



GENRE+ Baseline Evaluation / Conflict Assessment

Ségou, Mali - March 2023

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Acronyms

CSEGCA	Advisor on monitoring, evaluation, knowledge management and learning for Care
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PACA-CC	EU action plans for adaptation - Climate and conflicts
PDSEC	Social, economic and cultural development plans
RGA-P	Rapid assessment of gender equality in power and participation
RGPH	General census of the population and housing in Mali
UK	United Kingdom or Royaume Uni

1. Executive Summary

CARE and AMAPROS undertook a conflict assessment in March 2023 in the cercles of Bla, Ségou and Barouéli in the Ségou Region of Mali, as part of the FCDO-funded Genre ++ project. This included a quantitative household survey carried out with a representative sample of 182 households in eight of the project's communes.

The conflict assessment found that in the communes surveyed, **social cohesion, to some degree, appears to be an effective factor in the prevention and containment of violence** in relation to resource management/conflict in Segou, demonstrated by the failure (so far) of Islamist groups to take hold in the region:

- Though the frequency of conflicts is high in the communes surveyed, with 60% of households reporting that their communities experienced two to four occurrences of conflict every year (but their household was not involved), these rarely turn violent.
- There are also high levels of participation (70%) and satisfaction (56%) in accessing traditional conflict mediation/resolution mechanisms in the eight communes.
- However, only respondents from the two largest ethnic groups (Bambara and Peuhl) felt that their concerns were “always taken into account” by conflict management mechanisms and roughly 20% of minority groups reported that their concerns were “never addressed” (compared to 12% of the majority Bambara group), reflecting issues of potential ethnic-based exclusion.
- Here the role of community and religious leaders is critical, as the majority (70%) of respondents would turn to them for conflict management/mediation needs. Local authorities and community groups are not seen as important in this regard.

However, **the root causes of conflict in Segou are prevalent**, related to scarcity of resources and disputes over access to and management of private and communal land for farming, herding and harvesting of forest products:

- Conflict over NRM creates a feeling of mistrust between some community members with a quarter (25%) of participants reporting that conflict or insecurity could prevent them from working collectively with others.
- The primary causes for tensions identified were: disagreement over how natural resources should be managed (and hence whether established agreements are sufficient and enforced), and refusal to share common productive resources’ (such as areas for grazing livestock and use of the forest for leaf and fruit picking).

- Proportionately more women identified management of communal resources as a prime conflict cause, reflecting the fact that women cannot own land and hence feel the most impact related to communal conflicts.
- Fifty per cent (50%) of conflicts were reported to involve farmers, either between themselves or with a range of other community stakeholders. More than a third of the conflicts (37%) reported to be between herders and farmers. This reflects ethnic dimensions to conflict between the Fulani (or Peulh) herders (a minority groups) and the majority livestock-rearing Bambara ethnic group.
- Levels of satisfaction in accessing livelihood services (such as water, farmland and financial services) were low, with 54% of respondents saying they are "dissatisfied". Here more women (67%) reporting being dissatisfied compared to men (47%), with no women (0%) reporting being satisfied, reflecting clear gender differences.

Priorities: how livelihood services might be improved:

- Women ranked their priorities as: 1). new infrastructure, 2). a property land register and 3). enforcement of natural resource use rights, and better social services (particularly for GBV); 4). Better access to credit and bank accounts
- Men ranked their priorities as: 1). New infrastructure, 2). Better understanding and enforcement of natural resource use rights, 3). Better access to credit and bank accounts, 4). A land register with measurements of everyone's property, 5) better social services (particularly for GBV)

How conflict management/mediation mechanism might be improved:

- The majority of respondents (49%) prioritised strengthening mechanisms for dialogue and mediation at community level, as well as initiatives for building social cohesion.
- Sixteen percent (16%) of respondents felt that resource management processes could be made more transparent to build trust.
- The lack of enforcement of justice and accountability is not seen as a priority in dealing with land and natural resource management issues, with just 2% of respondents identifying this as a priority.

