Malian youth paving the road for peace

In Mali, the road to peace and reconciliation has been wrought by a 2012 military coup and insecure borders, combined with a proliferation of small arms illegally imported or stolen from unsecured stockpiles. This, however, has not stopped the Malian people from championing democracy—the country is in a period of transition geared towards the re-establishment of constitutional order and democratic governance. In 2013, Presidential and Parliamentary elections were held in the country, representing a milestone on the path to peace.

Youth ownership of peace for sustainability

The PARC Jeunesse Mali project was designed to engage Malian youth, rather than impose pre-conceived plans and activities. The project supports Malian youth and promotes youth leadership through inclusive civic participation. The project empowers them to raise awareness amongst their peers and, rather than being beneficiaries, Malian youth are encouraged to be a partner in this project, channelling their participation through governmental and public institutions. Malian youth, through this approach, are having direct impacts on the project thanks to their involvement in
decision making processes, keeping them regularly informed of the project, and the solicitation of their views concerning their needs. With inclusivity as a strategic priority, youth are sharing their ideas for planned activities of the project, which is important to the project's sustainability and impact.

“At a time when the perspectives for Mali are darkening, the country needs support from all social classes, and particularly from young people, because they are the cornerstone for development. PARC Jeunesse comes exactly at the right time to support the Malian government and to help building capacities towards its inclusion in the peacebuilding process.” —Mariama Yedié Traoré, National UN Volunteer

Currently, the PARC Jeunesse Mali project has been implemented in three regions: Mopti, Gao, and Ségou. The regions of Bamako and Kayes will soon be added to this list. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provides financial support and technical advice to the UNV project. At the end of a two-year period, project ownership will be transferred to participants—Malian youth.

**Impacts of PARC Jeunesse Mali**

To date, over 800 young people in Mali have directly benefited from the PARC Jeunesse Mali project. In the region of Ségou, activities included a capacity building workshop on conflict prevention and mediation. In Mopti, an equivalent workshop was supplemented with activities sensitising participants on issues of citizenship, social cohesion, and human rights. In the Gao region, the project completed the rehabilitation and furnishing of Gao's Youth house and offered a training course on project management.

Since its beginning, the PARC Jeunesse Mali project has mobilized a high number of UN Volunteers along with local counterparts to empower a growing numbers of Malian youth to become responsible citizens and to encourage them to take part in their national development. These national and international UN Volunteers have contributed to the project by bringing
their expertise on human rights, project management, and monitoring and evaluation, or simply by helping the project team to coordinate activities and field missions in the regions. At the national-level, the PARC Jeunesse Mali project works closely with government institutions and UN entities throughout the country.

As PARC Jeunesse Mali continues to create safe spaces for young people, the hope is that many of them will not stray towards extremism and violence despite steady recruitment attempts from radical groups. The project pushes youth into the centre of development and discussions surrounding peace to empower them to fight for a more sustainable and just future for their nation. The young leaders in Mali are paving the road for peace by becoming change agents and teaching others to embrace the beauty of reconciliation.

This case study was prepared with the assistance of UN Online Volunteer Leslie-Ann Murray.

Afrique subsaharienne

- Mali • youth • conflict prevention • peace

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 10: Reduced inequalities, SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities, SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions