



Advancing Alternative Migration Governance



Migration and Development: Examining the migration development nexus in Kayes Region, Mali

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1. Introduction

Halting migration ambitions by implementing developments initiatives has been part of the 's external toolbox since the adoption of the Global Approach for Migration and Mobility (Deridder, Pelckmans, Ward 2020, 13). With the "migration crisis" of 2015, the number of policy initiatives to try and stem departures from countries of origin multiplied and aid to African countries became increasingly conditional upon cooperation on migration matters (Schofberger, 2019). The EU-Africa Valletta Summit and the creation of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa identified West Africa as one of the prime regions of focus for projects that found themselves on the so-called migration-development-security nexus.

Mali was one of the West African priority countries due a high number of Malian arrivals in Europe as well as because of its strategic position on key migration routes northward. While finding itself under external pressure to stem departures was nothing new for the country (Saadiyo, 2020), the scale at which projects were implemented increased considerably, especially in regions that had longstanding traditions of long-distance migration such as the southern region of Kayes and Sikasso. A variety of projects were implemented that sought to create livelihood opportunities for residents and returning migrants, using a logic that assumed that creating such opportunities would lower people's aspirations to leave.

This study examines the approach put forward by these projects and investigates to what extent migration aspirations are influenced by development assistance. It focuses on Malian residents and returning migrants from the region of Kayes, as well as on migrants in transit in Bamako and the northern city of Gao. Research findings are based on 586 quantitative interviews and 60 qualitative interviews.

The first two parts of this study will explore the Malian country context with regards to migration and spell out the methodology used in both the quantitative and qualitative research methods. A third part then provides a descriptive profile of respondents based on both datasets and unpacks their migration aspirations as well as the development assistance they have thus far received. In a fourth and final part the relationship between development assistance received and migrations aspirations is analysed.

Country Context

2.1 Brief Overview of country situation

Migration is an important phenomenon in Mali. As in many other West African countries, migration is intra and extra regional and is rooted in historical, cultural and economical mobility patterns.

Typically, intraregional migration has taken place from Mali to plantations and mines in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal, as well as circular migration of pastoralists moving from the north to the south of Mali and to coastal countries (IOM, 2013). Such mobility patterns are facilitated by the free movement allowed within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) states as well as bilateral agreements between Mali and Algeria and Mali and Morocco (Molenaar and Van Damme, 2017). Increases in Malian emigration to Europe can be placed in a broader trend of heightened mobility following droughts sweeping through the Sahel in the 1970s and 80s.

In 2015, the biggest share of Malian emigrants lived in Cote d'Ivoire (35%), followed by Nigeria (16%), Niger (8%), and France (8%) (Bruni et al, 2017). From July to September 2020, Mauritania (24%), Algeria (18%), Libya (7%), France (3%), Italy (3%) and Spain (2%) were the main destination countries of Malian migrants (IOM, 2020). The majority of them thus move and live within the ECOWAS region. At the same time Mali has consistently ranked high in Mediterranean sea and land arrivals. By 2021, Malians were the 9th most common nationality arriving in Europe via its southern borders (4.6% of arrivals), the second country in West Africa after Cote d'Ivoire.¹

In addition, Mali serves as a transit country or temporary destination country. This involves migrants traveling either through the region, to North African countries or, in a minority of cases to Europe. The ECOWAS free movement protocol means that up until northern Malian towns, migrants originating from within the ECOWAS space can travel with relative ease of movement. From there, migrants rely on smuggling networks to cross over into Algeria or Niger (Molenaar and Van Damme, 2017).

¹ UNHCR. Operational Data Portal (ODP) on Refugee Situations, available at : <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>

The armed rebellion in Northern Mali in 2012 and rising insecurity since have caused an increasing amount of displaced people. Such insecurity notwithstanding, refugees and migrants continue to travel through Mali to North-Africa and migrants seem generally undeterred by rising levels of violence (MMC, 2019). Restrictions of mobility due to COVID-19 such as border closures caused a temporary decrease in migratory flows from March to May 2020 (IOM, October 2020), but longer-term effects do not seem discernible. The city of Gao in the country's north serves as a transit point for interregional mobility as well as local job opportunities in gold mining (Molenaar et al, 2018).

Remittances of the Malian diaspora have been estimated to account for between 4 and 10% of GDP (African Development Bank 2007, Mouhoud 2016).² Recognising the Malian diaspora as a key development actor, the Malian government in 2004 created the Ministry for Malians Abroad and African Integration (MMEIA). The role of migration as an instrument of socio-economic development is similarly reflected in the 2014 national migration policy (Politique Nationale de Migration du Mali, PONAM) which underlines migration as “a real asset for the development of the country, a factor of economic growth and social promotion to sustainably reduce poverty”.

Mali has seen an influx of development aid under the European Trust Fund for Africa in recent years, making it an interesting case study to investigate the link between migration and development. Projects – see overview in section 1.3 – include both ‘traditional’ development aid aiming to increase development indicators and to tackle ‘root causes of migration’, as well as more securitized components such as border management and capacity building for security forces aimed at controlling movements at the country's borders.

2.2 Overview of target group respondents

For this study three different types of target groups were selected, across 3 different locations. The target groups cover both migrants of Malian origin as well as migrants transiting through Mali, thereby capturing some of the complexity of mobility patterns through the country. The different locations cover a region with a long tradition of long-distance migration (Kayes) as well as a key transit hub for West African migrants (Gao).

² See Clemens and Ogden 2019 on the methodological challenges of accounting remittances as part of the GDP. ODA contributes 5% to Malian GDP (Mouhoud 2016).

Map 1: survey and interview locations with Malian residents and returnees (green) and non Malian migrants (blue)



A first and second target group are Malian residents – with no migration history – and Malian returnees in the southwestern Kayes region. In this region, the two groups were surveyed and interviewed in the municipalities of Kayes, Kita, Nioro du Sahel and Yelimané. The region of Kayes has a decades-long history of mobility, which plays a crucial role in the development of its communities. It is connected to a flourishing diaspora, most notably in France (MMC, 2019: 164). Forty-five percent of remittances in Mali flow to the region of Kayes (UNDP, 2016: 81). In 2017 this amounted to approximately 21 billion CFA (over € 32 million).

The diaspora of Kayes is a major actor in the development of its communities and is well organised through a network of migrant associations. These migration patterns are especially true among the Soninké, the dominant ethnic group in the region, who have often been described as ‘travellers’. Following their mobilization by France during WW II, they constituted a majority among Malians settling in France and continue to attract immigrants from Kayes (Di

Bartolomeo et al, 2010). Hence, emigration to France is especially strong in Soninké communities, which include the surveyed communities of Yélimané, Kayes and Niore du Sahel (UNDP, 2016: 77).

The third target group consists of West African migrants that are in transit in Bamako and Gao.³ As the last city reachable by long haul busses in the country, Gao is the point of departure for migrants to embark on the crossing of the Malian-Algerian or Malian-Nigerien border, for which they rely on services provided by people smugglers. Many northbound migrants stay in Gao to save up money for the next leg of the journey. They are often deprived of resources as costs continue to rise until they reach Gao, from where the most expensive part of the journey has yet to begin. Gao also sees a steady number of returning migrants, who are either pushed out of Algeria by security forces or who return on their own initiative.

When they arrive in the city, migrants are typically connected to *coxeurs* or middlemen who arrange for their housing while they await onward transport. Police raids are common and migrants are often required to pay off law enforcement officials in order to be left alone. Most migrants arriving in Gao have the intention to continue their journey northward. The city is also host, however, to a community of settled migrants, mainly from West African countries. While Mali has ratified a number of international treaties to protect migrants' rights, their position in Gao is precarious. Instances of abuse are common, most commonly by security forces at border crossings or other checkpoints, but equally while travelling with people smugglers to cross the Algerian border.

At the national level, legislation that aims at protecting migrants focuses mostly on trafficking and does not provide clear pathways for migrants to be offered protection. At the international level, programs aimed at increasing state capacity for border management rarely include a human rights component. More fundamentally, migrants in Mali often purposefully try to avoid detection and stay therefore try to remain out of sight of authorities and international organisations that are supposedly there to assist them.

³ The initial purpose of the study was to survey only migrants in transit in Gao. Access difficulties in the city have however led the research team to conduct part of the surveys with West African migrants in Bamako and part in Gao.

2.3 Overview of Development Projects

There are different EU-Malian cooperation frameworks on migration, and both France and Spain have sought to complement this with bilateral agreements (Trauner and Deimel, 2013). One of the main EU partnerships with Mali is the EU Partnership Framework on Migration, which was launched in 2016 to try and mobilize EU actions in the region (Molenaar and Van Damme, 2017). Through this framework, the EU agrees to provide ‘financial support and development and neighbourhood policy tools [that] will reinforce local capacity-building, including for border control, asylum procedures, counter-smuggling and reintegration efforts’ (EU, 2016). Some of these efforts are inherently securitized. The partnership has reinforced the migration dimension of the Common Security and Defense Policy mission in Mali, funded the G5 Sahel joint force to help increase security and boost cross-border cooperation in the region and strengthened cooperation on effective return of irregular migrants (EU, 2016-2017).

Other EU initiatives include the EU Capacity Building (EUCAP) Sahel mission, which has been operational since 2015 and has been supporting the Malian military through trainings. The mission has also been actively involved in supporting the establishment of specialized forces (police and justice) in the fight against terrorism, trafficking and border management (EUTF).⁴ The European training mission (EUTM) has been active since 2013 and works on the reconstruction of the Malian armed forces. They are also involved in operation ‘Seno’, an operation working on securing border zones in collaboration with Burkina Faso and Mauritania. They have a focus area on Mopti and Gao (EUTF).⁵

One of the main funding mechanisms, that apart from a securitized approach also includes a focus on more ‘traditional’ development assistance through a migration lens, is the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). The region of Kayes, linked to its status as a primary region of departure for long distance migration towards Europe, has seen a big influx of development funding, notably by the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) (EU, 2017). Since its creation in late 2015 the fund invested € 57.7 million in development projects that are linked to

⁴ European Union Trustfund for Africa - [Document d'action du Fonds Fiduciaire de l'UE pour le Programme d'Appui au Renforcement de la Sécurité dans les régions de Mopti et de Gao et à la gestion des zones frontalières \(PARSEC Mopti-Gao\)](#)

⁵ European Union Trustfund for Africa - [Document d'action du Fonds Fiduciaire de l'UE pour le Programme d'Appui au Renforcement de la Sécurité dans les régions de Mopti et de Gao et à la gestion des zones frontalières \(PARSEC Mopti-Gao\)](#)

‘tackling the root causes of migration’ such as improving value chains in the agricultural sector, improving the pathways at the disposal of the Malian diaspora to invest in sustainable development in Kayes, job creation and the reintegration of returning migrants.

