



UPINION

Policy brief: The operating environment of migration-focused CSOs in Mali

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Introduction

Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Mali are on the frontlines of addressing the various challenges faced by migrant communities. Recent interviews conducted by Upinion with key CSOs in the country provide insight into the operational environment these organizations navigate. This brief summarizes our key findings and offers concrete recommendations to donors and government partners to encourage CSO effectiveness in addressing migration-related issues.

Methodology

This policy brief draws on multiple data sources, including desk research, five structured in-depth interviews with CSOs covering different geographical parts of Mali, and a key informant interview with an expert on the Sahel region. The in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of migration-focused CSOs in Mali who are currently in the selection process to become in-country partners of Upinion under the Bridge to Safety project, funded through the 2023-2028 Migration and Displacement Grant Policy framework of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). Their firsthand insights provide a valuable understanding of their operational environment, the challenges they face, and their interactions with government entities. While the interviews with CSOs were conducted in French, the key informant interview was held in English. All interviews were recorded. By combining qualitative data from these various sources and applying thematic analysis, this brief offers a comprehensive assessment of the current landscape for migration-focused CSOs in Mali.¹

¹ Please note that the majority of this brief is based on a limited sample of five interviews with CSO representatives and may not fully reflect the diverse experiences of organizations across different regions.

Key findings

Shrinking funding

One of the most prominent and overarching challenges experienced by all organizations in Mali is the issue of inadequate funding, capacity constraints, and a lack of infrastructure.²³ CSOs working on migration in Mali are heavily dependent on external funding sources, making them vulnerable to shifts in donor priorities and geopolitical dynamics.⁴ In November 2022, the junta's ban on all organisations that performed activities receiving funding or any other support from France, a key donor to Mali's civil society, had major influence on Malian civil society's operations, with dozens of organisations reported to be affected.⁵ Concerns around Mali's transition to military rule and the need to return to democratic governance also led to a reduction in support from other major donors, including the European Union and Germany.⁶ Although clear information is lacking, national funding appears to remain limited, while other donors, such as the Gulf states and Morocco, seem to have gained more influence in financing civil society projects in Mali.⁷ However, their role in supporting civil society initiatives related to migration requires closer monitoring and further investigation.

The shrinking funding pool has led to intense competition for limited resources amongst CSOs.⁸ To secure funding, organizations must be well-organized, flexible, and capable of meeting donor requirements. As a result, many organizations have either reduced or suspended operations or subcontracted with larger international NGOs, such as the IOM, to sustain their activities. While these arrangements enable them to implement projects and access funding, they often come at the cost of reduced autonomy and strategic decision-making power. Notably, these agreements are becoming increasingly fragile due to recent aid cuts, primarily from the US. The trickle-down effect of these reductions is likely to further limit opportunities for local CSOs, making it more challenging for them to sustain operations and achieve financial stability.

Although external funding remains dominant, some CSOs are exploring alternative revenue streams, such as membership fees and income-generating activities.⁹ However, these sources typically cover only a small portion of their overall budget. For many CSOs, scaling down

²<https://civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/interviews/7014-mali-civil-society-demands-a-return-to-constitutional-order-through-free-elections>

³ Upinion interviews with CSO representatives, January 2025.

⁴ Upinion interviews with CSO representatives, January 2025.

⁵<https://lens.civicus.org/civil-society-caught-in-the-crossfire-of-malis-row-with-france/>

⁶ Upinion interviews with CSO representatives, January 2025.

⁷ Upinion interview with Key Informant, February 2025.

⁸ Upinion interviews with CSO representatives, January 2025.

⁹ Upinion interviews with CSO representatives, January 2025.

operations, reducing staff, or even closing their doors becomes the only viable option. This impact is particularly severe for organizations operating in high-risk or remote regions, which tend to have fewer resources and lower capacity compared to those based in urban centers like Bamako.¹⁰

“The needs are there, but the support is lacking because many donors have pulled out, including recently.” - CSO representative

“For the past 10 or 15 years, the organization has been at risk of collapsing because, while we can sometimes manage for a year or two without external support, we must work twice as hard internally to sustain our activities and continue serving our target groups.” - CSO representative

Legal and bureaucratic constraints

Mali’s 1992 constitution guarantees the rights of association and assembly, reaffirmed in the 2022 draft constitution.¹¹ For CSOs, the legal framework is primarily defined by the 2004 Law on Associations (Loi No. 04-038/AN-RM), which governs their registration, operation, and regulation. Under this law, CSOs must register with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, providing details on their purpose, activities, and sources of funding. While the registration process can be lengthy and complex, CSOs working on migration report that there are no significant barriers as long as the required procedures are followed and documentation is complete.¹² The process remains the same regardless of whether a CSO supports migrants, refugees, or other vulnerable groups.

