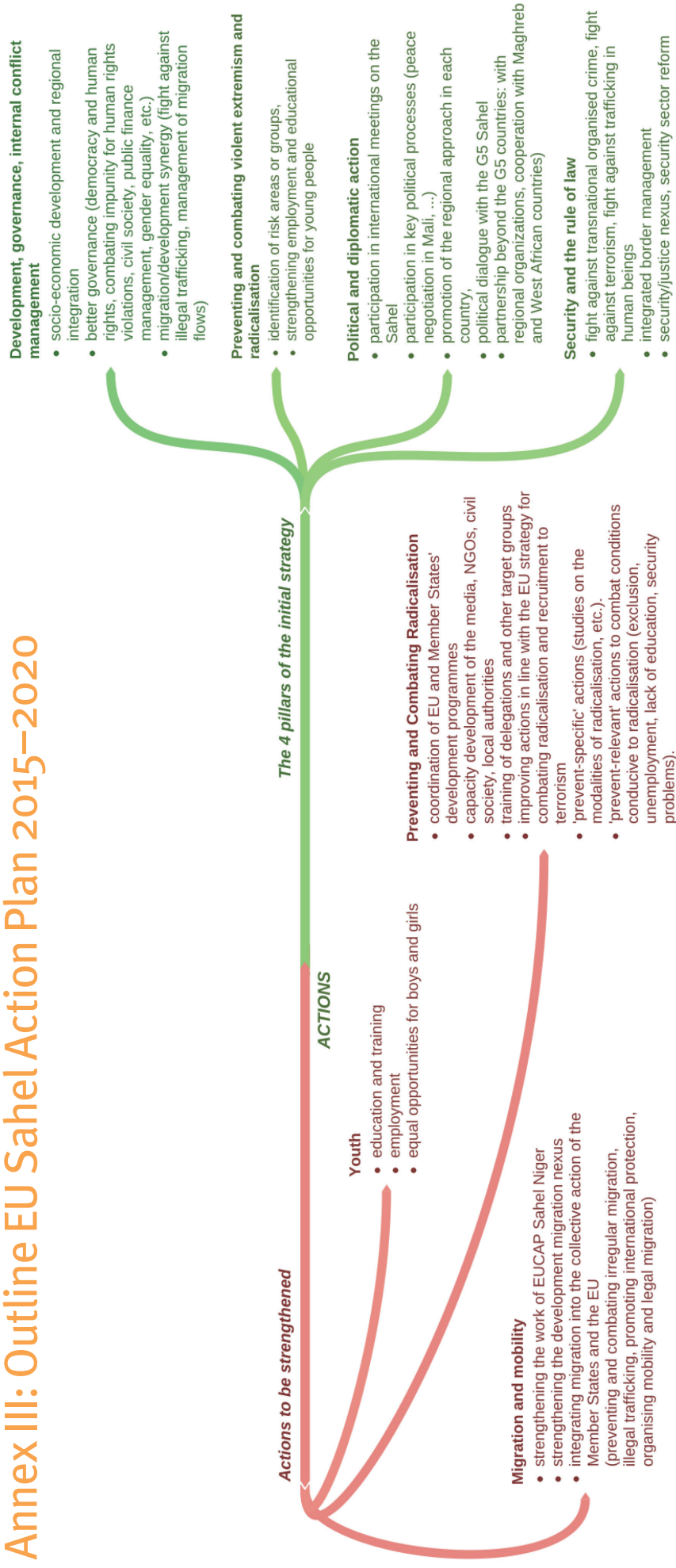
| | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Private sector and the economy: | | | |
| 31 | | | |
| Malian state | Local authorities | Intermediary structures | Malian authorities and partners from the EU |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Civil society and human rights: | | | |
| 24.75 | | | |
| Malian state | Local authorities | Intermediary structures | Malian authorities and partners from the EU |
| 60 | 7.95 | 16.8 | 0 |

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| FPI: | | | |
| 29.5 | | | |
| Malian state | Local authorities | Intermediary structures | Malian authorities and partners from the EU |
| 0 | 0 | 29.5 | 0 |

Source of Statistics: the EU Mission in Mali (2020), 'L'aide au développement de l'Union Européenne au Mali', October.

Annex III: Outline EU Sahel Action Plan 2015–2020



About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent, not-for-profit international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives in countries and territories across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. We work in solidarity with people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe in a world where everyone can lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity.

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