Table 1: overview of EUTF financed development projects in Kayes⁶

Project	Amount	Locations in Kayes region
Strengthening economic opportunities and food security for the populations of the Sikasso, Kayes and Koulikoro regions, through job creation and sustainable development of the cashew nut value chain, in order to improve the living conditions of the populations and mitigate the root causes of irregular emigration	€ 13.5 million	Kayes, Bafoulabe, Kita, Kenieba
Project to support investments by the Malian diaspora in their regions of origin	€ 8.2 million	Bafoulabe, Kenieba, Kayes, Diema, Kita, Nioro du Sahel, Yelimane
Youth employment creates opportunities in Mali	€ 21 million	Kayes, Kita, Nioro, Yelimane
Strengthening Migration Management, Governance, Sustainable Return and Reintegration in Mali	€ 15 million	Bafoulabe, Kenieba, Kayes, Diema, Kita, Nioro, Yelimane

The approach put forward by these projects aimed at tackling the so-called ‘root causes of migration’ assumes that spending on development has the potential to lower migration aspirations. EU development plans to contain migration movements in the Sahel are largely based on the assumption that increasing employment rates and livelihoods can deter departures.

⁶ Kayes was not the only survey area for this research project. Non Malian migrants transiting through Mali were surveyed in the city of Gao and in Bamako. However, these migrants do not benefit from the type of development aid projects that are implemented in Kayes region. In order to be able to compare both groups, the non Malians were asked about the aid they received in the year prior to their departure.

Several studies however, have questioned this relationship (Siegel 2019, Dao et al 2018). Clemens has shown that the development of countries such as Mali actually leads to rising emigration pressure (Clemens, 2014). A 2009 analysis of World Bank data found that when aid increases by 10 %, migration increased by 1,5 % (Berthélemy, J-C., Beuran, M. and Maurel, M. 2009). Clemens and Postel (2018) find that sustained economic development tends to encourage emigration in poorer countries. The logic of migration containment shaping EU development spending since 2016 is therefore, at least at the macro level, contradictory to literature.

In a review of the EUTF fund for the Sahel and Lake Chad, Oxfam finds that the intervention logic for EUTF funded projects overwhelmingly focuses on crisis response, rather than addressing the root causes more structurally. Development responses are largely tied to domestic policy priorities of the EU members states to curb migration, rather than development priorities in the target countries (OXFAM, 20202). Similarly to findings by Oxfam, Pye finds that EUTF projects are not integrated into long-term development instruments and are reactive rather than strategic, overall limiting their impact (Pye, 2019). Raineri and Rossi further find that by focusing on the imperative to curb migration at all costs, the EUTF in Mali risks distorting any genuine foreign development policies and comes at the cost of ongoing and planned development activities (Raineri et al, 2017).

As mentioned before, migration has strong historical and cultural roots in Mali, and especially in the region of Kayes. This has created social expectations to migrate, and the possibility of social mobility through migration (Reach Initiative, 2020). In this sense, migration allows for both material and immaterial empowerment, as migrants have gradually been assigned the status as developer of their respective communities. Having gained recognition and legitimacy through their contribution to community development, returned migrants have in many cases been able to capture electoral offices at the time of decentralization in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Gonin et al, 2011: 7). As argued by Lima, returning migrants have been presented with a personal trajectory as “elected municipal representatives or even members of parliament” largely out of reach prior to emigration (Lima, 2015; Adelkhah and Bayart, 2007). In this sense, successful migrants are often equipped with a status of authority that is directly linked to the income and investment made in Europe - thereby illustrative of a logic in which authority, influence and wellbeing are only achieved through the migration journey.

3 Methodology

3.1 Survey Methodology

3.1.1 Sampling Strategy

This examines the link between development interventions and migration aspirations in Mali through a mixed-method research combining desk research with both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Data collection was organised consecutively, so that preliminary descriptive findings of the quantitative data collection could feed into the structured interviews that were conceptualised to fill knowledge gaps.

The primary data collection consisting of 583 surveys was carried out in three regions: in the south-western region of Kayes, the northern region of Gao and the capital Bamako. Bamako is a transit point along the western-Mediterranean migration route, and finds itself at a crossroads of both inter-continental and inter-regional repatriation programs. The selection of Bamako thus included both migrants accommodated in IOM transit centres across the city – prior to the outbreak of Covid - and transit centres outside of institutional structures. As a popular destination on the northern migration route of Mali, Gao was selected to interview transit migrants from West and Central Africa.

The focus on Kayes region allowed to focus on a region that builds on a long history of migration to Europe and has as such become a focal point of EU development spending in Mali since 2016. As urban centres in the region, the selected municipalities of Kita, Nioro du Sahel, Yelimané and Kayes share a high emigrant fraction – and thus a closely linked understanding of migration and development.

In Kayes, a total of 300 respondents were surveyed, including both Malian returnees and Malians without previous migration experience. For both groups, recipients of development interventions, and those that had received no development support over the past two years were surveyed. Per municipality, 50 Malians and 25 Malian returned migrants were interviewed with a specific focus on development recipients. The remaining 300 respondents included transit migrants in both Gao and Bamako, similarly, including both recipients of development aid and those that had received no support.

Surveys were carried out by Malian researchers in collaboration with a national partner (Think Peace) with intimate knowledge of selected municipalities. In Gao, some constraints were

experienced, particularly in order to access some of the migrant houses or 'Ghettos'. In Kayes, access was obtained through international and national associations working on projects that focus on the migration-development nexus as part of the projects described above. To interview Malian respondents (both returnees and residents of Kayes), development organisations in Kayes helped facilitate contact to respondents. These included diaspora and migration organisations such as the Association of Malian deportees (AME).

Migration associations were contacted as they provide important contact points for transit migrants, offering advice and accommodation. In addition to transit associations, transit migrants in Bamako were sampled at central bus stations acting as points of arrival for West African migrants and as point of departure on the way north to Gao. Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 (more detail below), access to transit centres was facilitated by IOM. As the data collection coincided with the outbreak of COVID-19, the closure of IOM transit centres meant that most data collected from transit migrants took place outside IOM structures.

Prior to data collection, Clingendael and its national partner Think Peace conducted a two-day training workshop in Bamako in the presence of the entire research team including researchers from Gao and Kayes. Nonetheless, to account for country- and region-specific characteristics and target groups, the workshop was used to further tailor formulations and answer categories to local circumstances and sensitivities. In particular, the workshop provided the opportunity for local researchers to discuss the translation of key concepts of the research into local languages such as Bambara, Soninké and Peulh.

The workshop further served to identify the migration profile of each municipality, as well as an analysis of existing security risks. In line with ADMIGOV ethical guidelines, researchers were trained to begin each data interview with a description of the project goals, specifying in detail the objective of the research project. This included for example the specification that respondents would not be able to profit from participation in the research, nor would it have any impact on their migration prospects or the obtaining of development aid.

Data collection took place through survey collection software (Survey CTO) using a purposive sampling method.⁷ The Clingendael research team regularly followed-up with its national

⁷ Given the complexities in accessing migrant populations as well as the fact that it is impossible to establish the total migrant population, the possibility of random sampling was discarded.

partner during data collection. To ensure data quality and in order to allow for a swift adaptation where necessary, collected data was monitored daily by the Clingendael research team.

3.1.2 Survey Adaptations/Specifications

In order to ensure comparability of survey findings across the four selected country case studies – Mali, Ethiopia, Lebanon and Turkey – the survey deployed by Malian researchers was based on a common blueprint used by all country teams. The survey structure was set up to sample individual and household information on biographical data, migration history, migration aspirations and risk attitude towards migration, development interventions, available household assets and well-being.

Three rounds of adaptations were made following the pilot and the training workshop, to account for both country- and region-specific characteristics and target groups. A first adaptation of the generalised survey was based on a comprehensive literature review, a review of existing EUTF funded projects in Mali and the research team's knowledge of migration dynamics along the western-Mediterranean migration route. The review of EUTF funded projects served as basis to adapt answer categories on development interventions to country-specific types of assistance.

In a second round of adaptations following piloting among respondents from Kayes in February 2020 and the Clingendael-Think Peace workshop in March, the survey was shortened to increase the rate of participation and consider potential sensible questions. This allowed to incorporate feedback by respondents and Malian researchers.⁸ The pilot allowed for additional modifications through the adaptation of scaling questions that asked respondents to express the likelihood of an event on a numbered scale.⁹ Consequently, answer options for scaling questions were reduced.

A final round of adaptations was made to account for the potential effect of COVID-19 on both respondents' migration aspiration and their inclusion into development interventions in the context of the pandemic. To support comparability of data collected prior to the pandemic, only

⁸ For example, the pilot phase carried out among respondents from Kayes region indicated respondents' hesitation to the term 'migrant', frequently used throughout the survey. Respondents instead preferred the term 'voyageur'.

⁹ Pilot respondents expressed difficulty with an originally wide range of answer options.

two questions were added to enquire whether respondents did plan to move prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 and whether they have taken on work in its aftermath.

3.1.3 Survey Limitations

The research team encountered a number of limitations – both in terms of adaptations required through the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as some methodological challenges.

Almost immediately after the beginning of data collection in March 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 halted activities. Access to IOM transit centres in the capital of Bamako was no longer possible in order to survey migrants residing in collective accommodation. In parallel, the Clingendael Institute was forced to suspend the stay of its researcher in Mali, leading to a process of remote management of data collection. Data collection was initially paused and resumed in June 2020 based on national COVID guidelines that had by then been established. In this context, the extension of the originally envisioned two months of data collection required several changes in the Malian research team. As a result, the two-day training workshop data was adapted and conducted a second time online to train several new researchers that joined the team in the second half of 2020.

On the methodological side, the survey also introduced potential researcher bias through two main elements. First, the fact that the research team had to be adapted given the extended period of data collection meant that researchers who joined only in the second half of the year did not have the same training possibilities as their colleagues. In particular, the online training format made it difficult to include practical exercises and provide detailed individual feedback to each researcher.¹⁰

Second, language skills introduced additional limitations. To reach both Malian and West African respondents, the joint survey version of all four case studies – Mali, Ethiopia, Lebanon and Turkey – was translated from English to French. In addition, the research team translated the survey in three local languages. Given varying degrees of literacy in the national languages of Bambara, Soninké and Peulh, translation was limited to oral interpretation of each researcher. To

¹⁰ In addition, discussions on the concepts introduced in the survey were not possible to the same extent as in the earlier workshop which had facilitated lively discussions among all participants.

limit potential biases, the training workshop conducted ahead of data collection included a joint session to translate and discuss key terms of the survey in each language.

Lastly, access to respondents in all three zones provided a challenge throughout the data collection process. In Gao, access was difficult given the often clandestine accommodation of transit migrants leading to a level of suspicion in answering questions related to the migration journey. In Bamako, the originally scheduled access through transit centres was prohibited following precaution measures implemented by IOM in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. In the region of Kayes, an originally randomized approach to access development recipients in each municipality proved challenging despite the site selection based on EUTF funded projects. To account for these challenges, researchers approached both international and national migrants and diaspora organisations to act as point of contact to potential respondents.

While a practical and necessary adaptation, the de-facto cooperation with migration associations to approach respondents has similarly increased the potential for respondents' bias. Often funded in the frame of EU migration policy, migrant and diaspora organisations have themselves become actors in the EU's external migration-development nexus (Soukouna, 2019; Soukouna and Coulibaly, 2014). Consequently, it cannot be excluded that responses were based on respondents established understanding of the positioning of each actor – the migration associations on their side, the EU-funded researchers on the other.