“I believe there are no barriers. All organizations that wish to work must register with the administration and obtain the necessary documents. If you are provided with the document, it means there are no issues, and you are operational within the territory of Mali. The only challenge is obtaining the registration document, which can sometimes be difficult to obtain. However, it’s not impossible; there are procedures to follow.” - CSO representative

Once operational, CSOs are legally required to submit annual financial and activity reports. In recent years, however, the operating environment has become increasingly restrictive, with NGOs now expected to report monthly to public authorities^{13,14}. Interviewed CSOs confirmed that these reports must be reviewed and endorsed by the local mayor or sub-governor. Failure to comply

¹⁰<https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/where-we-work/mali>,
<https://the.akdn/en/where-we-work/west-africa/mali/civil-society-mali>

¹¹<https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/MLI>

¹² Upinion interviews with CSO representatives, January 2025.

¹³ Personal communication by CSO representative, November 2024.

¹⁴ Interview with Key Informant, February 2025.

with reporting requirements can result in penalties, including suspension or revocation of accreditation. The state maintains strict oversight of CSO activities, and the interviewed CSOs confirmed they have become increasingly subject to scrutiny from the government, particularly regarding their funding, activities, and reporting practices. To access certain insecure areas, for example, CSOs need permission from the authorities to operate.¹⁵ Severe violations—such as engaging in activities outside an organization’s approved scope—may also lead to further sanctions, particularly if authorities suspect alignment with groups opposing the state. Transparency and accountability are therefore critical to maintaining a positive working relationship with government bodies.

"Some organizations faced challenges, especially regarding the submission of annual reports, as the current authorities require both monthly and annual reports, and these reports must also be signed off by the local mayor and sub-prefecture, which was not required before. Initially, this was difficult for some NGOs, but many have adapted to this requirement." - CSO representative Mali

In addition to these bureaucratic controls, political developments have further tightened the space for civil society. The November 2022 ban on French NGOs and the suspension of funding from France were widely seen by Western actors as an effort to restrict civic organizations and enforce government conformity.¹⁶ More recently, on April 10, 2024, the ruling junta issued a decree suspending all activities of political parties and associations nationwide, citing public order concerns.¹⁷ The following day, media outlets were directed to cease broadcasting content related to political parties and associations.¹⁸ International organizations and human rights groups have criticized these measures as violations of both Malian law and international human rights standards.^{19,20}

When assessing whether migration-focused CSOs face concrete obstacles due to these developments, it appears that they have largely been able to continue their work on migration as a humanitarian or socio-economic issue. They do so by avoiding activities that could be perceived as undermining the state and by aligning with national priorities. Meanwhile, other civil society issues remain highly sensitive, such as LGBTQ+ rights, which have faced additional restrictions under a newly passed law and continue to make CSOs targets for both the government and jihadist groups.

¹⁵ Upinion interviews with CSO representatives, January 2025.

¹⁶ https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/MLI?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹⁷ <https://globalvoices.org/2024/04/23/mali-political-parties-call-for-presidential-elections-to-end-military-transition/>

¹⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/03/mali-concern-over-closures-civil-society-organizations>

¹⁹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/mali-junta-suspends-political-parties-associations>

²⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/mali-junta-suspends-political-parties-associations>

"The actions of civil society organizations that do not align with the state are often addressed by the government. Unlike in other countries, there are no restrictions on activities related to the protection of migrants, refugees, or internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Mali. However, there are specific state structures that must be contacted. For example, in the implementation of migrant protection, you must first contact the Ministry of Social Development, which represents the state. It is with them that you work to implement activities. The same applies for IDPs. As soon as you involve them, they are informed and involved. When working with them, everyone knows what they need to do, and there is no problem." - CSO representative

"[For CSOs], it is important to continue conducting activities with full neutrality. Specialized organizations must carry on their work without taking positions. Therefore, I think migrant-related CSOs don't have a problem, provided they should avoid taking a stance or acting unethically toward the government. The government is not very subtle in ensuring that politics does not mix with humanitarian aid." - CSO representative

Money laundering and anti-terrorism financing regulations

Most interviewed CSO representatives reported that AML/CTF measures have not directly impacted the operations of their migration-focused organization. One organization specifically emphasized that as long as their activities are transparent and well-known, they will not encounter any problems. Most interviewees revealed a general understanding of the importance of complying with these regulations to avoid potential issues related to money laundering (AML) and terrorism financing (CTF).