Therefore, while traditional conflict management mechanisms do seem relatively effective in containing violence in Segou, there remain social disparities along ethnic and gender lines in how different respondents reported their experience of conflict and participation in community responses. This is reinforced by unequal access to diminishing resources; disparity in levels of satisfaction over access to livelihood services, as well as lack of transparency and trust in how decisions are

made in natural resource management. The causes of (or conditions for) future violent conflict through the manipulation of grievances are therefore present, reinforcing the need for investment with communities and local institutions on climate adaptation, early warning, conflict prevention and management.

2. Introduction

This conflict assessment is part of the Gender ++ project in the cercles of Bla, Ségou and Barouéli in the Ségou region of Mali. The project is funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCDO) to build capacity for climate change adaptation, gender equality and social cohesion in the Ségou region.

The GENRE + Phase II project aims to achieve this objective by:

- Improving governance in natural resource management (NRM), by making it more inclusive, consensual and concerted,
- Revitalising traditional conflict prevention and management mechanisms and strengthening community adaptation in order to reduce vulnerability to climatic and social shocks, and finally
- Transforming unfavourable social norms that perpetuate gender inequalities to ensure a more effective presence of women in strategic decision-making bodies in the field of natural resource management and peace-building.

The aim of the conflict assessment, carried out in March 2023, was to analyse :

- (i) What forms of conflict exist at community level, their underlying causes and their evolution over time (in terms of frequency and impact);
- (ii) How communities react and manage to conflict in difficult times, and what the obstacles are to working together;
- (iii) Whether different groups/community members feel secure and satisfied in accessing conflict management mechanisms and livelihood services (such as water, agriculture/land and financial services);
- (iv) To what extent different members of the community feel that their concerns are taken into account, and who participates in decision-making processes/structures related to mediation/conflict resolution and access to resources and livelihood services;
- (v) How these services/mechanisms could be improved or strengthened.

The emphasis in the analysis was on inclusion, in order to better understand how different groups, primarily based on gender and ethnicity, experience conflict and participate in community responses.

This assessment also serves as a baseline study for future evaluation of the project's performance and impact.

Key terms :

Conflict is an inevitable part of life (within the household or community) and is not inherently bad. The problem arises when conflict is not managed effectively and becomes violent or harmful.

Conflict: Result of a disagreement between parties acting on the basis of perceived incompatibilities.

Violent conflict: Use of psychological or physical force to resolve a disagreement.

Peace: When people anticipate and manage conflict without violence, and engage in inclusive processes of social change that improve their quality of life. "Positive peace" is therefore not only the absence of violence, but also tackling the root causes of conflict.

Social cohesion: The bonds or 'glue' that hold a society together, often through shared values, beliefs and behaviours. It manifests itself through cooperation between different groups within the community, particularly when working towards a project that will benefit society as a whole.

Governance: How resources are shared in society and who decides who gets what, where and when.

2.1 Context

Ségou, Mali's fourth-largest region, covers an area of 64,821 km², or 5% of the national territory. It is located 245 km east of Mali's capital (Bamako) and comprises seven cercles (old division). The climate is Sudano-Sahelian, with rainfall varying between 400 and 800 mm. The terrain is flat and even, with shrublands and wooded savannahs. The cercle is watered by two rivers, the Niger and its tributary the Bani.

The region's economy is essentially agro-sylvo-pastoral. The main activities practised by the population are farming, fishing, livestock rearing and gathering. The main ethnic groups are Bambara, Peuhl, Miniaka, Bozo, Somono, Dogon and Sarakole. The total population of displaced persons is estimated at 4,282, of whom 2,398 are women (56%).¹

¹<https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11461/files/reports/RAPPORT%20CMP%20SEPTEMBRE%202022.pdf>

