



GERMANY'S NEW BUDGETARY GUIDELINES: WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR MALI?

INTRODUCTION

Mali, faced with multiple crises—food insecurity, armed conflict, political instability, population displacement, and climate shocks—is heavily dependent on international aid, which is mainly delivered by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and multilateral institutions that aim to reach vulnerable populations. Among its technical and financial partners, Germany is the leading European contributor, particularly in terms of development aid¹. Many projects are funded by the Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt), which is responsible for emergency humanitarian aid and civil protection abroad, and by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, BMZ), which is responsible for development cooperation.

Some programmes, known as 'umbrella projects', are jointly funded by both ministries, combining humanitarian interventions (nutrition, access to water), development initiatives (creation of income-generating activities), and actions aimed at promoting social cohesion.

This study analyses German aid that, in its various forms, reaches beneficiary populations through NGOs.

Like several European governments, Germany has reduced its development aid budget (OECD, 2025). This policy brief warns of the consequences of these changes for Mali, a pivotal country in the central Sahel, where the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance in 2025 is estimated at 6.4 million (UNOCHA, 2025). As of 2025, Mali is no longer eligible for BMZ transitional development assistance, a mechanism designed for fragile contexts and focused on strengthening the resilience of local populations and structures. This study is based on data from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), research on the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus, and interviews with humanitarian actors and representatives of the BMZ and the German Federal Foreign Office, and shows that the decline in German aid to Mali threatens to undermine the gains made so far and increase the risks of regional instability, irregular migration, and loss of German influence to competing actors (Russia, China, etc.).

¹ Germany has also contributed human and financial resources to civilian and military missions such as MINUSMA and EUTM.

1 GERMAN AID TO MALI

German aid to Mali in 2025 amounts to US\$18.5 million, corresponding to 15.3% of the funds allocated for the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)². However, German humanitarian assistance to Mali fell by 43.7% between 2022 (US\$50.98 million) and 2024 (US\$19.63 million). In 2025, the German government announced substantial cuts, motivated by domestic priorities, especially increased military spending and the management of national crises. The 2025 budget reduces the overall humanitarian envelope by 53%, from €2.23 billion to €1.04 billion (Südhoff, 2024). This decrease is in line with the reductions already made in 2023 and 2024. It will affect all beneficiary countries, but Mali will be particularly hard hit owing to its heavy dependence on Germany and the weaker presence of other humanitarian donors. France suspended its official development assistance to Mali in 2022, followed by Sweden in 2024. More recently, USAID-funded programmes have been suspended. Belgium and Luxembourg are also considering ending several projects (Fualdes et al., 2025).

Table 1: Comparative table of German aid allocated to Mali under the HRP (2022, 2023, and 2024)

2022			2023		2024	
Total funding needs according to HRP: US\$685.7 million			Total funding needs according to HRP: US\$751.5 million		Total funding needs according to HRP: US\$701.6 million	
Source of funding	Amount of funding (US\$)	% of actual HRP funding	Amount of funding (US\$)	% of actual HRP funding	Amount of funding (US\$)	% of actual HRP funding
USA (gov.)	79,469,801	26.5%	78,855,294	33.8%	122,661,184	43.9%
Germany (gov.)	50 983 071	17%	28,656,078	12.3%	19,634,369	7%
European Commission	50,980,542	17%	38,911,460	16.7%	30,187,569	10,8%
Sweden (gov.)	15,026,725	5%	7,655,227	3.3%	7,581,178	2,7%
Denmark (gov.)	13,456,631	4.5%	3,831,448	1.6%	977,583	0,3%
France (gov.)	12,582,417	4.2%	5,184,723	2.2%	5,422,245	1,9%
Canada (gov.)	8,453,618	2.8%	3,008,792	1.3%	4,205,355	1,5%
Switzerland (gov.)	5,597,391	1.9%	2,867,315	1.2%	5,352,015	1,9%
United Kingdom (gov.)	4,297,619	1.4%	2,870,733	1.2%	7,450,804	2,7%
Belgium (gov.)	4,259,996	1.4%	3,984,610	1.7%	6,019,200	2,2%
Norway (gov.)	3,285,093	1.1%	7,471,243	3.2%	4,964,361	1,8%

Source: FTS-UNOCHA, [Mali besoins humanitaires et plan de réponse, 2022, 2023, and 2024](#).

