**Briefing on UN-Women Operational Response in Mali
to the Executive Board Annual Session 2016**

Background Note

Summary: The national context is characterized by insecurity and slow implementation of the Peace Accord, while massive investments in basic social services are required in the North in order to realize the peace dividend and end support for pro-jihadi initiatives. On the political front, the passing of the 30% quota law in 2015 for women's minimum representation in government jobs and elected offices marked significant progress for Gender Equality in Mali and will be implemented during the upcoming local and regional elections. The law is expected to address the marginalization of women in post-crisis processes such as DDR, SSR, and TJ.

UN-Women Mali concentrates on three impact areas, all supported by UN Women's normative mandate: i) *Women Economic Empowerment,* with the aim of increasing the productive capacity of women farmers & cooperatives, increasing women's access to public procurement opportunities and developing local economic infrastructure to improve women's access to markets; ii) *Ending Violence Against Women and Girls*: UN-Women's response aims at mobilizing women, girls, men and boys at community and individual level in favor of respectful relationships and gender equality, reinforcing the capacity of institutions to implement legislation to end VAW and other forms of discrimination; and iii) *Women, Peace & Security*, supporting the socio-economic recovery & political participation of women and girls in post-conflict situations and advocating for gender inclusive & responsive humanitarian response planning, frameworks and programming.

UN-Women's country level operational response in Mali

<u>**Context:**</u>

<u>Insecurity and Slow Implementation of the Peace Accord</u>: In 2016, efforts to implement the Peace Accord have had mixed results. While the rebel groups have stopped fighting, terrorist organizations have continued to prevent any meaningful presence of the central government and humanitarian agencies in parts of the North. Credible analysts believe that massive investments in basic social services in the North will be required for the local population to realize the dividends of peace, and to end support for pro-jihadi initiatives. Among the factors delaying the implementation of the accord are insecurity, but also lack of funding to implement the programmes and projects included in its annex 3, and the complexity of some procedures linked to proposed measures or the disbursement of funds already mobilized.

<u>Decentralization and Local Elections</u>: While the presidential and parliamentarian elections that led to the end of political transition in the country have taken place, the other critical elections (local and regional) have been postponed for 3 years due to continued insecurity. This has further delayed the decentralization process and has forced the government to propose the appointment of transitional local governments.

<u>Law on Gender Promotion</u>: The Government delivered on its promise to women organizations by passing the "Gender Promotion Law" in December 2015, which guarantees a minimum of 30% representation to women for all elective and appointed positions. However, implementation has been slow. Gender analysts and activists hope that this law will address the potential marginalization of women in the post-crisis mechanisms, including Transitional Justice (TJ), Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), Security Sector Reform (SSR), despite their sufferings during the conflict.

The above conflict-related context has exacerbated the limited access to basic social services and economic opportunities, with little progress in gender equality legislations and social transformation. To strengthen the implementation of the UN Women mandate in such a context, the Mali country office has invested in a series of sociological research to improve understanding of power dynamics as well as how change occurs locally. UN-Women's studies, now considered as a reference by major actors include: "*Understanding the role of women in Mali's Conflict*" (2015); "*The 100 Cultural Obstacles to Gender Equality in Mali & How to address them*" (2016). The studies now form the basis of a training and advocacy package used by UN-Women and its partners to accelerate the required transformational change for gender equality and women's empowerment in Mali.

Programme Focus:

The Mali Country Office concentrates on three impact areas, all supported by UN Women's normative mandate:

Women Economic Empowerment: The Programme aims at increasing the capacity of women farmers & cooperatives and developing local economic infrastructure to improve women's access to markets, in order to increase productivity by reducing labor and time costs for women farmers. UN-Women supports women's associations and women entrepreneurs to respond to public procurement opportunities and holds the public sector accountable to gender responsive provisions in public procurement policies. The programme also works to build resilience of rural women to manage food insecurity and climate change, including supporting access to renewable energy and appropriate technology for increased revenue and improved social status. Selected initiatives include **i)** promoting women's medium size companies in several value chains to increase productivity and market share, including through government bidding; and participation in economic governance; **ii)** 'Mali Muso' is an initiative which uses gender performance of multinational companies in Mali to increase procurement from women companies and women's access to non-traditional roles in the private sector; and **iii)** supporting financing of women's businesses and funding of relevant economic infrastructure through partnerships with financial institutions.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG): The programme aims at mobilizing women, girls, men and boys at community and individual level in favor of respectful relationships and gender equality; reinforcing the capacity of institutions to implement legislation to end VAWG and other forms of discrimination; and supporting service providers (health, police and justice, social services) to provide quality, coordinated services, and collect and use data in an ethical manner. Selected initiatives include **i)** The EVAWG Campaign works to mobilize forces (civil society; traditional & religious leaders, public opinion) for the passing of a law on Violence Against Women and Girls; **ii)** One stop Centers: Provision of technical and financial support to public and social actors to establish "One stop centers" for quality services (in one place) for survivors of GBV; and empowerment of users to demand accountability and monitor quality; **iii)** Muskoka program focused on enhancing the skills and knowledge of healthcare workers on gender-based violence and working with UNFPA to reduce maternal mortality from a community perspective; **iv)** The HeforShe Campaign stresses the involvement of boys and men in gender equality, particularly regarding the eradication of VAWGs and harmful traditional practices.

Women, Peace & Security: UN Women Mali supports the socio-economic recovery & political participation of women and girls in post-conflict situations, advocates for gender inclusive & responsive humanitarian response planning, frameworks and programming to ensure that women and girls' safety, physical and mental health concerns are addressed and their human rights respected. <u>On-the-ground initiatives</u> include **i)** Programme for implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) for UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; it includes prevention, protection, participation and economic recovery with a basket funds (aligned to the global acceleration initiative - GAI) to support local actors; **ii)** Establishment of "Women Peace Huts", which comprise inter-ethnic groups of women aiming at promoting community dialogue for peace, addressing community conflicts, and engaging security and judiciary authorities for women security related issues; as well as GBV support and refugee centers for women survivors (or at-risk) of conflict or post-conflict Gender-Based Violence; **iii)** Training of humanitarian actors on Gender Equality and the Gender Marker (rapid gender performance assessment tool for programming in emergency settings); **iv)** Research project into women's role in the conflict and their potential contribution to peace, This research led to the development of a joint post-conflict programme (with 5 UN Agencies) to support involvement of women in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), Security Sector Reform (SSR), Transitional Justice (TJ) as well as Justice & Rule of Law (RoL)

<u>UN-Women's Normative Mandate in Mali:</u>

UN-Women supports development and implementation of the UN Gender Equality strategy that covers MINUSMA; promotes nationally agreed indicator-based Gender Norms in the Private Sector; leads the drive for Aid Effectiveness from a Gender Perspective in the donor community, and supports the government on the country's Gender Related Reviews & Reporting, including on Beijing Platform of Action or CEDAW. <u>Selected initiatives</u> include **i)** Partnership with National Business Association (Patronat Malien) and government for the development of gender performance indicators in the private sector, with a reward system from 1 to 5 stars; **ii)** Programme to provide training for Donor agencies in Mali on appropriate gender mainstreaming in Oversee Development Aid, in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Such sessions have already taken place with embassies and cooperation agencies like France, Belgium, EU, and African Development Bank (AfDB), and includes supporting the integration of gender in projects funded by donors in Mali; and **iii)** Leading the Mali (donor and the UN) Gender Theme Group as well as policy dialogue with government on gender issues – the main focus is on advising the government on development strategies and supporting the implementation of the National Gender Policy.

Partnership

UN-WOMEN MALI PARTNERS

Women leaders; vulnerable rural women; Business women and women in cross-border trade, Women survivors of GBV & conflict, as well as their organizations and networks.

CSOs (Women & Men) with potential to achieve social transformation at both local and national levels

The UN in Mali through joint programming on Women Economic Empowerment; Gender Equality; Youth and development; Humanitarian response; Human Rights and Gender in the UNDAF+ framework

Government Of Mali, specifically for the implementation of the national gender policy; **Private Sector** for improved GE norms; **Regional Economic Communities** such as ECOWAS and UEMOA for gender perspective in relevant national policies; & the **Donor community** to ensure integration of Gender in Aid effectiveness.