3.2 Qualitative Interview Methodology

Following preliminary analysis of quantitative data, a qualitative component of the research was introduced in November 2020. Three local researchers with in-depth knowledge of the region of Kayes and Gao were hired by the Clingendael Institute. Given the continued necessity to work remotely at the time of qualitative data collection, one researcher with a more senior profile was named as the lead researcher. Early November, an online training was organised which presented the research project and draft questionnaires to the national researchers.¹¹ Based on their feedback the questionnaire was modified. Over a period of four weeks, one researcher travelled to Gao and two to Kayes region to conduct interviews with Malian residents, Malian

¹¹ Each of the three respondent categories had a separate questionnaire.

returnees and non-Malian migrants in transit. Access was again facilitated by local organisations working with migrants and on implementing development projects.

Interviews took place in the same municipalities of Kayes region where surveying had taken place (Kayes, Yelimane, Nioro du Sahel and Kita) and in Gao, using purposive sampling. A total of 60 interviews were carried out, 20 for every respondent type. In Kayes, 10 interviews were conducted in every municipality, 5 of which with Malian residents and 5 with Malian returnees. In Gao, 20 interviewed were conducted with non-Malian migrants. Oral informed consent was obtained from all respondents.

Feedback was given to researchers on an ongoing basis during the interview period and the Clingendael research team was in contact on a daily basis with the lead researcher. Following data collection a codebook was developed by the Clingendael research team based on discussions with the Malian research team. Coding and analysis were then carried out in NVIVO.

Similar limitations in terms of language and potential for respondent bias can be noted for the qualitative component of the research. In addition, it was not possible to recruit the same respondents for the qualitative and quantitative components due to the anonymity of the surveys. Suspicion among respondents detected during the pilot phase of survey led to the decision to not request phone numbers that could be used for a potential qualitative follow up discussion.

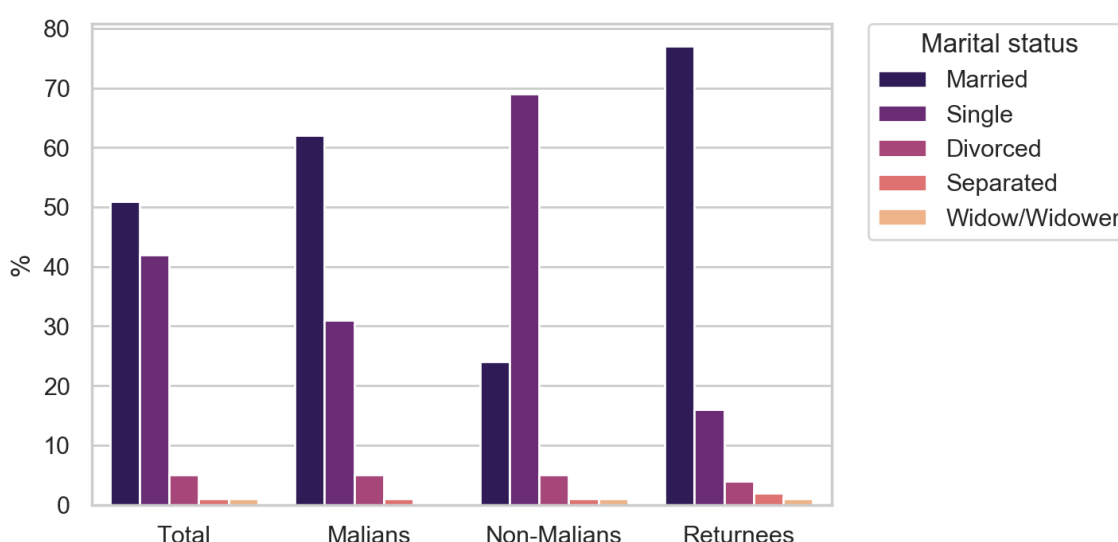
4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Profile of Respondents

4.1.1 Respondents to quantitative survey¹²

Most interviewed Malian residents and non-Malian migrants were between 18 and 35 years old, 68% and 76% respectively, while returnees were older, 74% of them were between 25 and 45 years old. Twenty-four percent (n=143) of all respondents were women. Non-Malians were less likely to have received no education (12%) as compared to returnees (26%). In terms of marital status, fewer non-Malian migrants were married than Malian respondents (24% vs. 62% for Malian residents and 77% for Malian returnees respectively).

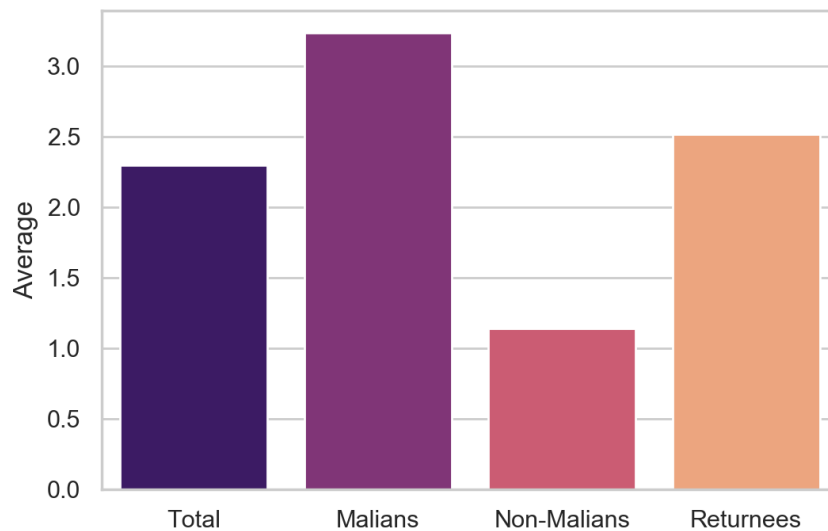
Graph 1: Marital status of respondents per respondent category



¹² Quantitative data were pre-processed in Python, with most answers recoded to labels (for descriptive analyses) or numbers (for regression analysis). Seven extreme outliers were replaced with the median value of the variable in question. Likewise, the interview location Bamako – IOM was not used in analyses due to an insufficient number of observations (n=8) in that location. Furthermore, for regression analyses, the following variables were recoded into the following groups: Age: 18-25, 25-35, 35-45, and 45+¹²; Education: ‘Primary’, ‘High School’, ‘Higher education’, and ‘No education’; Birth country: ‘Mali’ and ‘Other’; Home ownership: ‘Owner’, ‘Renting’, and ‘Other’; Destination: ‘Mali’, ‘Spain’, ‘France’, and ‘Other’. The reason for recoding these variables was to have a similar number of observations in each group, or at least a sufficient number of observations in each group to conduct valid analyses. Across all regression analyses, no collinearity issues were detected, or these are indicated in the tables below with asterisks (*). Other minor changes made to the data are reported directly in the results below.

While more non-Malian migrants reported that the children in their household attend school (51% vs. 17% for Malian residents and 14% for Malian returnees), their overall socioeconomic status seemed to be lower than that of Malian respondents: 51% was employed over the past 12 months (vs. 72% for Malian residents and 57% for Malian returnees); 55% reported owning a home (vs. 80% for Malian residents and 84% for Malian returnees); their asset index was significantly lower (1.14 vs. 3.23 for Malian residents and 2.51 for Malian returnees).¹³ Their income sources were most likely to come from independent activities (42%), as opposed to interviewed Malians who reported a more diverse picture of income generating activities, including agriculture.

Graph 2: asset index per respondent category



The difference between Malian residents and Malian returnees is more nuanced. Slightly more Returnees were home-owners (84% vs. 80%) but fewer of them were employed over the past 12 months (57% vs. 72%), and they also had a lower asset index (2.51 vs. 3.23). More of them were married (77% vs. 62%). Such results could suggest that there is a potential effect of migrating on the socioeconomic status of interviewees.

¹³ The asset index is calculated as follows: every time a respondent answers positively to owning an item – and being the sole owner – from the possessions list in the questionnaire (refrigerator, dish washer, oven, washing machine, television, air conditioning, holiday home, car, motorcycle, agricultural tools, PC, mobile phone, satellite dish) he/she is attributed one point. The index is the average per group. So interviewed non-Malians on average possess 1.13 items from the possessions list.

Table 2: Full Descriptive Profile of Questionnaire Respondents

		Malian residents		Malian returnees		Non Malians		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Respondent Household Head									
	yes	65	27	46	36	-	-	111	19
	no	174	73	82	64	-	-	256	44
Average Age	tranche	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	[18-25]	62	26	9	7	65	30	136	23
	[25-35]	100	42	55	43	100	46	255	44
	[35-45]	58	24	40	31	41	19	139	24
	[45-55]	12	5	16	12	9	4	37	6
	[55-65]	6	3	6	5	2	1	14	2
	[65+]	1	0	2	2	0	0	3	1
Sex	Sex	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	m	177	74	108	84	156	72	441	76
	f	62	26	20	16	61	28	143	24
Highest Level of Education Achieved	type	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	no education	37	15	33	26	26	12	96	16
	primary education	33	14	30	23	53	24	116	20
	secondary education	74	31	32	25	74	34	180	30
	intermediary education	8	3	12	9	13	6	33	6
	higher education (bachelor or master)	38	16	4	3	35	16	77	13
	Koranic education	28	12	15	12	13	6	56	10
non-formal (e.g. training)	21	8	2	2	3	1	26	4	
Marital Status	status	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	married	148	62	99	77	52	24	299	51
	single	75	31	20	16	150	69	245	42
	divorced/widow	16	6	9	7	15	7	40	7
Children Attending School in Household		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	yes	41	17	18	14	110	51	169	29
Employed in last year		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	yes	172	72	73	57	110	51	355	61
Home ownership	status	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	owner	192	80	107	84	119	55	418	72
	renting	39	16	18	14	70	32	127	22
	free housing	7	3	1	1	11	5	19	3
	co-housing	0	0	0	0	14	6	14	2
other	1	0	2	2	3	0	6	0	
Income Sources	source	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	independent	166	27	75	25	148	42	389	31
	agriculture	141	23	76	25	40	11	257	20

	employee	105	17	37	12	66	19	208	16
	remittances	69	11	37	12	12	3	118	9
	pension savings	54	9	27	9	5	1	86	7
	loans	27	4	17	6	6	2	50	4
	selling belongings	12	2	6	2	11	3	29	2
	social	7	1	4	1	8	2	19	1
	NGOs	8	1	2	1	0	0	10	1
	no response	0	0	5	2	5	1	10	1
	begging	1	0	2	1	5	1	8	1
	savings/investments	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
	unemployment benefits	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
	other	23	4	12	4	48	14	83	7
Asset Index		3.23		2.516		1.14		2.298	

4.1.2 Respondents to qualitative interview

Table 3: Qualitative Interview Respondents Descriptive Profile

		Malian residents	Malian returnees	Non Malians	Total
Sex	m	9	21	15	45
	f	11	0	5	16
Age	[18-25]	7	2	2	11
	[25-35]	12	13	16	41
	[35-45]	1	5	2	8
	[45-55]	0	0	0	0
	[55-65]	0	0	0	0
	[65+]	0	1	0	1
Marital Status	married	17	14	11	42
	single	1	7	8	16
	divorced	2	0	1	3

4.2 Migration Aspirations

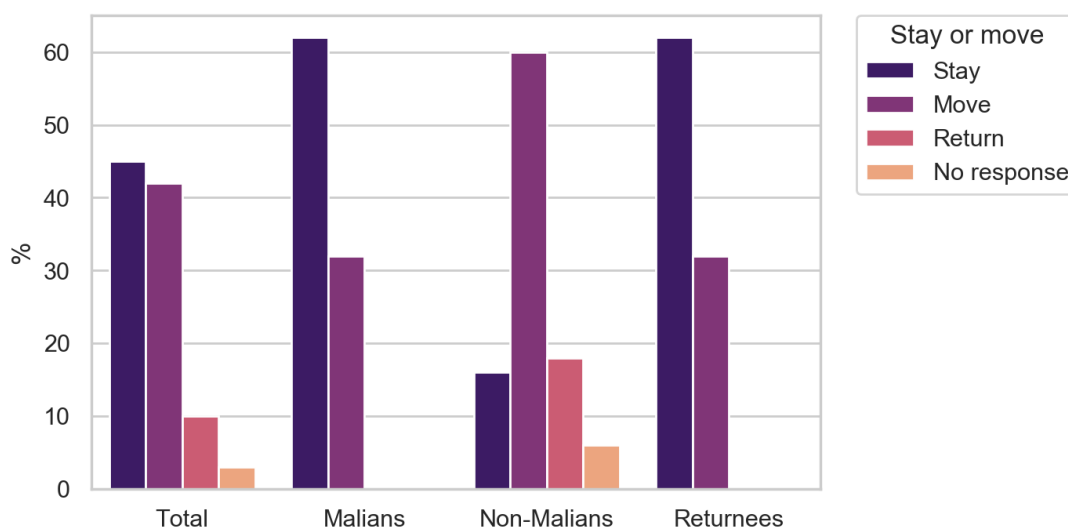
Onwards aspirations are more common for non-Malian migrants who indicate more often than interviewed Malians that both their ideal aspiration as well as their planned aspiration is to leave (60% and 61% respectively for non-Malian migrants, compared to 32% and 35% for Malian residents and 32% and 38% for Malian returnees). Stated considered aspirations are high for all three groups (54% for Malian residents, 55% for Malian returnees and 57% for non-Malian

migrants), highlighting a discrepancy between considering to leave on the one hand and, on the other hand, actually planning for it or seeing it as an ideal situation.

Inversely, aspirations to stay are more common among Malian residents and Malian returnees, who state wanting to stay as ideal aspiration (62% for Malian residents, 62% for Malian returnees) or planning to stay (64% for Malian residents, 61% for Malian returnees) as their most common response.

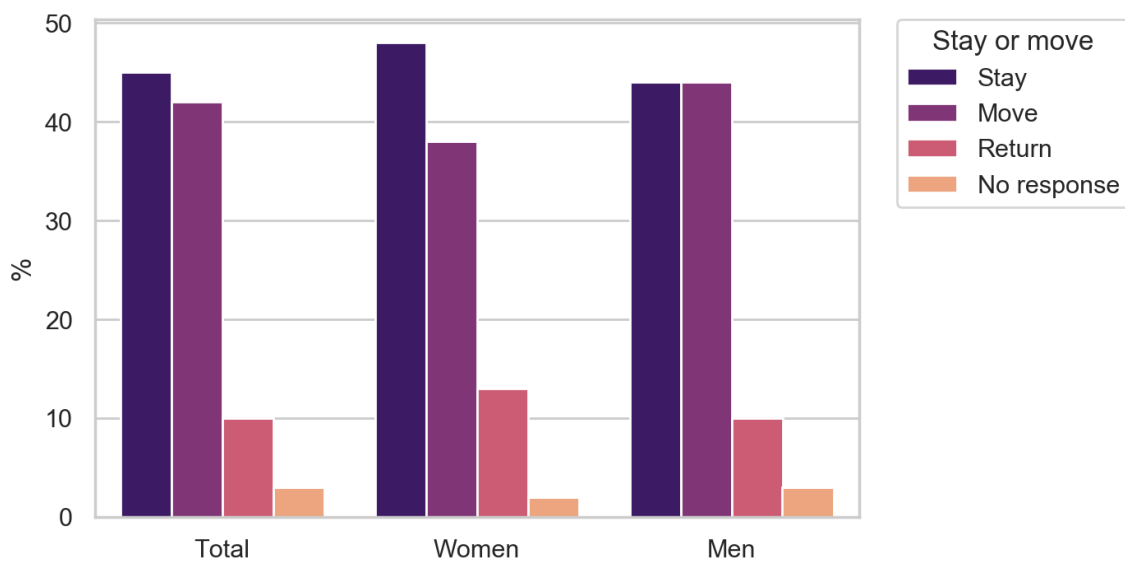
Return aspirations are expressed by 14% of non-Malian migrants.

Graph 3: ideal aspiration (D1) per respondent category



Graph 4 : Ideal aspiration (D1) disaggregated by gender

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Graph 5: Considered aspiration (D2) disaggregated by gender

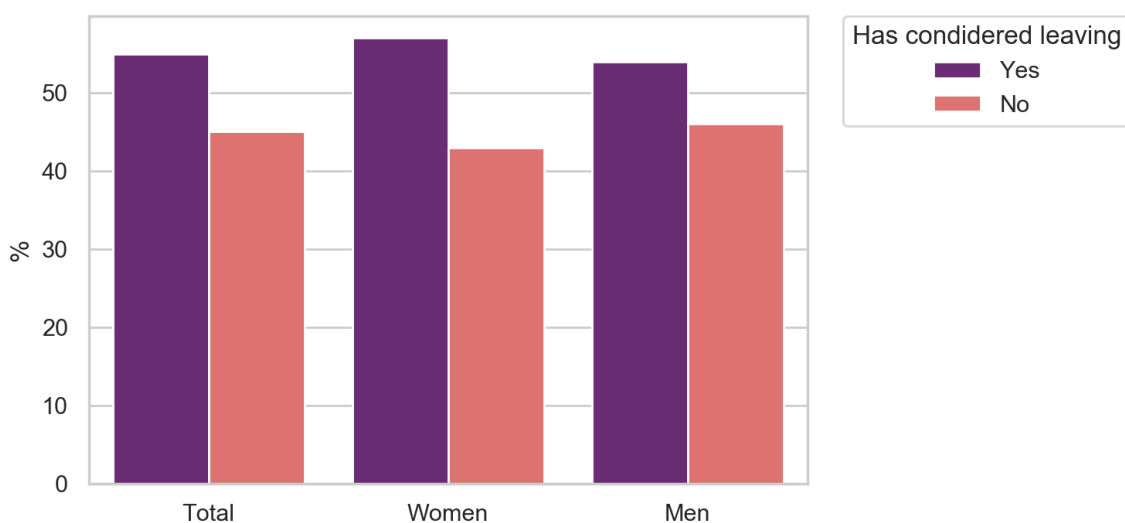


Table 4: Questionnaire Respondents Migration Aspirations

		Malian residents		Malian returnees		Non Malians		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
D1-Ideal Aspiration	stay	147	62	80	62	35	16	262	45
	leave	76	32	41	32	130	60	247	42
	return	15	6	7	5	38	18	60	10
	no response	1	0	0	0	14	6	15	3
D2- Last		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%

year	considered leaving	128	54	70	55	123	57	321	55
	did not consider leaving	111	46	58	45	94	43	263	45
considered aspiration		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
D3- Planned Aspiration	stay	151	64	78	61	33	15	402	46%
	leave	83	35	48	38	131	61	396	45%
	return	0	0	0	0	31	14	45	5%
	no response	1	0	1	1	21	10	34	4%

Table 5: Interview Respondents Migration Aspirations

	Malian residents	Malian returnees	Non-Malians
stay	12	5	0
leave	7	2	9
return	-	-	8
no response	1	13	3

4.3 Development Interventions

Surveyed non-Malian migrants have received development aid to a lesser degree than surveyed Malians (8% vs. 49% for Malian residents and 45% for Malian returnees). Given the very low sample size for non-Malian migrants having received aid (n=18) it is therefore necessary to interpret results for this group with caution. This low figure does however point to the reality that as such non Malian migrants are not entitled to assistance based on their status, and that it is hard for them to access aid.¹⁴ Furthermore it is noteworthy that the number of returnees having received assistance is lower than that of Malian residents without migration history. The most commonly received types of aid are cash transfer (35% for Malian residents, 30% for Malian returnees), agricultural subsidies (17% for Malian residents, 30% for Malian returnees), job training (13% for both Malian residents and returnees), and business development training assistance (13% for Malian residents, 8% for Malian returnees).

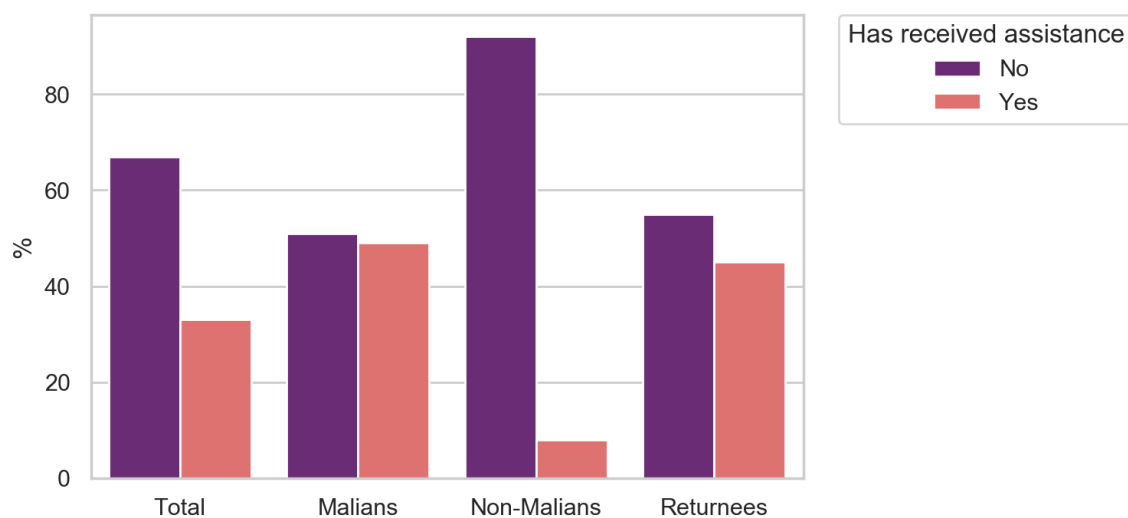
Table 6: Questionnaire Respondents' Participation in Development Interventions

¹⁴ The question about aid asks about all types of aid received in the last 12 months. It is therefore possible that some of the mentioned assistance was received outside of Mali.

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		Malian residents		Malian returnees		Non-Malians		Total	
Development Assistance Received	yes/no	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	yes	118	49	58	45	18	8	194	33
	no	121	51	70	55	199	92	390	67
Type of Development Assistance	type	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	cash	63	35	28	30	2	9	93	32
	agricultural subsidy	30	17	28	30	1	5	59	20
	job training	23	13	12	13	0	0	35	12
	business development	24	13	7	8	0	0	31	11
	other subsidies	18	10	7	8	1	5	25	9
	professional training	10	6	5	5	1	5	16	5
	housing	0	0	0	0	13	59	13	4
	reintegration	2	1	1	1	2	9	5	2
	documents	1	1	1	1	1	5	3	1
	psycho-social	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	1
	travel expenses	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
	other	5	3	2	2	2	9	9	3
no response	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	

Graph 5: % of respondents having received assistance per respondent category



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Analysis of the frequency of assistance received does reveal significant differences between groups, but does highlight that overall the frequency is rather low – between 1.57 times and 1.05 times over the last 12 months for the four most commonly received types of aid.

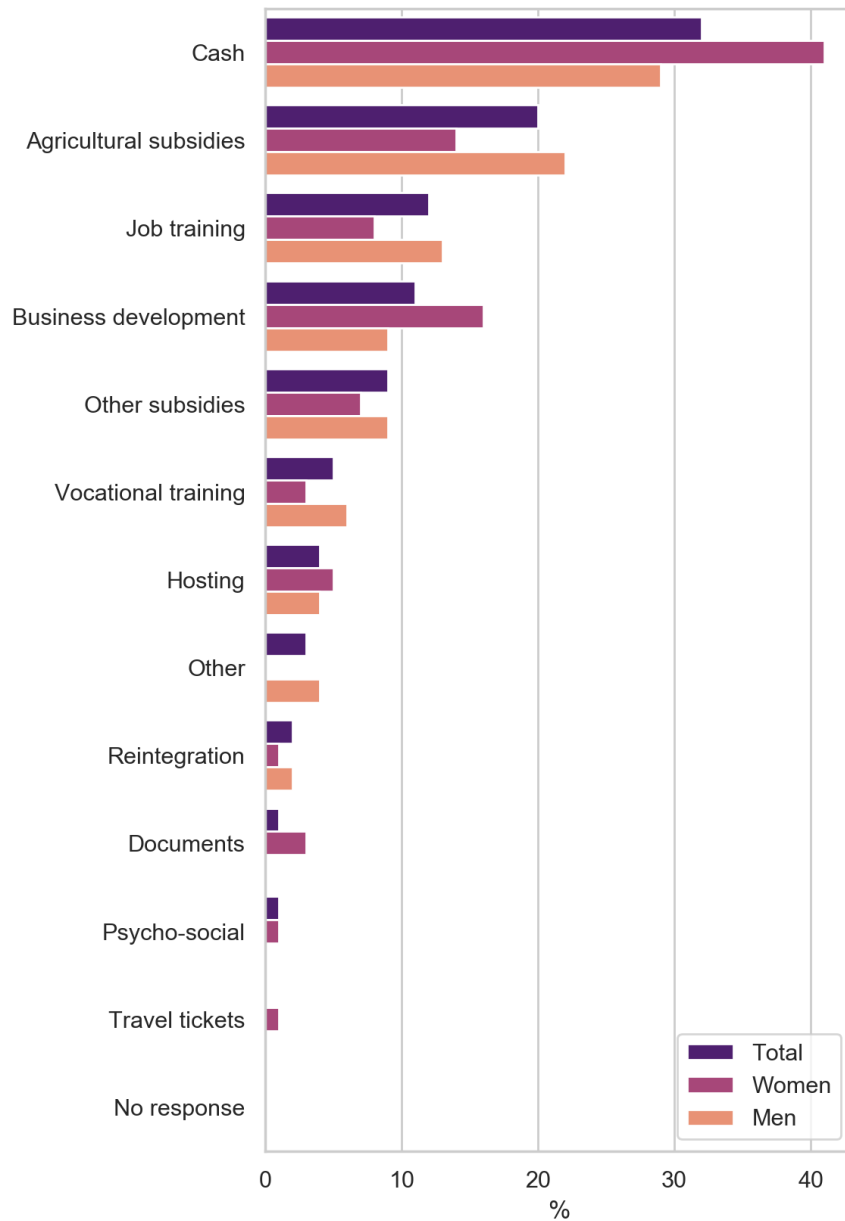
Table 7: frequency of aid received in last 12 months (most commonly received types, all groups)

Type	Avg. times received
cash	1.57
Agricultural subsidy	1.23
Job training	1.33
Business development	1.05

More women indicated having received cash transfers than men (41% for women, 29% for men), and business development support (16% for women, 9% for men), whereas male respondents received agricultural subsidies (14% for women, 22% for men) and job training (8% for women, 13% for men) more often.

Graph 6: type of assistance received disaggregated by gender

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During qualitative interviews, respondents indicating that they had received some form of assistance (48) mostly talked about small one-off forms of assistance, oftentimes in the context of governmental COVID-19 relief plans that provided basic necessities. This is particularly the case for Malian residents and returnees. One respondent noted: “My family received food aid under the government’s COVID-19 program. It was this year in July that my family received the aid” (Yelimane_II_H_61). Another respondent noted: “The aid I received was a donation of mosquito nets and my family also received food aid, as part of the COVID-19 response program” (Yelimane_I_F_55). Mentioned assistance is often linked to calamities such as floods: “I received

bags of grain as part of the support for people whose houses collapsed following the storms of 2018 and 2020. In those two years, I received a bag of maize flour, a bag of millet and oil." (Nioro_II_H_43).

Structural, more longer form types of assistance mentioned were mostly related to infrastructure, training or education. One respondent noted "I received a well in my garden as a gift from an NGO. This well has been useful for me and for the whole community, we do a lot of things with this well like building, gardening etc." (Gao_III_H_15). Another respondent mentioned: "I received help from an NGO for gardening. I received help with seeds for gardening. It was in 2017; I received the aid only once." (Yelimane_I_F_56).

Returnees specifically reported the aid received in the process of their return. Three respondents mention the assistance provided by either an EU Member State or IOM in the process of their return procedure. "I received assistance from IOM in the context of my return to Mali; apart from that, I did not receive any development aid. The assistance was done in 2019 as part of my return to Mali." (Kayes_II_H_30). Some respondents mentioned having received one-off payments several times during their return procedures: "I received two grants. The first is a sum of 50 euros from the Italians for the flight ticket when I was repatriated, and the second is 52,000 francs received from the IOM agents, and since then I have not received anything from anyone." (Kita_II_H_37).

Most of these types of assistance received in the context of return procedures seem limited to a small sum of money to cover costs during travel to respondents' home communities. One respondent mentioned assistance in setting up a project at home, for which he was not selected: "Yes, following my expulsion to Morocco - I should specify that I was on my way to Italy - IOM accompanied us from Morocco and took care of our return. Once we arrived in Mali, IOM gave us 60,000 francs each and asked each of us to set up a project so that they could assist us further; my project was cattle fattening, but I was not selected for funding. So the help I received from IOM was assistance in the process of my return and 60,000 francs to enable me to arrive with my family." (Yelimane_II_H_59). None of the interviewed returnees signalled having received more structural forms of assistance as part of their return procedures.

More often than international organizations, family and friends, at times belonging to the diaspora, are mentioned as sources of assistance in the process of return procedures: "The type

of help I received was financial support from my friends and family, this was after my return in 2016. The help I received was a sum of money of 500,000 francs that my friends and family gathered to assist me after my expulsion from France." (Kayes_II_H_32). Another respondent noted: "I received support to settle down after I returned home. It was in 2017 that I got the help. The help was provided by family (my parents) who are in the diaspora. They helped me on my way there and during my return. On my way there I had problems in Morocco and once I arrived in France I was expelled, again it was the family who helped me even with my Niger-Mali ticket." (Yelimane_II_H_58).

More in general, diaspora family and friends seem to play an important role in assistance mentioned by respondents, especially by West African migrants. While aid from international organizations is often cited as punctual, one-off interventions, aid from members of the diaspora is mentioned as a recurring feature. One respondent mentioned "Yes, I received money from my parents in Europe. They send us heavy clothes in the cooler weather." (Gao_III_H_14). "Yes, I have received help and so has my family. We have received several times oil, milk, rice and even money from WFP (World Food Program). My brothers also send money quite often. The niece from Saudi Arabia sends money quite often too." (Gao_III_H_08).

Assistance from the diaspora is also mentioned as more structural, such as paying for schooling fees over an extended period of time: "My primary school education was secured thanks to the help of migrants from our community. Once a year they continue to provide the school with teaching materials and supplies for the children. There is also my big brother who sends money to the mother every year to manage our monthly expenses. Now that I also earn a little, I contribute from time to time." (Gao_III_H_13).

5. The relation between received assistance and migration aspirations

This section will explore the relationship between migration aspirations and assistance received by interviewees. A first part will present a descriptive analysis of the quantitative data. A second part will then use regression analysis to further examine the relationship. A final part brings in qualitative data in order to further refine and nuance findings. The below analysis uses three dependent variables (D1, D2 and D3), that each relate to a question in the questionnaire that polled respondents' migration aspirations.¹⁵

5.1 Descriptive statistics

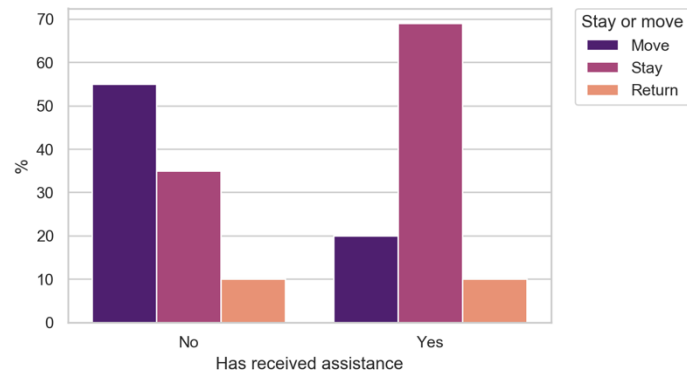
Descriptive statistics reveal mixed results for the three questions in the questionnaire on migration aspirations. For D2 (ideal aspirations) and D3 (planned aspirations), respondents that received assistance responded more often that they wanted to stay (or return home) as opposed to leave or continue their journey. For D1 (considered aspiration over the past 12 months) this is not the case. Those that received assistance do not report in equal number wanting to stay or leave. Respondents that did not receive assistance indicated more often that they wanted to leave, except for D3 (Malian residents and returnees, graph 9), where the difference is negligible.

¹⁵ Question D1: "In the past year, have you considered leaving Mali?"

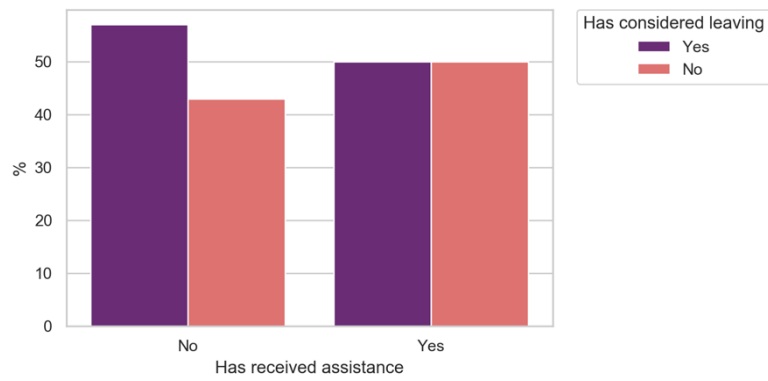
Question D2: "Ideally, if you had the opportunity, would you like to move, or would you prefer to continue living in your current place of residence? Or, if you are a non-Malian migrant, return to your country of origin?"