For example, one CSO representative stressed the need to ensure they are not perceived as supporting groups with separatist agendas, as this could lead to serious consequences. It is crucial to exercise caution in collaborations to avoid the appearance of supporting sanctioned individuals or groups. As confirmed by the Key Informant, this caution is vital because if authorities observe activities that do not align with their agenda, perceptions, or beliefs, they can quickly label them as money laundering or terrorism financing. The second quote below, discussing those organizations operating with French funding in the northern region, might illustrate this issue. Notably, as mentioned by the Key Informant, if the activities are indeed money laundering or terrorism financing and serve the interests of the authorities, they may go unnoticed and without consequences.

"I became aware that the state had made efforts to stop their activities. I think there was a legal issue because the organization in question had an agreement that only allowed it to operate in the Mopti region, but it expanded its activities to the Kidal region. It was accused by the state of financing terrorists." - CSO representative

"The organizations that have been affected by this [AML and CTF regulations] are always those that

operate with French funding in the three northern regions.” - CSO representative

Political instability and security concerns

The political instability and security concerns in Mali have created a volatile environment for civil society activities. Many areas become "no-go zones" or require complex security protocols and escorts.²¹ This situation is exacerbated by the fact that many migrant routes and IDP settlements are located in these volatile regions.

Ongoing armed conflicts, terrorism, and instability caused by groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda (Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin, JNIM), ISIS (Islamic State in the Sahel Province, ISSP), and Tuareg separatist (Azawad Liberation Front) movements have severely restricted civil society activities, especially in the Kidal region and surrounding areas in Azawad.²² In Gao, Mopti, and Timbuktu regions, the environment has also been insecure due to the insurgent presence of armed groups, resulting in many international NGOs and local CSOs having reduced or suspended their activities due to threats and difficulties in accessing these areas.²³ One CSO representative mentioned that, in these regions, jihadists dictate 'thematic redlines' and threaten organizations that contradict Sharia law, particularly when working or expressing themselves on topics like reproductive health and women empowerment.²⁴ Another CSO described how terrorist groups had stolen their equipment when they were transporting their stuff for a project in Gao.

Likewise, in border areas, where there is less military control and jihadist and other armed groups are present, it is difficult for CSOs to have access and/or to operate in secure circumstances. In cities like Kayes, Sefetou, and Diéma, close to the Mauritanian border, local NGOs face threats like kidnapping.²⁵ Also the city of Ménaka, as well as the village of Tinzaouatine, located near the borders of Niger and Algeria respectively, are difficult to access for organizations due to the presence of armed groups and ongoing insecurity.²⁶ In Tinzaouatine, this is largely attributed to conflicts with Tuareg groups.²⁷

To navigate insecurity, CSOs in Mali often collaborate closely with government entities at various levels. These organizations rely on the government for security clearances, permits, and coordination in high-risk areas. A CSO representative explained that the state supports their teams on missions through official orders, which are essential for safe operations. Another CSO representative stressed the importance of notifying the relevant authorities about their presence

²¹ Upinion interviews with CSO representatives, January 2025.

²² <https://www.cordaid.org/en/story/a-just-future-for-malians/>

²³ <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fes-pscc/14017.pdf>

²⁴ Personal communication with CSO representative, November 2024.

²⁵ Personal communication with CSO representative, November 2024.

²⁶ Personal communication with CSO representative, November 2024.

²⁷ Personal communication with CSO representative, December 2024.

in a locality and involving the gendarmerie or the army in case of an incident, highlighting the necessity of close coordination with state actors in insecure environments.