As of mid-October 2025, actual funding amounted to only 15.7% of funding needs according to the HRP, or US\$121 million compared with total needs of US\$771.3 million. Germany's contribution now makes it the leading donor government (see Table 2), underscoring its importance to Mali.

² OCHA data from 22 October 2025.

Table 2: Aid funding allocated to Mali for the current year (2025) under the HRP

2025

Total funding needs according to HRP: **US\$ 771.3 million**

Source of funding	Amount of funding (US\$)	% of actual HRP funding
European Commission (Humanitarian aid and civil protection)	24,341,297	20%
Germany (gov.)	18,509,388	15,3%
Italy (gov.)	11,315,105	9,3%
USA (State Department)	5,291,056	4,4%
USA (gov.)	17,664,167	14,6%
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)	4,053,845	3,3%
France (gov.)	2,341,920	1,9%

Total allocated funding for 2025 amounts to US\$121 million, corresponding to 15.7% of aid needs according to the HRP.**Source:** FTS-UNOCHA, [Mali besoins humanitaires et plan de réponse 2025](#).

German funds support key sectors: water, hygiene, and sanitation infrastructure; combating malnutrition and food insecurity, including initiatives promoting resilient agriculture; climate change adaptation; and local governance and institutional strengthening, particularly to reduce community tensions (BMZ, 2025). Germany uses various channels to deliver its aid to Mali. The embassy in Bamako provides direct support to Malian NGOs and associations for small-scale projects (€20,000 to €25,000) in the fields of education, health, agriculture, climate, environment, infrastructure (water, sanitation, energy), and culture (German Embassy in Mali, 2024). The German Federal Agency for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ), manages large-scale programmes in partnership with national and local NGOs. The German government also supports programmes run by international NGOs (IRC, Welthungerhilfe, Oxfam, Caritas, DRC) and United Nations agencies (UNDP, UNHCR, WHO, WFP).

In addition, projects under the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus—aimed at coordinating emergency humanitarian aid, sustainable development actions, and peace efforts for an integrated response to crises—are mainly funded by the BMZ. Organisations such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Welthungerhilfe (WHH) play a major role in implementing these HDP projects, particularly in the Mopti region. Humanitarian funds provided by Germany to Mali are primarily targeted at the most vulnerable areas—those affected by armed conflict, insecurity, and internal displacement, as well as rural areas that are difficult to access. This aid is mainly concentrated in the central and northern regions of the country.

2 THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN MALI

Mali is facing multiple crises, some of which are long-term and low intensity, while others are more recent and acute. The prolonged crisis has given rise to intertwined conflict dynamics: inter-ethnic violence linked to the scarcity of natural resources, secessionist movements in the north, jihadist violence exploiting existing tensions, a proliferation of armed groups, and a limited state presence. These factors have exacerbated humanitarian needs and hampered development (Haidara, 2024). In 2025, 6.4 million people (27.7% of the population) require humanitarian assistance and protection (UNOCHA, 2025).

Map 1: Humanitarian needs and severity (re)assessed by location

MALI | Re-Prioritized HNRP At a glance

Summary

PEOPLE IN NEED

6.4M

PEOPLE TARGETED

4.7M

TOTAL REQUIREMENTS (US\$)

\$771.3M

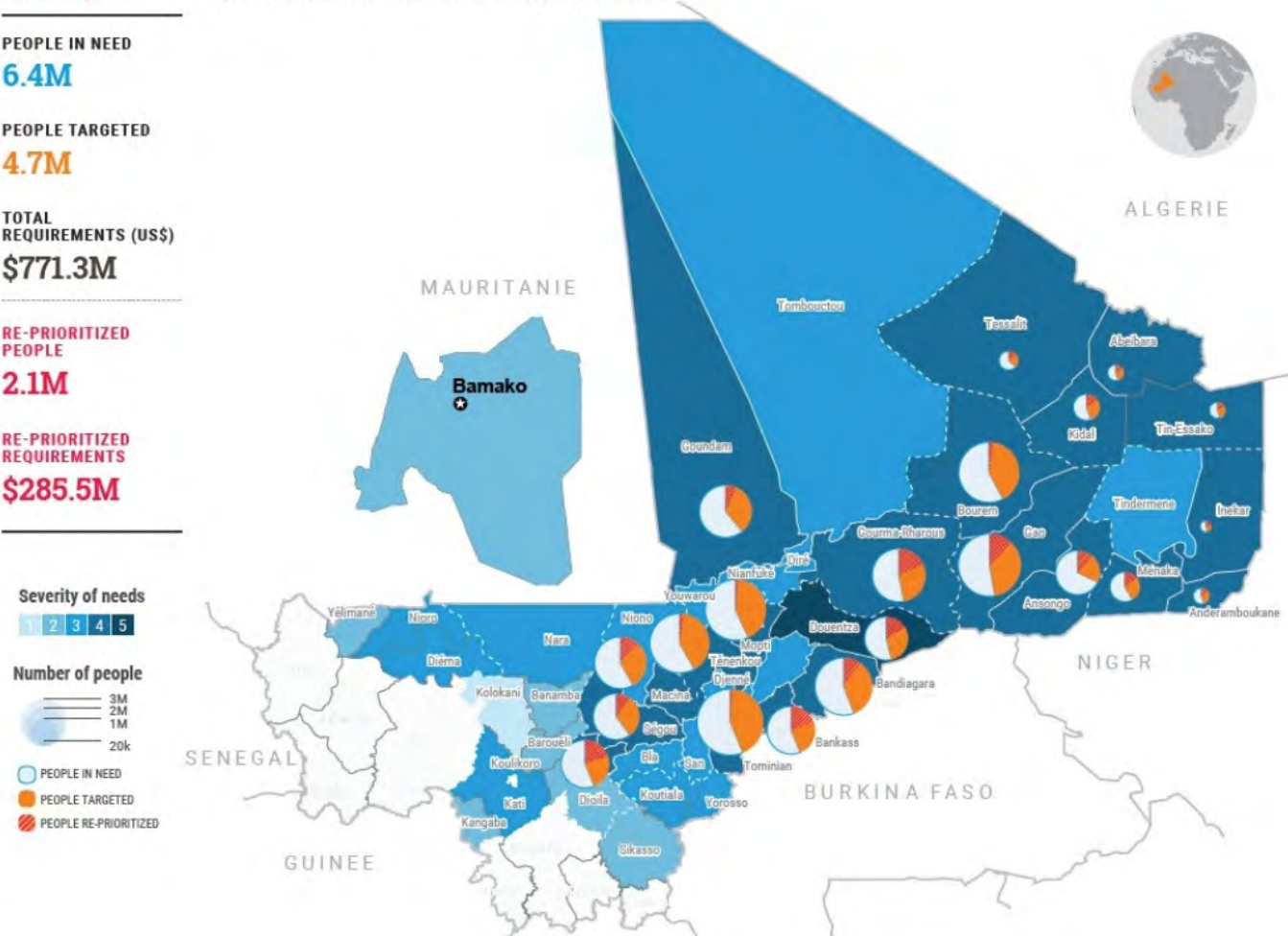
RE-PRIORITIZED PEOPLE

2.1M

RE-PRIORITIZED REQUIREMENTS

\$285.5M

Re-Prioritized needs and severity by location



Source : UNOCHA, « [Mali : Re-prioritized HNRP At a Glance](#) », UNOCHA publications, 6 mai 2025.

The situation is most critical in the centre and north-east, where access constraints and multiple displacements exacerbate vulnerabilities. In 2024, only 40.3% of the funding need according to the HRP (US\$701.6 million) was secured (FTS-UNOCHA, 2024), which enabled assistance to be provided to approximately 2.1 million people out of the 4.1 million people targeted (UNOCHA, 2024). Germany's contribution of US\$19.6 million made it, once again, the leading donor out of European states for that year.

Recent socio-political developments have isolated Mali from some of its Western partners, particularly in Europe. Following the coup d'état on 24 May 2021, the major political changes implemented by the transitional government have particularly affected its relations with its 'traditional' partners (Ba, 2023).

However, although Mali itself is not designated as a priority, Germany has made the Sahel, along with the Horn of Africa, one of its two priority regions. Within the Sahel, Mali occupies a central position: as the epicentre of regional socio-political and security crises and a strategic crossroads for cross-border dynamics, its evolving situation directly influences the stability and development prospects of the Sahel.