Question D3: "Do you intend to move to another country, or to stay in Mali at the moment?"

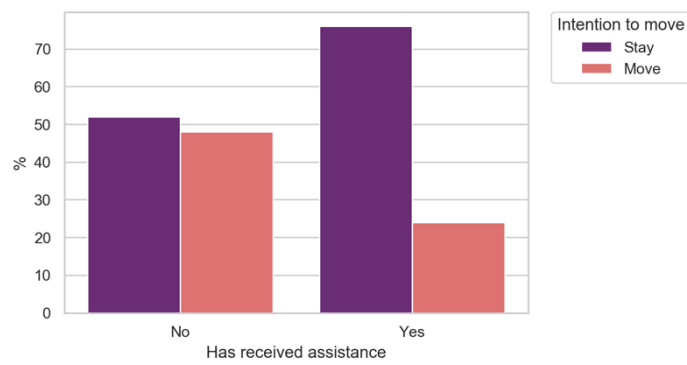
Graph 7: considered aspiration in the past year



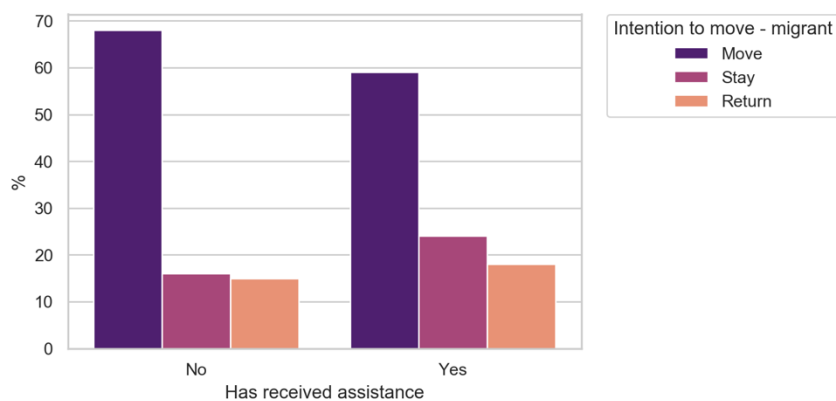
Graph 8: Ideal aspiration at the time of interview



Graph 9: Planned aspiration (Maliens residents and returnees)

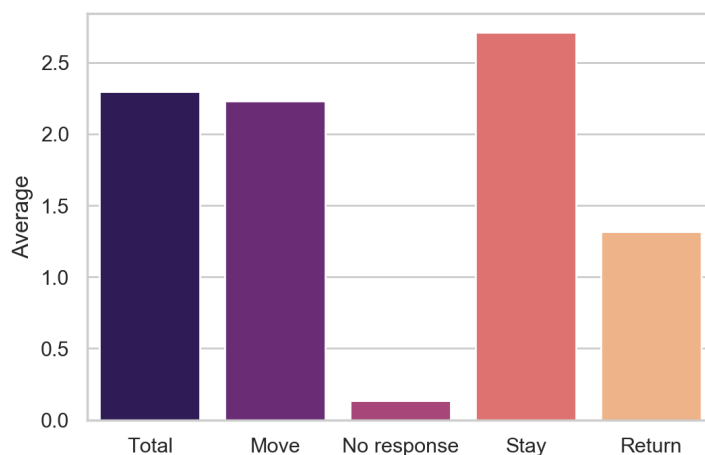


Graph 10: Planned aspiration (non Malian migrants)



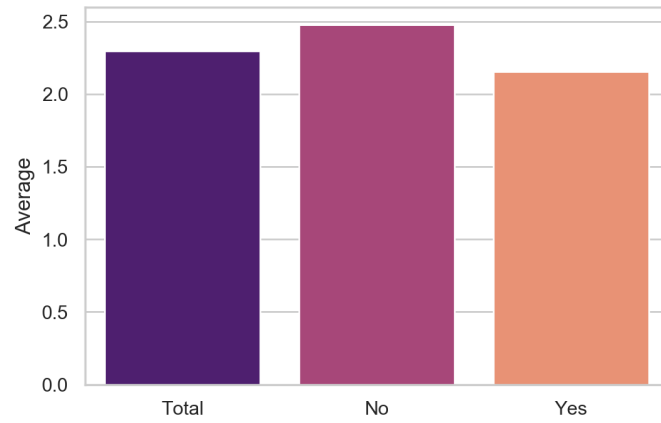
Analysing migration aspirations by asset index reveals that for D1 (considered aspirations in the past year) and D2 (ideal aspirations at the time of interview) respondents who plan to stay have a higher asset index than those who plan to leave (graph 11 and 12). For D3 the picture is more nuanced. Malian residents and returnees (graph 13) gave similar responses, whereas responses from non-Malian migrants (graph 14) show an inverse pattern. They responded more often wanting to leave when they had higher asset indices. As indicated above, overall their average asset index is much lower however, which might explain these results.

Graph 11: Considered aspiration (D1) by asset index

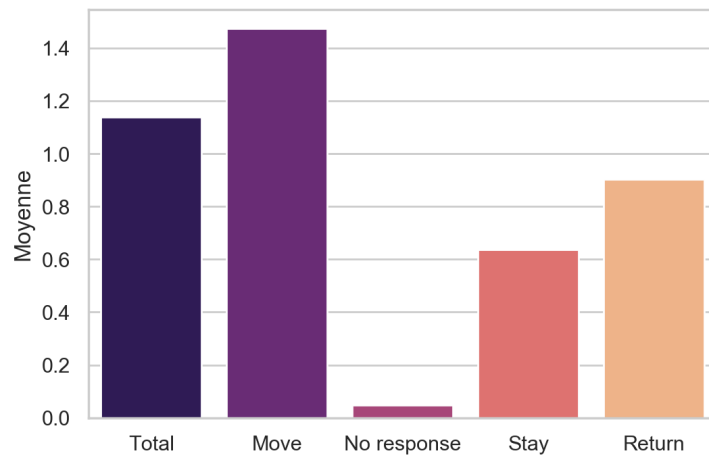


Graph 12: Ideal aspirations (D2) by asset index

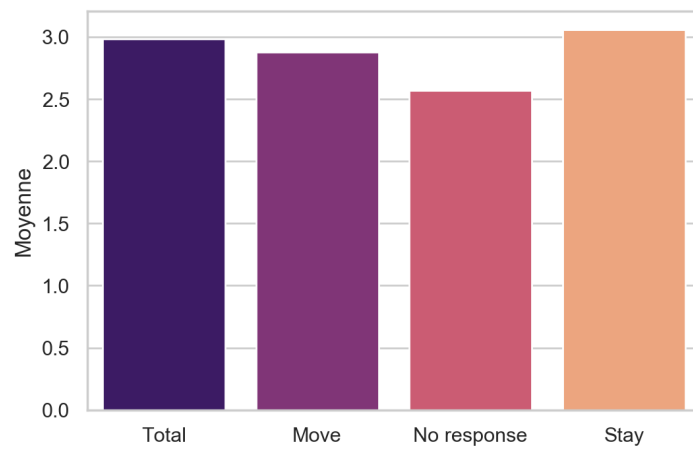
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Graph 13: Planned aspirations (D3, Malian residents and returnees) by asset index



Graph 14: Planned aspirations (D3, non Malian migrants) by asset index



5.2 Regression analysis

In order to further refine the descriptive statistics and to obtain more in-depth insights into the relationship between development assistance and migration aspirations of survey respondents, binomial and multinomial regression analysis was carried out. We used the three questions in the survey related to migration aspirations as dependent variables. Between four and five models were developed for each dependent variable. Independent variables were assistance received and the type of assistance received. In addition, each model included between 5 and 19 control variables.¹⁶ This approach allowed us to isolate the effect of assistance on intentions to migrate while controlling for the effect of other variables. Tables 8, 9 and 10 provide an overview of models.

Table 8: regression models for D1

Model	DV	IV	Number of controls	Participants
1	Considered leaving in the last year	Received assistance (yes or no)	5	All (n=584)
2			16	
3			19	Non-Malians and returnees (n=345)
4		Type of assistance received	0	All who received assistance (n=193)
5			15	

Table 9: regression models for D2

Model	DV	IV	Number of controls	Participants
6	Ideal aspiration is	Received assistance	5	All

¹⁶ The full list of control variables used is : gender, age, respondent category, education level, asset index, location of interview, country of birth, ability to write, children in household attend school, employed in last 12 months, knowledge about migration risks, marital status, housing type, household size, satisfaction with quality of life, control over life, reached final destination, destination, length of stay.

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7	move, stay, or return	(yes or no)	16	(n=569) ¹⁷
8			19	Non-Malians and returnees (n=331)
9		Type of assistance received	0	All who received assistance (n=192)

Table 10: regression models for D3

Model	DV	IV	Number of controls	Participants
10	Planning to leave at the moment	Received assistance (yes or no)	5	Malians and Returnees (n=360) ¹⁸
11			16	
12	Planning to leave at the moment (migrant)		5	Non-Malians (n=187) ¹⁹
13			16	
14	Planning to leave at the moment	Type of assistance received	0	Malians and Returnees who received assistance (n=171)

Overall, the most frequent significant variables predicting intentions to migrate were the interview location, having received assistance, the type of assistance received, and quality of life. For example, having received assistance was a significant variable predicting intentions to migrate in 7 out of the 10 models in which having received assistance was included (see Table 11 below). Likewise, certain types of assistance received (notably business training) were significant variables in all but one model, although these results should be interpreted with caution due to the low sample size. In the majority of models respondents who received assistance were less likely to plan to migrate than those who did not receive assistance. In contrast, basic sociodemographic factors such as age, sex, or education level were less important control variables. Quality of life and control over one's life were more important control variables.

¹⁷ 15 respondents who did not provide an answer are not included in analyses

¹⁸ 2 respondents who did not provide an answer are not included in analyses

¹⁹ 21 respondents who did not provide an answer are not included in analyses

Table 11: most frequent significant control variables across models

Variable	Number of models where variable was included	Number of models where variable was significant	Ratio
Place	7	5	0.71
Assistance	10	7	0.70
Quality of life	7	4	0.57
Destination	2	1	0.50
Control over life	7	3	0.42
Age	11	4	0.36
Possessions	11	4	0.36
Marital status	7	2	0.28
Education	11	3	0.27
Group	9	2	0.22
Sex	12	2	0.16
Written mother tongue	6	1	0.16

The 14 models can be grouped into three different series, depending on which control variables are included in the model. Series 1 (models 4, 5, 9, 14) examines the effect of the different types of assistance received, with a set of additional control variables. Series 2 (models 1, 6, 10, 12) only tests for the effect of having received assistance or not and includes a very limited amount of control variables. Series 3 (models 2, 3, 7, 8, 11, 13) tests for having received assistance and includes a larger amount of control variables. The n in series 1, especially for the specific types of aid received, is generally too low to draw conclusions. Series 2 only offers a limited amount of explanation in the variance. Series 3 explains the variance quite well with R² between 0.235 and 0.374. Two models from this series (models 2 and 7) are further presented below. Both models include nearly all respondents (n=584 for model 2 and n=569 for model 7) and are

representative of the most frequent significant control variables predicting the intentions to migrate (Table 11).