“Every time there are risks or security issues, there is the relevant ministry involved. We work closely with them, whether it is the Ministry of Security or the Ministry of Civil Protection [...] They share various elements with us, and we strictly comply with the security measures that truly allow us to work every time in a safe environment.” - CSO representative

“Because if we undertake missions, the state protects our people that we send on missions by giving them official orders. They need to arrive on site and check in either at the sub-prefecture, the prefecture, or the government level. The state is involved in this. It’s clear, well-defined, and it’s something they have already been informed about.” - CSO representative

“[In case of a staff member taken hostage] The first thing is to immediately notify the competent authorities in the area. It’s true that we are humanitarian workers, and it’s very difficult to navigate the relationship between us and the army; it’s a bit complicated for all international organizations and humanitarian workers. We always aim to maintain neutrality and impartiality, but when there is a hostage situation, it’s not a small matter. The gendarmerie and the army are immediately alerted, but we must be careful not to put the hostage’s life in danger.” - CSO representative

During military operations, the government may designate certain areas as off-limits to civilians, including aid workers.²⁸ This is seemingly driven by the government’s desire to prevent external observers from witnessing retaliatory actions against civilians suspected of supporting armed groups, as well as to shield the support it provides to private military groups, such as the Russian-affiliated Africa Corps.

Outside of these restricted zones, the state provides guidelines and recommendations, while CSOs retain significant responsibility for assessing risks, including identifying where their involvement may be disruptive. This risk assessment is regarded as a challenging task.

“It is not necessarily stated that it’s forbidden to go there [in certain insecure areas], but there are guidelines for going to these areas, and the state explicitly mentions that. But generally, it is us who see that these are areas where the risks are much higher. The state does not prevent us from going there, except when the state realizes that there are certain areas where they have operations, if the state has to address certain situations.” - CSO representative

In addition to working with the government, larger, international organizations - those who often have security officers, also seem an important actor in handling security incidents.²⁹

²⁸ Upinion interviews with CSO representatives, January 2025.

²⁹ Upinion interviews with CSO representatives, January 2025.

"If there is a security incident, we have procedures in place. Even though we don't have security officers, we maintain contacts with larger organizations that do have security officers. We communicate with these organizations in the locality where the incident occurs. For these incidents, we follow our internal procedures [...] There are many actors in the region, for example, 122 km from Bamako, where humanitarian actors like Médecins Sans Frontières operate. Regarding the security officers, you would first contact those security officers and simultaneously coordinate with the state authorities." - CSO representative

Then next to the volatile and sometimes inaccessible northern and central regions, in more southern, military-controlled areas like Bamako, Segou, and Koulikoro, civil societies, including migration focal points and informants, have been increasingly facing security threats in forms of targeted harassment, arrests, or silencing.³⁰³¹ The military's control here allows it to monitor civil society closely and impose related security risks. While the interviewed migrant CSOs mentioned that they have not encountered any specific problems with this, there are examples of civil society groups that have been jailed³²³³, and CSOs and political opposition parties have been dissolved or threatened with dissolution³⁴, primarily because of criticism against the current authorities. See also the next section on this topic.

Freedom of expression and association

In the context of migration and defending the rights of migrants, the interviewed migration-focused CSOs emphasize they enjoy the freedom of expression and association without significant issues. For instance, they actively participate in events like Migrants Day, where they can openly advocate for migrant rights and raise awareness. However, when it comes to criticizing the state or engaging in actions that could be perceived as insulting to the government, this freedom becomes very limited. As aforementioned, in some cases, CSOs risk having their accreditation revoked or their activities suspended if their actions or statements challenge the state's position or policies. These risks highlight the balance CSOs must maintain between advocating for human rights and staying within the bounds of government tolerance.

"If it's about defending migrant rights and expressing opinions on this matter in Mali, there are no limits. However, if someone starts insulting the authorities or trying to attack them, you understand, that's when things go wrong." - CSO representative

"We are free to speak about what we see on the ground. The only restriction is not to touch on the army;

³⁰<https://lens.civicus.org/mali-heads-in-the-wrong-direction/>

³¹ Personal communication with CSO representative, November 2024.

³²<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1dd9jzr02ko>

³³<https://allafrica.com/stories/202308040270.html>

³⁴<https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/mali-activism-and-free-speech-under-siege-as-military-authorities-penalise-critics/>

other than that, everything is okay. When we do advocacy within that framework, the state listens." - CSO representative

"We are completely free on all topics concerning migrants and humanitarian assistance. Three months ago, we gave our opinion on the state's intention to relocate migrant camps, and our opinion was heard without any problems." - CSO representative

State-CSO relations

The relationship between the Malian state and CSOs appears to be multifaceted, characterized by elements of cooperation, encouragement, and oversight. CSOs are generally viewed as partners in development and humanitarian assistance, playing a crucial role in addressing needs that the government alone cannot meet.³⁵ However, as evident in previous sections of this brief, the current state also increasingly maintains a degree of control and scrutiny, particularly concerning adherence to national laws, financial accountability, security, and freedom of expression.