3 IMPLICATIONS FOR MALI

This is a context in which NGOs play a central role: when a need arises in a community, local authorities often call upon NGOs even before they turn to government services. Their areas of intervention are varied, including the provision of basic needs (water, food, health), the implementation of income-generating activities (IGAs), and activities promoting social cohesion and conflict resolution.

Further funding cuts could plunge Mali into even greater food and nutrition insecurity. Since June 2025, the country has been classified as a high-alert zone, where the risk of food insecurity is considered 'urgent' by the international community (UN Info, 2025). According to a spokesperson for the German Federal Foreign Office, these cuts will affect all programmes funded by Germany. Priorities, which have not yet been defined, will have to be set. For Mali, these cuts would reduce agricultural and nutritional programmes, thereby increasing the risk of famine in the north and centre of the country, and possibly leading to the intensification of conflicts over natural resources, and increased displacement. With 378,000 internally displaced persons and 191,000 refugees (UNOCHA, 2025), Mali is heavily dependent on German-funded NGOs that provide essential services such as water, health, and protection. A reduction in this support would limit access to basic services, including for victims of gender-based violence.

Maintaining aid is therefore crucial. Many young people participate in NGO programmes. In the Mopti region, IRC works through local teams. In the Bandiagara region, WHH recruits young people as local facilitators. Others benefit from IGAs or temporary programmes such as WHH's 'cash for work' scheme, which sometimes gives young people the financial means to start an IGA, such as small-scale trading or livestock farming. The creation of IGAs, which are designed to promote financial independence, would be jeopardised by the cessation or reduction of funding, thereby increasing the economic precarity of young people.

CONCLUSION

The reduction of German aid to Mali, without compensatory measures, risks accelerating a spiral of vulnerability and instability, with repercussions at the regional level. However, through targeted actions, Germany could mitigate the effects while maintaining its leading role in international development. By taking account of the recommendations below, the Federal Foreign Office and the BMZ will not only protect vulnerable populations, but also strengthen European security in the long term. It is imperative to act now to turn this budgetary constraint into an opportunity for reform and innovation.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT

The reorientation of development aid, particularly in financial terms, should be used to facilitate a rethinking of mechanisms in order to strengthen the sustainability of their effects and increase the autonomy of beneficiary communities. A key lever for reducing Malian communities' dependence on external aid is investment in increasing their economic and social autonomy. This requires simultaneous action on several fronts, which could mitigate the negative impacts on Mali while respecting budgetary constraints:

• Prioritise funding for Mali in the new budget

It is necessary to maintain support for organisations operating in Mali as a high priority, as the fragile situation in this country remains particularly critical. This could involve re-adding Mali to the list of countries eligible for BMZ transitional development assistance. Furthermore, by strengthening multilateral cooperation through the Sahel Alliance, the European Union, or the United Nations, and encouraging these organisations to maintain their commitment in the region, Germany would improve the coordination of existing multilateral efforts without necessarily increasing aid budgets.

Research on the HDP nexus confirms the positive role of certain German-funded NGOs in managing local conflicts (Müller-Koné et al., 2024), such as the case of IRC in Tenenkou (2022-2025). In an area marked by the deterioration of the social fabric, IRC launched a social cohesion project in 2022, funded by the BMZ, within and between communities in the Tenenkou district. The project draws on local actors—local authorities, associations, reconciliation committees, young people, and women—and has several components: promoting endogenous conflict resolution practices; revitalising frameworks for dialogue; capacity building; promoting peace initiatives; and consolidating participatory governance. These actions have resulted in the creation of infrastructure (water points, market gardens), as well as the establishment of 14 management committees to ensure collective management, and 54 peace committees composed of community members. The latter play an essential role in the rapid and pragmatic resolution of local disputes, thus helping to prevent them from escalating.