Climate and Conflict

The central regions in general, and Ségou in particular, are characterised by a juxtaposition of climatic and social shocks and crises that have exacerbated existing vulnerabilities. The breakdown in complementarity between the different production systems of farmers and herders and the recent security crisis have rekindled the risk of inter-community tensions and an "ethnicisation" of the conflict. The largest and most dominant ethnic group, the Bambara, live in central and southern Mali. The Bambara, and to a lesser extent the Malinke, have dominated Mali's political life, and around 80% of all Malians speak Bambara (UNHCR, 2017).² While ethnic rivalries have not been a major feature of Mali's political scene, conflicts over natural resources can have an ethnic dimension. The Peulhs (also known as Peuls or Fulani), who are predominantly herders, for example, have been accused of complicity with armed terrorist groups, particularly in the central regions and in Mopti.

Ninety-five per cent of Mali's population is Muslim. While religious tolerance and acceptance used to be the norm in Mali, the imposition of Sharia law by certain militant groups in 2012/13 and the involvement of extremist Islamist groups have added a new dimension to the conflict.

While climate change is a key driver of resource-related conflicts in Mali, the inability of governments to manage the decline in productive land available to farmers and herders is also a key factor. This is reflected, for example, in the lack of transparent and responsive policies and plans to address issues related to land inheritance and access to arable/pastoral land, government subsidies and incentives for agricultural production over livestock, and access to water as a conflict driver. While the state is much more present and active in Ségou than in most other central and northern regions, local governance remains weak. These include problems of corruption in the way leaders are elected, widespread injustice and impunity, and conflicts between political parties.

Natural Resource and Conflict Management

The management of land and natural resources is based on local traditions and agreements. Most agricultural land is communal or village land managed by village chiefs or traditional organisations. Land is allocated to community members according to their needs and ability to use it. Land is also allocated for specific activities such as farming and livestock rearing.

Village Chief Councils are the main local decision-making body in this regard, with the Land Commission (COFO), a state institution, also active in at least half of the villages surveyed (CARE Rapid Gender Analysis in Power & Participation, March

² <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4954ce5bc.html>

2023). Active non-state management structures include Conflict Prevention and Management Committees, Water Point Management Committees and Forest Watch Committees, which are also present in around half of the villages surveyed. However, their presence varies considerably from one municipality to another, with the vast majority being active in Bla, and very few of these local community structures being active in Ségou (CARE RGA-P, March 2023).

Gender, Natural Resource Management (NRM) and Conflict

In Mali, women have little say in customary practices for allocating agricultural land, their inheritance and access rights are not protected by law, and they rarely have access to systems for mediating land disputes. However, in rural areas, although women rarely own agricultural land, they can benefit from the use of communal or village land. One of the main laws restricting women's access to land is the Personal and Family Code. For example, women cannot inherit land if they have brothers, as the land is transferred to the men in the family. Girls are also often seen as temporary family members, destined to marry and leave the family to join their husband's family. However, they are heavily involved in cultivating the land and are often affected by the consequences of land conflicts.

This pre-existing culture of discrimination against women and girls therefore has significant implications for the prevention and management of climate-related violence, natural resource management and conflict in Ségou, and must remain at the heart of any intervention in this regard. According to the Report of the UN Secretary-General on women, peace and security (2002), "**where cultures of violence and discrimination against women and girls exist before a conflict, they will be exacerbated during the conflict. If women do not participate in the decision-making structures of a society, they are unlikely to be involved in decisions relating to the conflict or the peace process that follows.**"³

3. Methodology

This baseline study was carried out by partner AMAPROS, in partnership with CARE, who led the design, analysis and writing of this report. Using a simple systematic sampling system, the quantitative survey was conducted among a representative sample of 182 households in eight project communes.

A data collection tool (household questionnaire) was developed and then digitised in XLS on the Kobo Toolbox platform. After training and a pre-test of the tools, data collection was carried out by junior consultants, three men and two women, under the close supervision of the MEAL advisor and the Gender+ project manager.

³ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/ods/S-2002-1154-E.pdf>

Demographics of the survey sample :

Of the 182 households surveyed in 8 municipalities :

- **95%** of respondents were male heads of households and **5%** female heads of household*,
- **86%** of heads of household were over 40*,
- **71%** of households were Bambara, **12%** Peulh and **17%** from other ethnic groups such as Mianka, Sarakolé, Dogon, Sénoufo, Bomou and Maure, Somono, Malinke, Maure, Mossi, Serefo, Soninke and Griot ethnic groups
- **92%** of household income came from farming, **4%** from salaried employment and the remaining **3%** from petty trading.
- Only **1.2%** of households surveyed said they had been **displaced**.

***Note:** The average age of respondents was 58, with only 14 respondents (out of 182) under 40. The lack of representation of younger respondents and female respondents in the survey is a key gap in the baseline data and in understanding the how these dimensions of identity influence conflict dynamics. While this data will be triangulated with the qualitative analysis undertaken through the Climate and Conflict Vulnerability Assessment in March 2023, the CCAAP and WLiE Action Planning processes will need to further draw out these inclusion issues in more disaggregated detail to ensure all perspectives are heard and addressed to prevent future conflict.

4. Main results

4.1. Community conflict dynamics

4.1.1 Frequency and intensity of conflicts

Community conflicts over natural resource management are common in the areas surveyed, but rarely turn violent. The majority of households surveyed (96%), including 91% of male household heads and 100% of female household heads surveyed, stated that there had been conflicts or disputes in their community in the last twelve months.

Sixty per cent (60%) of households reported experiencing two to four conflicts per year. However, while around half (40%) believe that the frequency of conflict has remained unchanged over the past three years, the other half have a different perception, with a quarter of participants stating that the frequency has increased, and a quarter that it has decreased - with no discernible difference in responses between men and women.

However, surprisingly, although the frequency of conflict is high, the vast majority (98%) of households reported that conflict had not led to violence and all households surveyed were unanimous in stating that they had not suffered any harm or loss of property as a result of the tensions. This needs to be explored further in dialogue with communities to understand whether this is the case and, if so, why (for example, because of effective early warning or mediation processes or existing cultural customs that reinforce cohesion between different communities).

4.1.2 Causes of conflict

Disputes over land and the management of natural resources are a source of conflict in Ségou, linked to the scarcity of resources due to climate change and accentuated by the inter-community crisis between the Peulh and Bambara communities in the region. However, the dynamics of the conflicts surrounding the way in which private and communal land are accessed/managed are complex and management practices need to be further explored.

Disputes over land ownership were reported by 62% of households as the main cause of conflict, linked to tensions over the demarcation of fields, as well as the passage of animals and livestock thefts. Proportionately, the main respondents in this category were from the Bambara and Peuhl ethnic groups, who represent the largest groups of sedentary farmers and herders respectively.⁴

Management of communal property was identified by another quarter (24%) of households as the main cause of conflicts within communities. Of these 3% were women, representing **60% of the total proportion of women respondents** for this question. Given that women can only access communal land and that this is where they will feel the impact of conflict the most, and given the lower number of women surveyed, conflicts related to communal land may be under-represented in this respect.

The link between private ownership of land and use of communal land is complex. Land can be privately or community-owned, though still used by other people or communities in need, based on local agreements. The main causes of conflict reported were **“refusal to share common productive resources”** (such as livestock grazing areas and use of the forest for leaf and fruit gathering) and **‘disagreement on how natural resources should be managed’** (and therefore over whether established agreements are sufficient and fairly enforced).

⁴ Sixty-five per cent of Bambara respondents and 43% of respondents from the Peuhl ethnic group identified land ownership disputes as the main cause of conflict in their communities.

Fifty percent (50%) of conflicts involve farmers, either with each other or with other community actors, and over a third of conflicts (37%) are between herders and farmers.