"The state encourages us, rather than blocking us. They encourage us, because they need to have the courage to get into such situations [...] Here in Mali, there is no problem [with the state's perception on CSOs working on migration in Mali]. The state cannot employ everyone, not everyone can work on behalf of the state. So, that means some young people will be encouraged to go work in the CSO field on migration. This topic or these organizations are not seen as a problem." - CSO representative

Corruption

When asked whether corruption impacts the work of CSOs on migration in Mali, responses of the interviewed organizations varied. One CSO representative stated that they are unaffected by corruption, as they are a humanitarian organization working directly and transparently with the municipality. Another emphasized the strong internal measures they have in place to prevent it. However, one CSO shared examples of corruption at the local government level, such as extortion by local officials, which they have become accustomed to and sometimes plan for by using administrative funds to motivate authorities to participate in their programs.

It is important to note, as highlighted by a Key Informant, that the topic of corruption was discussed with CSOs without considering their own definitions of corruption. What may be considered corruption by European standards, for example, might not be viewed as corruption by them.

³⁵Upinion interviews with CSO representatives, January 2025.

"We're used to it. You know, I've been working in this field for almost 18 years now, and sometimes they [the authorities] ask for money, but you don't give it to them. [...] It happened to us—we were really doing the work, but we didn't want to bend to the mayor's demands. So, they spread rumors about us, even though we did everything well. As I said, we made photos and videos—this is what saved us. We also told the truth about what happened." - CSO representative

"Some passive authorities won't take part in your activities unless you give them something. So, how do we handle it? It's simple. Sometimes, we give them a small amount, like 20,000 or 25,000 CFA, so they show up, but beyond that, there's no pressure on them. But it's in this way because, since these expenses are not justified, they are free to use the funds as they want, somewhat to please the authorities, so that they will be part of the activities" - CSO representative

Conclusion

Migration-focused CSOs in Mali operate in a complex and rapidly changing environment characterized by legal, financial, and security challenges. While they continue to play a crucial role in supporting migrants and displaced populations, their operations are increasingly constrained by funding shortages, bureaucratic hurdles, and heightened government oversight. The reduction of Western funding has forced many organizations to adapt by seeking alternative funding streams or forming partnerships with larger international NGOs.

Despite these significant challenges, migration-focused CSOs have found ways to navigate restrictions, particularly by maintaining transparency, collaborating with authorities, and ensuring compliance with regulations. However, a clear red thread emerges: their operational environment remains manageable only if they avoid direct confrontation or engagement with the authorities in ways that might attract scrutiny or jeopardize their operations. This delicate balance is often achieved by closely adhering to registration, operational, and reporting regulations and agreements, as well as ensuring that their activities do not challenge government policies or involve sensitive political issues. By focusing on assisting and serving migrants without overtly questioning government actions, these organizations can continue their work. This environment of cautious cooperation, while effective in the short term, poses long-term risks to the sustainability and independence of migration-focused CSOs. They remain vulnerable to shifts in government regulations, priorities, and political climates, with potential changes on the horizon that could further restrict their operations and undermine their autonomy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations aim to strengthen the operational environment for migration-focused CSOs in Mali and enhance their sustainability, effectiveness, and impact. These recommendations focus on key areas such as funding, legal support, security, and collaboration between local and international organizations.

To donors (including the EU and EU governments):

Funding support for migration-focused CSOs

- Increase the number of funding opportunities that explicitly involve local civil society partners in both the design and implementation of migration-related programs. Prioritize mechanisms that support sustained, long-term partnerships, which are critical for local organizations to build resilience and maintain impact over time. Given the current operational environment, this presents a strategic opportunity to enhance their roles in migration programs.
- Ensure that funding structures actively promote equitable partnerships between INGOs and national or local CSOs. Frameworks like the 2023-2028 Migration and Displacement Grant Policy framework demonstrate how funding mechanisms can require INGOs to collaborate on more equal terms. By embedding clear guidelines and accountability measures, donors can prevent power imbalances and ensure that local CSOs receive adequate resources, including coverage for administrative and security-related expenses.
- Prioritize funding for migration-focused CSOs outside major urban centers like Bamako, including smaller, less-established organizations. Supporting these CSOs helps to create a more diverse and resilient civil society that reflects the varied needs of different communities, as well as enhances reach and sustainability of donor-supported initiatives, ensuring a wider and robust impact across different regions.
- Encourage funding and programs where organisations like IOM, UN, and other international actors collaborate more closely with local migration-focused CSOs, leveraging local partners' invaluable insights, visibility, and ownership to enhance program effectiveness and sustainability.
- Invest in ongoing analysis of the civil society environment in Mali, regularly identifying key trends and impact on operations. A deep understanding of these factors enables donors to engage effectively and support meaningful activities and reforms.