Numerous activities conducted by the IRC project contribute to preventing and mitigating conflicts: jointly agreed and equitable management of natural resources, raising awareness of the importance of peaceful coexistence, revitalising endogenous dispute resolution mechanisms, and creating economic opportunities for young people in order to reduce their vulnerability to recruitment by armed groups. According to several testimonies gathered from communities, these initiatives have had a tangible impact on local dynamics, and peace committees are now frequently called upon to resolve disputes³. However, the planned end of the project in December 2025, with no prospect of extension, could jeopardise the gains made. It is therefore essential to integrate, from the design stage of projects, clear exit strategies that focus on putting in place sustainable mechanisms, increasing the autonomy of beneficiary communities, and establishing financial sustainability mechanisms through transfer or local ownership.

³ See the research project '[How can the HDP nexus succeed?](#)', Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies.

•Re-enrol Mali on the list of countries eligible for BMZ transitional development assistance

BMZ transitional development assistance is a specific cooperation instrument that bridges the gap between emergency humanitarian aid and long-term development cooperation. Mali was previously eligible for this scheme, but was removed from it in 2024. Its reinstatement would mitigate the negative effects of the planned budget cuts.

•Plan exit strategies in advance

With external aid spending likely to be lower in the long term, it is necessary to prepare responsible exit strategies for interventions. These should strengthen the autonomy of beneficiary communities by providing them with the human, institutional, and financial resources necessary to maintain the gains made by the projects. This involves training local actors, setting up endogenous financing mechanisms (such as cooperatives or mutual systems), and integrating humanitarian actions into national public policies. With regard to livelihoods, before any funding is withdrawn it is important to ensure that local populations have adopted resilient agricultural techniques (agroecology, small-scale irrigation, crop diversification) and developed local value chains that support product processing. These measures would reduce dependence and protect against the impacts of budget reallocations or cuts.

•Seize the opportunity presented by funding cuts to increase the localisation of aid

German budget cuts should be seen as an opportunity to accelerate the localisation of aid. Including local NGOs and community actors in all projects, for example within consortia, would reduce dependence on costly international structures and promote national ownership. This would also strengthen the legitimacy, social anchoring, and effectiveness of interventions, thanks to a better understanding of contexts and real needs. However, this strategy requires: training local NGOs in financial management, monitoring and evaluation, governance, and accountability; creating mentoring programmes between international NGOs and local structures in order to transfer skills; and systematically including representatives of local NGOs in humanitarian coordination mechanisms (clusters, sectoral platforms, etc.).

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MALIAN GOVERNMENT

Mali's government is at a crossroads. In a context of multiple crises, the needs of the population exceed the capacity of the state. For several years, national and international NGOs have been providing essential services, stepping in to fill the gap left by the state. The Malian authorities should make them strategic partners by creating a legal, economic, and political framework conducive to humanitarian action and development. Facilitating their work is essential for the survival and resilience of Malian communities that have become dependent on aid. The Malian state should enable NGOs to operate in safe, transparent, and secure conditions. The recently proposed measure to tax humanitarian funds contradicts this logic and constitutes a 'red line' for donors. It would reduce the impact of these resources, which are intended to meet the vital needs of Malian citizens, while discouraging the remaining donors, limiting financial flows, increasing Mali's marginalisation, and prompting some organisations to leave or reduce their activities, to the detriment of the most vulnerable populations.

Rather than adopting measures that restrict the activities of NGOs, the Malian government should fully assume its responsibilities by:

- recognising the role of NGOs as partners in the provision of social and humanitarian services;
- simplifying administrative and tax procedures;
- ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers;
- Institutionalising a framework for regular dialogue between authorities, civil society, NGOs, and other partners. This framework would not be a constraint, but a lever to strengthen the credibility of the Malian government, while increasing the coherence and impact of initiatives on the ground. The issue of governance cannot be sidestepped. International partners make their aid conditional on respect for the principles of good governance and human rights, so a dialogue around those conditions is essential: the receipt of international aid must be accompanied by concrete reforms with regard to transparency, accountability, and respect for fundamental freedoms. Only in this way can humanitarian and development efforts be sustainably aligned with local efforts and contribute to a genuine resolution of the crisis.

The Malian government must recognise that NGOs are not only intermediaries for international aid, but also essential actors that compensate for the structural weaknesses of the state in responding to social needs. By creating a favourable environment, refraining from taxing humanitarian funds, and engaging in constructive dialogue on governance, the Malian government would send a strong signal of cooperation with its partners, which would help to restore trust, protect the most vulnerable, and promote lasting stability.

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