The influence of extremist Islamic groups or vigilante groups (known as "hunters") does not appear significant in the Ségou intervention areas, although this is a critical development in the dynamics of the conflict in neighbouring Mopti. Though there was no explicit reference in the survey questions to this issue, it was not identified as a concern by any respondents in follow-up questions. However, in the Climate and Conflict Vulnerability Assessment, undertaken by CARE in March 2023, this issue was raised as having a major impact by participants in Bla. Therefore, although the influence of more extremist groups remains limited or has not yet reached most project intervention areas in Ségou, the causes (or conditions) for future violent conflict through grievance manipulation are present, reinforcing the need to invest with local communities and institutions in early warning, conflict prevention and management.

4.1.3 Community Relations

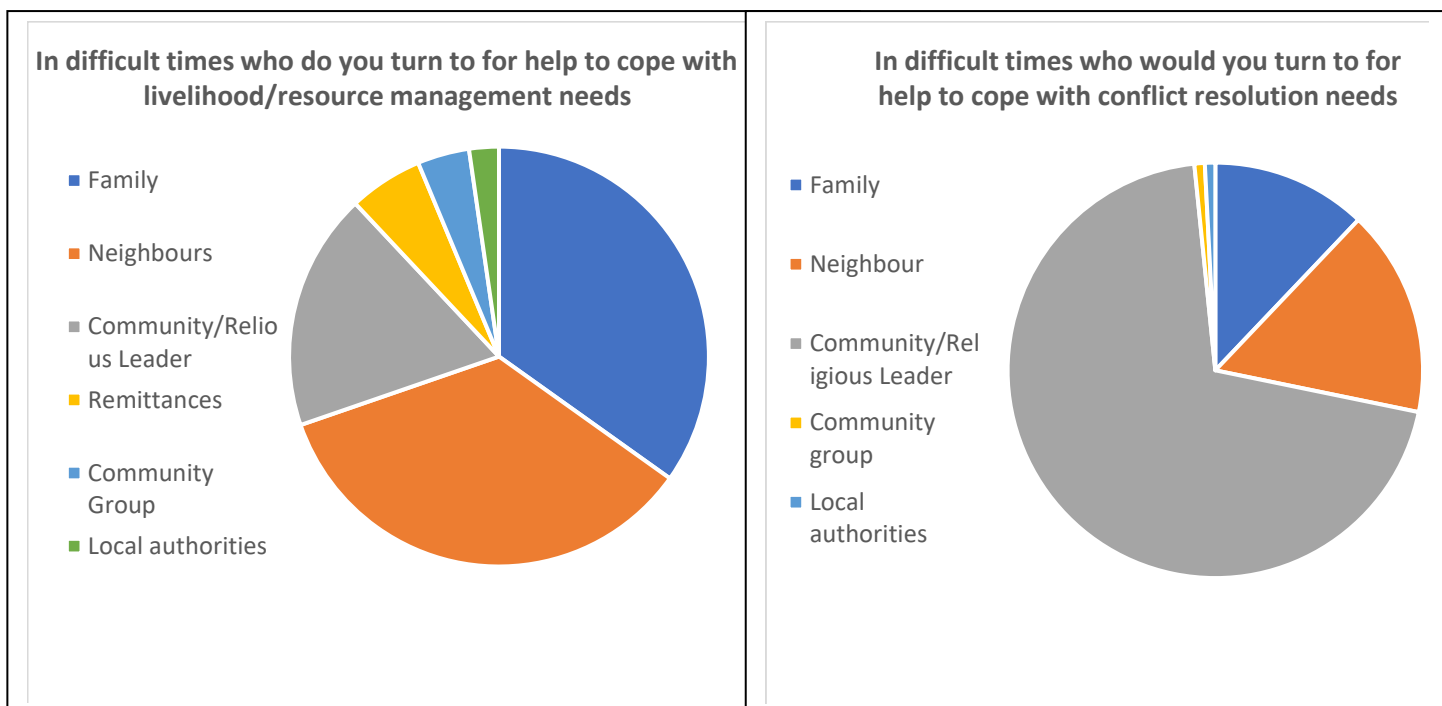
Social bonds remain strong: most people feel confident working collectively with others, with family and neighbours and the community/religious leaders being critical relationships for coping in difficult times and managing conflict.