Legal environment and civil society space protection

- Promote the protection of civil society space by supporting legal aid programs or lawyers' unions that assist migration-focused CSOs in navigating regulatory frameworks. This support can help ensure that migration-focused organizations are able to operate effectively, avoid arbitrary suspensions or penalties, and uphold their rights to advocate and provide essential services.
- Support public awareness campaigns that highlight the critical role of CSOs in addressing migration-related challenges, while ensuring they avoid direct criticism of the government. By promoting the value of local civil society organizations, their institutional and public recognition can be encouraged, moving beyond suspicion and restrictions.
- Actively monitor any restrictions placed on migration-focused civil society. Regular monitoring of restrictions can help inform policy and ensure that civil society's ability to address migration challenges remains intact without putting organizations at undue risk.
- Encourage the development and implementation of robust financial tracking systems for migration-focused CSOs to maintain transparent records, ensuring compliance with anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism financing regulations. By giving local organizations the tools and resources they need to navigate complex financial regulations, donors can reduce the risk of penalties while promoting good governance within the civil society sector.
- Ensure that anti-corruption measures are sensitive to the impact on local organizations and offer them the necessary resources to navigate this complex environment. Promoting transparency and accountability at all levels of operation is crucial to safeguarding local CSOs' work.

Security support:

- Provide support to ensure migration-focused CSOs are covered by appropriate risk-sharing mechanisms, including safety and security insurances. This helps mitigate operational risks, particularly in high-risk areas that are often critical to donor priorities, and ensures the continued functioning of organizations working in challenging environments.
- Allocate specific funding to support security-related costs, such as the hiring of escorts or covering other safety protocols. This will help ensure that CSOs can operate safely in areas where access is difficult or dangerous, without diverting from their programmatic objectives.
- Encourage the creation of standardized security procedures for CSOs, including a compensation fund for staff in the event of abductions or other security incidents. Donors

should also prioritize a clear duty of care, ensuring that these organizations are not only funded but also supported in ensuring the safety of their staff.

To UN agencies and (I)NGOs:

- Collaborate more closely with local CSOs in programming areas related to migration. Local organizations provide crucial contextual knowledge, which can increase the relevance and impact of projects. Their involvement ensures programs are both effective and sustainable.
- Support mechanisms that allow smaller migration-focused CSOs to benefit from the networks, resources, and expertise of international organizations, while also ensuring that local organizations' leadership and capacity are recognized and reinforced. This creates a more balanced and mutually beneficial partnership where local actors can play a leading role in driving initiatives forward.
- Improve access to security-related information for local migration-focused CSOs, as international organizations often have more detailed and timely security assessments. Link information-sharing systems to local CSOs to enhance their operational planning and safety measures.
- Ensure leadership of local CSOs: Promote the leadership and capacity of smaller migration-focused CSOs by ensuring their active involvement in decision-making processes. Recognize local organizations as central actors in driving migration-focused initiatives.

Future research

Under the 2023-2028 Migration and Displacement Grant Policy framework supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Upinion will continue monitoring the evolving operational environment of migration-focused CSOs in Mali, providing annual briefs to track progress, challenges, and emerging trends, offering valuable insights for informed decision-making and strategic support.³⁶

Should you be interested in exploring more nuanced insights or discussing the operational environment and situation of CSOs working on topics such as LGBTQ+, climate change, women's empowerment, girls' education, democratic transition/governance, or any other relevant topics, we would be happy to engage in that conversation and explore potential research opportunities. Please feel free to reach out to marouen@upinion.com.

³⁶The same applies to Niger, Libya, and Türkiye—which are also Upinion's target countries under the 2023-2028 Migration and Displacement Grant Policy framework.

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