In Model 2, which examines the relationship between DV 1 (considered aspiration over the past year) and having received assistance or not, and includes 16 control variables.²⁰ 4 variables are significant: having received assistance, asset index, interview location, and satisfaction with quality of life. Looking at the results (Table 12), we see that respondents who received assistance, and respondents who report a high quality of life, are significantly less likely to plan to migrate. In contrast, participant who have a higher asset index are significantly more likely to plan to migrate.

Model 7 explores the relationship between DV2 (ideal migration aspirations) and having received assistance or not – with the same 16 control variables used in model 2.²¹ 6 control variables are significant: having received assistance, interview location, civil status, literacy, satisfaction with quality of life and control over life. The results presented in table 12 show that respondents that received assistance, that had a higher literacy level, that were divorced or married (as opposed to being single), and those that expressed a higher quality of life and control over their life, are significantly less likely to indicate that migrating was their ideal aspiration. By contrast, those interviewed in Gao were significantly more likely to indicate that migrating was their ideal aspiration as opposed to those interviewed in Bamako.

Table 12: Regression results for models 2 and 7

	DV1: considered aspiration				DV2: ideal aspiration							
	Model 2: binomial regression				Model 7: Multinomial regression							
Considered leaving					Leave - stay				Return - stay			
n=584	R ² : 0.235				n=569	R ² : 0.327			n=569	R ² : 0.327		
	Coefficient	SE	p	odds ratio	Coefficient	SE	p	odds ratio	Coefficient	SE	p	odds ratio

²⁰ The control variables used in this model are : gender, age, respondent type, education level, asset index, location of interview, country of birth, literacy, children in household attending school, employed in last 12 months, knowledge of migration risks, civil status, housing status, household size, control over life and satisfaction with quality of life.

²¹ The control variables used in this model are gender, age, respondent type, education level, asset index, location of interview, country of birth, literacy, children in household attending school, employed in last 12 months, knowledge of migration risks, civil status, housing status, household size, control over life and satisfaction with quality of life.

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Intercept		2.66028	1.175		14.3	5.20724	1.642		182.6	0.94428	1.673	2.571
Received assistance	Yes - No	-1.25436	0.278	***	0.285	-1.05259	0.292	***	0.349	-0.38972	0.5	0.677
Gender	Male - Female	-0.29074	0.265		0.748	0.02876	0.313		1.029	-0.20183	0.442	0.817
Age	25-35 - 18-25	0.23389	0.294		1.264	0.4202	0.342		1.522	-0.44128	0.469	0.643
	35-45 - 18-25	0.16359	0.352		1.178	0.07651	0.411		1.08	0.17163	0.54	1.187
	45+ - 18-25	-0.09683	0.457		0.908	-1.0703	0.579	*	0.343	-0.75996	0.753	0.468
Group	Non-Maliens - Maliens	-0.98462	0.873		0.374	-0.17582	1.251		0.839	1.61177	1.078	5.012
	Returnees - Maliens	0.00639	0.302		1.006	0.15702	0.322		1.17	-0.14467	0.585	0.865
Education	Coranic / franco-arabic - No Education	-0.19014	0.421		0.827	-0.09799	0.495		0.907	0.37468	0.615	1.455
	Primary - No education	-0.10434	0.349		0.901	-0.33045	0.409		0.719	-0.36722	0.564	0.693
	Secondary - No education	0.18047	0.346		1.198	0.31894	0.394		1.376	-0.6766	0.64	0.508
	Higher - No education	-0.37394	0.368		0.688	-0.3703	0.426		0.691	-0.41084	0.597	0.663
Possessions		0.1735	0.053	***	1.19	0.07801	0.058		1.081	0.07014	0.074	1.073
Interview location	Gao - Bamako	2.06742	0.48		7.904	1.7077	0.845		5.516	1.66947	0.955	* 5.309
	Kayes - Bamako	-0.56238	0.816		0.57	-0.42039	0.826		0.657	-1.31693	1.296	0.268
	Kita - Bamako	-3.10111	0.853	***	0.045	-1.65031	0.857	*	0.192	-16.72194	4E-06	*** 5E-08
	Nioro du Sahel - Bamako	1.87351	0.824	**	6.511	-0.91947	0.908		0.399	1.07863	1.096	2.941
	Yelimane - Bamako	-1.41834	0.863		0.242	0.35832	0.883		1.431	-14.03446	1E-05	*** 8E-07
Country of birth	Mali - Other	1.12622	0.735		3.084	-0.30482	1.091		0.737	-0.24042	0.955	0.786
Literacy in mother tongue	Yes - No	-0.46162	0.281		0.63	-0.80593	0.308	***	0.447	-0.00839	0.455	0.992
Children attending school	Yes - No	0.5086	0.288	*	1.663	-0.06009	0.345		0.942	0.60215	0.418	1.826
Worked in last 12 months	Yes - No	-0.38216	0.251		0.682	-0.01074	0.29		0.989	0.43415	0.425	1.544
Knowledge about migration risks	Yes - No	-0.82703	0.438	*	0.437	-0.60733	0.48		0.545	-0.6834	0.613	0.505
Civil status	Divorced - Single	-0.20404	0.521		0.815	-1.34752	0.627	**	0.26	-1.61472	1.086	0.199

Housing status	Married – Single	-0.07675	0.299	0.926	-1.00387	0.326	***	0.366	-0.74262	0.535	0.476		
	Divorced – Single	-0.53977	0.908	0.583	-1.47581	1.117		0.229	2.15497	1.46	8.628		
	Widow – Single	0.23332	1.03	1.263	-2.25087	1.472		0.105	-0.66991	1.625	0.512		
Household size	Renting – Other	-0.23648	0.494	0.789	-0.43363	0.688		0.648	-1.3009	0.772	*	0.272	
	Owner – Other	-0.65783	0.476	0.518	-0.69077	0.658		0.501	-1.32653	0.702	*	0.265	
Control over life		0.01158	0.013	1.012	-0.001	0.014		0.999	0.05043	0.025	**	1.052	
Satisfaction with quality of life		-0.03173	0.138	0.969	-0.47653	0.159	***	0.621	-0.05518	0.234		0.946	
		-0.15823	0.064	**	0.854	-0.29156	0.069	***	0.747	-0.18191	0.108	*	0.834

5.3 Qualitative data

The above regression results raise a number of questions, especially relating to the prominence of having received assistance as a significant independent variable. The qualitative leg of this study has therefore sought to examine in more detail the interlinkages between development assistance and migration aspirations in the local context of Kayes. The results of this are presented below. It will first outline the expressed reasons for migrating by respondents to qualitative interviews, before discussing the role of the diaspora as a driver of development in Kayes region. In a last section it will outline the respondents' interpretations of the link between development assistance and their migration aspirations.

5.3.1. Reasons for migrating

In qualitative interviews, across all types of interviewees, participants mainly mentioned a low quality of life, family and community pressure or seeking adventure as the basis for their migration aspirations.

Most participants mentioned poverty, lack of work and bad quality of life as at least one of the reasons why they aspire to migrate or had already migrated in the past. Participants mention that they were unable to find well-paying work in their area of origin, and thus left in search of a better income. Multiple participants that had already migrated to Gao spoke scathingly about previous generations that had simply accepted bad living conditions, expressing that the current

generation knew that there was something better out there. Some participants also mentioned wanting to migrate to continue studies abroad.

For most participants family played an important role in their desire to increase their quality of life. Many participants mention they aspire to migrate, or have migrated, in order to find a way to provide for their family. Especially situations such as the death of a parent or sickness of family members are mentioned as reasons for migrating. In these cases migration is mentioned as a family duty, and participants reference their position as first born, father or brother as a reason to have to migrate and provide. Conversely, in the case of female respondents, family expectations sometimes work to curb migration aspirations, as participants are expected to stay in the community of origin to take care of family. One female participant even mentioned that her family members no longer spoke to her following her decision to migrate.

In tandem with family expectations, community expectations also form an important basis for migration aspirations among respondents. A long history of migration in Kayes has formed a pattern of migration referred to as a 'culture of migration'. In this context, strong social expectations to migrate are well documented and staying can be viewed negatively (Reach Initiative 2020). This sense that migration is very important for status in the community is brought up in qualitative interviews especially in relation to youth, where youth who migrate successfully gain a respected status in the community.

One participant said that: "Migration is a source of pride in our community because it shows the courage and bravery of young people in search for goods. It is necessary to contribute to the development of my community and parents." (Gao_III_H_12). This status also works in the opposite sense, where interviewees in Gao mention they can't return to their community or origin without having achieved anything during their journey. Participants mention they would rather continue down a potentially dangerous path to Europe than return to their community with empty hands.

The COVID-19 pandemic seems to divide respondents in the impact it has on their aspirations. The pandemic comes up frequently (10 interviews) as a reason to have returned or temporarily halt their trajectory. However, this may be only a temporary decision for some interviewed respondents as explained by a Nigerien migrant interviewed in Gao: "Indeed, I came back since this Covid story, because everything has become almost impossible in France. When the

pandemic will be over, I want to go to Belgium or Canada" (Gao_III_F_04). This sentiment of temporarily wanting to return because of COVID-19 is echoed by others: "During this period of the COVID pandemic, which has crippled the world economy, I just want to return home to my relatives and better prepare my trip to the European continent." (Gao_III_H_10).

The majority of interviewees disagree with these statements however and do not see a reason to (temporarily) return home in the pandemic. Participants mention there are far worse things than COVID-19 and that they would rather continue their migration than return to their community of origin in shame: "Yes, the coronavirus slowed us down, but I never thought of giving up because of the disease. This is to tell you that COVID did not change my idea of travelling, I still suffered in Algeria for a while" (Gao_III_F_01). Others even express seeing an opportunity for onward travel to Europe because of the pandemic : "COVID has not changed anything, on the contrary, I think it is an opportunity because after so many deaths I think there will be a need for labor, which may be good for me" (Gao_III_H_14).

A recurring aspect mentioned by especially younger male respondents was that they aspired to migrate to search for 'adventure'. Multiple participants describe an innate drive to migrate and explore, indicating that this is a natural ritual for (male) youth. Because of this drive for adventure, most of these participants suggest that nothing can change their aspiration to migrate. This search for adventure is seen positively by most in the community, as it allows youth to go out and learn more, thereby bringing back new skills. Contrary to men, female participants indicate that when they went on 'adventure' they faced backlash from their family. Others also mention that this search for adventure is a pointless pursuit for young men, leads to a loss of members of the workforce, and that youth should instead focus on working in their community of origin.