In the household survey, when asked about community relations, almost all households (95%) said that they **"feel safe and confident to work collectively with other community members to achieve a common goal related to NRM/conflict"**. However, although the majority of male respondents (69%) said that nothing prevented them from working collectively, a **significant proportion (23%) said that conflict or insecurity might prevent them from working collectively**, reflecting the fact that conflict creates a sense of mistrust between community members.

Although this may be an indicator of social cohesion within the communities surveyed, the issue needs to be explored further. A survey tool, for example, may not be the best way to gather information in this regard. In order to answer this question as the project evolves, further consideration will need to be given to how safe spaces can be created to encourage dialogue between community groups, and how facilitating local decision-making can encourage greater trust and more open dialogue on these issues.

The majority of respondents said in difficult times they turn to family members, neighbours or community/religious leaders for help to cope with livelihood/resource management and conflict resolution needs. The critical role of community/religious leaders is particularly evident, as 70% of respondents would turn here for conflict resolution needs and community leaders are the first place respondents would turn to, outside family and neighbours, for livelihood/resource management needs. Local authorities and community groups in both cases are rarely seen as important for coping in difficult times.

Traditional and religious leaders should therefore be considered as key partners in constructive and inclusive dialogue, highlighting the benefits of inclusion of women and ethnic minorities for society as a whole.

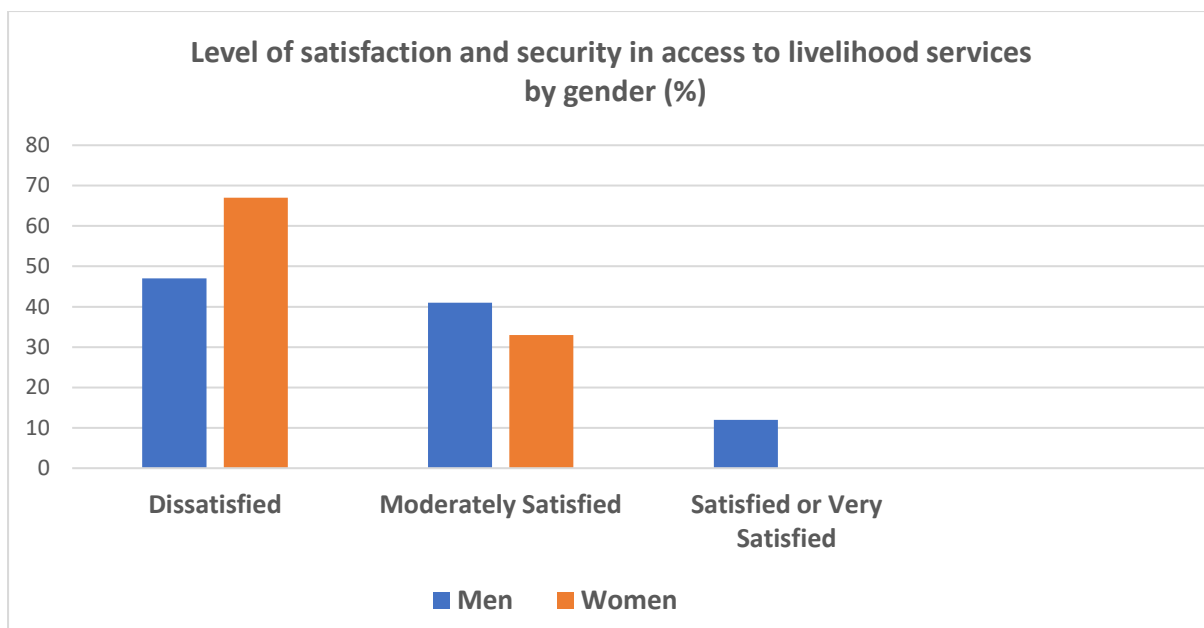


4.2 Levels of satisfaction and participation in livelihood services (such as water, agriculture/land and financial services)

In regard the **level of satisfaction and security in access to livelihood services** (such as water, farmland and financial services):

- 54% of respondents are "dissatisfied"
- 37% are "moderately satisfied"
- 9% are "satisfied or very satisfied"

However, there are clear differences between how men and women perceive satisfaction and security in access to livelihood services. In this case, no women (0%) reported being satisfied, and more women (67%) reported being dissatisfied than men (47%) with access to livelihood services.



