

PROFILE: MALI



Vast and landlocked in the Sahel region of West Africa, Mali has a rich cultural heritage of trading and nomadic pastoralism.

More than half of Mali is desert or semi-desert, but the winding River Niger offers a vital conduit for trade and agriculture.

When severe drought struck in 1973, many of Mali's nomadic herders were forced into a sedentary lifestyle after losing cattle and are now based in permanent *campements*.

Half of the country's population survives on less than US\$1.25 a day – and there are additional challenges from drought, flooding and locust epidemics.

Mali is one of Africa's biggest cotton producers, but its farmers struggle with unfair competition from subsidised farmers in richer countries.

Malian children face a difficult journey to adulthood. Nearly one in four will die before the age of five. One in three suffer chronic malnutrition. Children are also vulnerable to being trafficked to neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire for work on cotton plantations.

Nomadic groups such as the Tuareg feel abandoned by politicians, and rebellions have erupted over land, cultural and linguistic rights, while competition for pasture has led to localised inter-tribal clashes.

A minority group (5 per cent of the population), the Malian church can operate freely and is respected for its social witness.

TEARFUND'S WORK IN MALI

Tearfund has been working in Mali for more than two decades. We are currently working with five partner organisations and four church denominations.

Our current vision for Mali is to enable 100 local churches to help 10,000 Malians overcome physical and spiritual poverty by 2014.

To help achieve this goal, our partners in Mali will be encouraged to join civil society networks and to lobby government on issues such as education, land rights, disaster risk reduction measures and female genital mutilation.

Fifty communities in the regions of Mopti, Timbuktu and Koulikoro will benefit from safe drinking water and improved sanitation through the installation of wells or handpumps and latrines.

This will allow some 20,000 additional children to attend school instead of having to fetch water from distant sources.

We will also be working with partners to encourage 20 vulnerable communities in five areas to develop their resilience – with a specific emphasis on food security.

Despite the low HIV prevalence in Mali, initiatives will also be taken to bring about more cross-denominational cooperation to raise awareness of the virus and tackle associated stigma.

Meanwhile, all Tearfund partners in the country are adopting child protection policies.

- **Pray for people living in poverty in Mali.**
- **Please pray for our Malian partners as they seek to help others.**
- **And pray for Mali: for justice, peace, health and hope for everyone.**