Most respondents that indicate wanting to return do so while highlighting that they want to attain their objectives first. They see their return to their communities in function of realizing their project and being able to reinvest in their home communities. Not only do they express a need for financial gain but also a sense of pride in giving back to their community before being able to return. A 29-year-old Beninese migrant interviewed in Gao expressed it as follows: "Of course, I do plan to return to my home village one day and settle there. You know that you are only as good as your home. Whatever a man earns in life, he can only really enjoy it when he is at home. It's when I'm at home that I'll feel even prouder. It's just a matter of time. I have a goal

to reach, once I reach it, be sure of this, I'll move back home. As I told you earlier, I am here to give something back to my family and to contribute to the development of my community. With this goal, how can I not go back if I can get what I want. I will go back to build, to invest and to allow the young people there to have jobs too.” (Gao_III_H_20).

10 interview respondents, predominantly from the first group – Malian residents without prior migration experience – expressed that they preferred not moving elsewhere. The group is the only group that has predominantly female respondents. Among the reasons cited by female respondents many referred to family obligations or to Mali being their country and there not being a reason to move. Male respondents predominantly answered that they would need financing for their business in order to not leave.

5.3.2 The role of the diaspora and migration in Kayes

As mentioned previously, the longstanding migration history of the Kayes region has led to a vast array of development projects being funded by its diaspora. Qualitative interviews conducted in the localities where surveying took place confirm the large impact migration has had on local development throughout the years.

When questioned about the most important development actor in the region, the vast majority of interviewed Kayes residents (36) respond that migrants, or the diaspora, are the most important actors contributing to development in the region. As described by one respondent, the diaspora finances a broad range of infrastructure projects and public services in the region: “The diaspora and migrant organizations participate a lot in providing development for our community. The infrastructures that you see in town or in the bush are made by the diaspora, I take the example of the Kayes-Yelimané road, it was financed by the diaspora. Our schools and health centers that you see are also financed by the diaspora and the organizations of our migrants; here, as soon as you are in the diaspora, you contribute not only to the family expenses but also to the community development projects, that is to say, the different projects that are done in the community.” (Yelimane_II_H_61).

There also seems to be an interaction between local communities and diaspora in terms of priority setting, whereby residents of Kayes region call on the diaspora after they have determined which project is most needed to assist the community: “The diaspora gathers

money for projects that really matter to our community; whenever the community wants to do or carry out a project, it calls on the diaspora. It is the diaspora that assists and provides for all the expenses of their respective families: food, medical expenses, schooling for children and even taxes." (Yelimane_II_H_62).

Such a pivotal role for migrants in the development of the community leads to very positive impressions of migration, expressed by the majority of interview respondents. They express how deeply connected the ties are with the diaspora and how much families rely on it as a livelihood strategy. Migration is cited as the most important vector for development of the community: "Migration has a big place in our community, if you hear Kayes, you think migration. It is migration that takes care of 100% of the families, I mean all the expenses of our community are on the back of migration, everything you see in Kayes comes from migration or an achievement of migrants." (Kayes_I_H_25).

Statements in this context were at times contradictory. One such contradictory statement was made by a migrant who first stressed the importance of the diaspora: "The diaspora and migrant organizations play a big role in providing development; besides all the achievements you see are from them. They have built health centers, they contribute to the popularization of education by building schools and madrasas (Arabic schools); even the fencing of cemeteries is thanks to them, so all this contributes to development." Later the respondent suggested that NGOs created jobs for youth, preventing them to stay home and contributing to development: "NGOs and international organizations are reducing unemployment by recruiting young people from our community, which helps to reduce the rate of migration and contribute to development." (Yelimane_I_H_35). Such contradictions might point to the presence of certain negative narratives around migration.

A first observation can thus be made about the contradiction between statements about the importance of migration for local communities by qualitative interview respondents, and the results from the above regression analysis that show that development assistance can, in some cases, alter migration aspirations. The very high impact of diaspora funding and the crucial role former migrants play in community development, as stated by qualitative interview respondents, seems to run counter to the results of the regression analysis. In other words if migration is so important for the community how could receiving assistance make such a difference. The low frequency at which such assistance is distributed (Table 6) and its non-

structural character further highlight this discrepancy. This points to the fact that the answer to the impact of development is not as straightforward as the above regression analysis might show. If development funding has an impact on migration aspirations, it is up against a strong contender in the form of more structural assistance provided by the diaspora.

5.3.3 Migration aspirations and assistance

When asked about their migration aspirations and whether some form of assistance would be able to alter these, many respondents, especially West African migrants interviewed in Gao, indicated that assistance would not alter their intentions to migrate: "No, not at all, and what's more, I have this desire to emigrate and nothing and no one is going to make me change my mind. I had to go to the other side to discover another world, something I have never regretted. Now I'm going to continue on another horizon to have other business opportunities." (Gao_III_F_04).

Some respondents mention not wanting to be dependent on aid: "Besides, my decision to leave is not related to any type of assistance. Because if I stay I will always depend on the mentioned aid. Aid that just takes care of small expenses would not prevent me from migrating. I need other things more important than this aid to be able to return home." (Gao_III_H_11). Such statements seemingly contradict the regression analysis. However, when examining the models that analyzed non Malian migrants, particularly models 12 and 13, there indeed is no significant relation between receiving development assistance and migration aspirations. This can be due to this respondent group's specific characteristic of having migrated already at the time of the interview and thus being less susceptible to being deterred by receiving assistance.

On the other hand, a large number of interviewed Kayes residents indicated that they would consider staying if they were helped and if conditions were right. The way such help is filled in is often expressed in terms of being employed, being able to take care of family, being able to build a thriving business. "In order for me to give up my plan to migrate to France, I need financing with which I will do poultry farming and build a bakery; there I will have money and good food, at which time I can give up my plan to migrate to France." (Yelimane_I_F_56).

Some Malian returnees who had received aid expressed a similar picture, adding that after having lived their migration experience, they prefer staying at home now: "Yes, of course the

assistance has changed my will to migrate, because it has allowed me to have a stable job; I don't want to meet the difficulties that you find on the migration route anymore. With the assistance, I was able to meet some of my family's needs, which was the basic reason for my migration. So with the aid, I earn a little and this little helps me to live with dignity here." (Kayes_II_H_32). These statements of Malian residents and returnees seem to confirm the regression results, including those of models 2 and 7 presented above.

Caution is needed when interpreting these statements however. Apart from the contradiction between the importance of migration and the diaspora on the one hand and the relatively insignificant levels of assistance received on the other, a number of respondents indicated that they are tired of being questioned about migration. As outlined above Kayes is a region where a large number of different projects with a migration management component have been implemented over the past years. It is thus likely that communities feel a certain level of survey fatigue. One respondent said: "What I have to add is to tell the NGOs that every time we receive people who ask us questions, they take information and then we don't see anything; if the NGOs or the state services don't stop this, there will come a time where nobody will answer them." (Kayes_II_H_32). In addition, there is a possibility that respondents have been questioned about their migration aspirations before and that the scope and intentions of such interviews is generally well understood in places where data collection took place. Interviews could therefore be seen as leading to assistance in itself, which might generate a situation where respondent bias drives answers in order to obtain a certain benefit from participating in the interview. The extent of such bias is hard to assess and would require further field research.

A second observation is thus that those migrants who indicate that their aspirations might change if they were to receive assistance, do so in spite of the fact that the types of the fact that such assistance plays a minimal role in their every day life. As mentioned above, assistance is generally low in frequency and typically part of an emergency response or a small cash transfer in the context of a return program.

Conclusion

This study has examined the links between migration and development in Mali, focusing specifically on Malian residents and returnees in Kayes region, as well as on migrants in transit in Gao.

The analysis presented lays bare the crucial importance that long distance migration holds for the socioeconomic development of Kayes region. Large influxes of remittances have fuelled local development initiatives for decades and led to a well-established pattern of diaspora funding for such projects. Interviewed respondents therefore speak very positively of the diaspora and the role of former migrants. Against such a backdrop, efforts by Western donors to tackle the 'root causes of migration' through development assistance seem contradictory and not fully in synch with local realities. In addition, surveyed respondents indicated that they received assistance in a very limited number of cases which indicates that its role is limited when compared to what the diaspora is able to contribute to community development. Such findings cast doubt over whether development assistance could have an impact on migration aspirations.

Surprisingly, regression analysis carried out on the quantitative dataset reveals that having received assistance does play a role in migration decisions in 7 out of 10 models in which it was included as independent variable. This makes it one of the most frequent significant variables across models. There is a clear negative correlation between having received assistance and the willingness of respondents to leave. These results are surprising in a context where migration plays such a crucial role in community development, as well as in terms of social status of former migrants. They also do not align with the literature which, at least at the macro level, seems to confirm that such a correlation is usually not present.

While it is possible that at the microlevel, and on the short term, there is some effect of assistance on migration aspirations, several nuances should be made when interpreting these results. First, the type and number of significant control variables vary from model to model. Second, there is a potential for respondent bias to be at play in the formulation of the research question towards respondents; this is reinforced by the fact that respondents to qualitative interviews indicate a high level of survey fatigue in the field of migration and development. Third, qualitative interview respondents at times seem to provide contradictory statements about migration and development. Fourth, the best of 14 regression models explains less than 40% of

the total variance in intentions to migrate, and the majority of models explain around 30%, which remains a cautious result.

More generally, the question of whether development aid should be leveraged at the local level as a means to influence migration aspirations comes to the fore. Policymakers should be aware that the expressed needs by those who indicated being susceptible to altering their aspirations when offered development assistance, usually far outrank the type and frequency of assistance offered until now. It is unlikely, given the decades long patterns of diaspora funded community development in Kayes region that development programs would be able to significantly alter such aspirations at a large scale. Moreover, as a deeply rooted historical, cultural and economic phenomenon, mobility contributes significantly to the socio-economic development of Kayes region, and by extension to many countries in West Africa. Amid a stalling aid localisation agenda and increasing instrumentalization of development funds for external goals on the migration-development-security nexus, the 'root causes' agenda seems to strike a dissonant tone.

Recommendations

- (i) In Kayes region, longstanding diaspora investments in local communities have created an intricate link between migrants and their origin country, with many households dependent on remittances and a large number of infrastructure projects being financed by the diaspora. It is therefore important to not interfere with such longstanding development vectors that are crucial for community development. They are based on local ownership and can serve as examples of aid localisation in terms of agenda setting at the local level;
- (ii) Investments seeking to optimize the functioning of such assistance through the diaspora are thus a better investment than focusing solely on limiting departures. This can be done by
 - Better linking up the diaspora with local development projects and avoid framing migration through a negative lens, as is often the case in projects implemented over the past years;

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- Examining and remedying the gaps in diaspora funding in terms of access to assistance by tailoring development programs in close coordination with existing locally owned development organizations;
- (iii) When designing programming that seeks to specifically alter migration aspirations, it is important to not overestimate the longer-term effects of development assistance on migration aspirations. While this study has shown that assistance could play a role, much more attention should be given to overall socioeconomic indicators, with this study highlighting the importance of quality and control over life. Such indicators are not easily influenced by short lived development interventions and rather depend from a long and sustained – potentially generational – effort to increase overall socioeconomic development. Framing development interventions through a migration lens due to short term political objectives therefore risks not taking such elements into account;

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