In terms of how livelihood services might be improved or strengthened, men and women ranked them in the following order of priority:

Women	Men
1. New infrastructure (e.g. a new well)	1. New infrastructure (e.g. a new well)
2. A land register with measurements of everyone's property	2. Better understanding and enforcement of natural resource use rights (e.g. pastoral code or local customary laws) <u>and</u> better social services, particularly for women who are victims of domestic abuse
3. Better understanding and enforcement of natural resource use rights (e.g. pastoral code or local customary laws) and better social services, particularly for women who are victims of domestic abuse	3. Better access to credit and bank accounts
4. Better access to credit and bank accounts	4. A land register with measurements of everyone's property
5.	5. Better social services

Levels of participation in decision-making processes and structures related to livelihood/natural resource management vary, though the majority of respondents do participate in some form:

- A quarter (25%) never participate in decision making decisions in their communities;
- A quarter (25%) of men and women participate once a year;
- Roughly half (50%) of all participants participate in decision-making three times a year, with proportionately more women involved at this level;
- No women (0%) participate in decision making every week or month, compared to nine per cent (9%) of men.

Note: These figures may not be representative of the experience of all women in the community. Female heads of household (who made up the group of female survey respondents) tend to hold more power and influence within their household and have fewer social restrictions on participation in the community compared to women in male headed households.

The key reason given for not participating in decision-making processes by both men and women was because they are not members of a committee. However, for half of female respondents, the determining factor was ‘because I am a woman’. For men, age was also given as a reason (either in terms of being too old or too young), as well as lack of knowledge about these structures.

4.3 Levels of satisfaction and participation in conflict management mechanisms

In regard the **level of satisfaction and security in access to traditional conflict management mechanisms:**

- 11% of women and 8% of men are dissatisfied
- 33% of women and 41% of men are moderately satisfied
- 56% are of women and 51% of men are satisfied or very satisfied

Seventy per cent (70%) of respondents said they participate in traditional (non-state) mediation/conflict resolution decision-making processes at least once a year, with 30% not participating at all. This includes 37% of all respondents who say they participate three times a year and 24% participate once a year.

A greater proportion of women (66%) reported attending mediation/conflict resolution decision-making processes three times a year, compared to men (48%), and more men (41%) reported not attending at all, compared to women (22%). However, 12% of male heads of household reported attending these spaces every

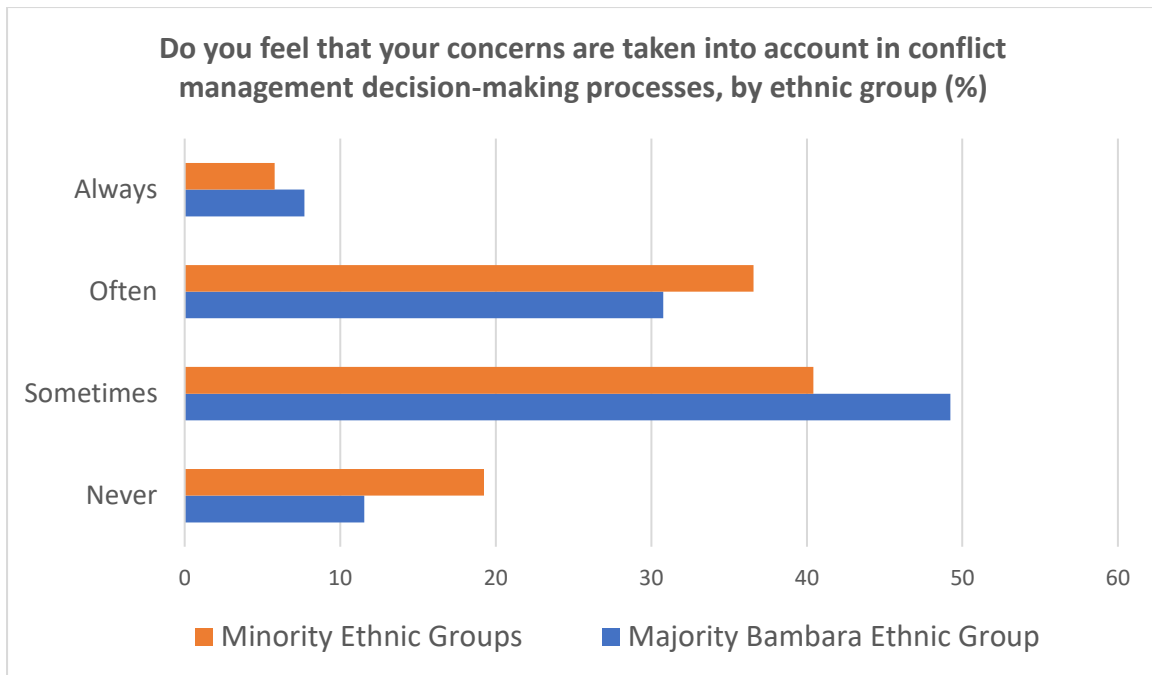
week/month, compared to no female participation this frequently. As women only made up 5% of survey respondents, and noting that female heads of household may have more agency to attend public decision making spaces than women in male headed households, it would be interesting to assess participation levels among women who are not heads of households.

Respondents main reasons given for their non-participation are that they are not members of the village chief's council , which is the official decision-making body in the village, or that there is no specific body responsible for mediating conflicts within their community.

Almost half (47%) of respondents felt that their concerns were "sometimes" taken into account in conflict prevention/resolution decision-making processes, while a third (32%) felt that their concerns were "often" taken into account, and 14% felt that they were "never" were. Only respondents from the two largest ethnic groups felt that their concerns were “always taken into account”, with these respondents representing 22% of these two groups collectively (Bambara and Peuhl, who represented 71% and 12% of total respondents respectively).

Compared to all minority groups collectively (who made up 29% of survey respondents), proportionately more respondents from the majority ethnic group (the Bambara, who made up 71% of survey respondents) reported that their concerns were “always addressed” or “sometimes addressed”, and far fewer reported that the concerns were “never addressed”.

Roughly 20% of minority groups reported that their concerns were never addressed (compared to 12% among the majority Bambara group). However, 40% did report that their concerns are “sometimes addressed” and 36% reported their concerns were “often addressed”. This group was made up of representatives from the Peuhl, Mianke, Bomou, Dogon, Blacksmith, Somono, Malinke, Maure, Mossi, Sarakole, Serefo, Soninke and Griot ethnic groups.



In terms of gender, of the nine female respondents, six said their “concerns were sometimes addressed”, two said they were “often addressed”, and one said they were “never addressed”, and none said they were “always addressed”. However, it is difficult to draw comparisons between men and women, given the small sample size of women respondents.

Respondents felt that **community conflict management/resolution mechanisms could be strengthened in a number of ways:**

- Community dialogue (27%)
- Mediation (22%)
- Transparent management of resources (16%)
- Enforcing justice (2%).

This suggests that the lack of enforcement of justice and accountability is not seen as a priority in dealing with land and natural resource management issues, and while resource management processes could be made more transparent to build trust, the communities' main priority is to strengthen mechanisms for dialogue and mediation at community level. The majority (30%) indicated that the best way to strengthen conflict management and mediation processes was to reinforce social cohesion within the community. Further exploration will therefore be needed to understand what this looks like in practice.