LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION COUNTRY PROFILE

Mali

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ACR GCD	All Children Reading: Grand Challenge for Development
AEP	Accelerated Education Program
DNEN	Direction Nationale de l'Enseignement Normal
ECOM	École Communautaire
EDC	Education Development Center, Inc.
EGIDS	Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale
EGR	Early Grade Reading
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
ERSA	Education Recovery Support Activity
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IFM	Institut de Formation de Maîtres
L1	First Language
L2	Second (or additional) Language
LOI	Language of Instruction
MEN	Mnistère de l'Education Nationale (National Ministry of Education)
MIRQA	Mali Improving Education Quality and Results for All Project
PRODEC 2	Programme Décennal de Développent de L'Education et de la Formation Professionnelle Deuxieme Generation
REEP-A	Research for Effective Education Programming—Africa
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
SARPE	Stratégie Alternative de Recrutment du Personnel Enseignant
SBCC	Social Behavior Change Communication
SIRA	Selective Integrated Reading Activity
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

INTRODUCTION

Enhancing reading skills in the early grades is a key education priority for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Despite some improvements in access and learning in sub-Saharan Africa, literacy levels in the early grades remain low, and progress has been slow. Efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early grades have led to an increased focus on the role of the language of instruction (LOI). Recent research has demonstrated that mismatches between the LOI and the language that students and teachers speak and understand best, can hamper effective teaching and learning (University Research Co., 2019). Thus, it is critical to understand the LOI policy and linguistic context of a country when trying to design programs to improve literacy and learning outcomes.

Currently, USAID supports **Early Grade Reading (EGR) initiatives in 19 countries across sub-Saharan Africa.** Many policies in these countries have recently shifted toward adopting the mother tongue as the language for initial literacy acquisition, and then transitioning to a second or additional language, such as a regional, national, or international language, as the subsequent LOI.

Government policies and strategies related to teachers and LOI reflect country priorities, approaches, and objectives for early grade literacy. During the design-phase of donor-funded reading programs, decisions are made regarding the manner and extent to which national policies are incorporated into project design, and when alternative approaches or additional elements need to be considered. However, government policies on LOI, and other information relevant for informing design, are often difficult to find and are not easily accessible.

The LOI country profiles aim to address this need. The profiles will allow the USAID Africa Bureau, USAID Missions, and partner organizations to quickly understand the country's linguistic and policy context in order to design an approach that most effectively helps improve EGR outcomes. These profiles, designed for 18 of the countries with current or upcoming USAID EGR initiatives, aim to clearly and succinctly describe and illustrate the country's linguistic landscape and official LOI policy. This country profile in particular provides information on language policy and practice in Mali.

LINGUISTIC CONTEXT

According to SIL International's *Ethnologue: Languages of the World,* there are 68 languages spoken in Mali, including 63 that are indigenous and five that are nonindigenous. The Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) categorizes different languages according to their vitality. According to this scale, eight of the indigenous languages in Mali are categorized as institutional, 18 are categorized as developing, 35 are categorized as vigorous, and seven are in trouble (Eberhard et al., 2020). For more information on the EGIDS scale including definitions for each of the language categories, see Table 1.

According to Article 25 of the Republic of Mali's 1992 Constitution, French is the national language of expression. However, very few people (15,000) speak it as their first language (L1). An additional 2.94 million speak it as their second or additional language (L2) out of a total population of 19.41 million (Eberhard et al., 2020).
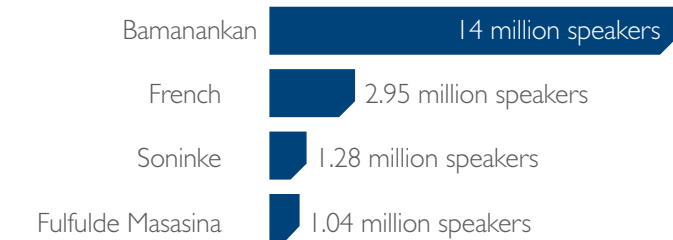
The most widely spoken language in Mali is Bamanankan, which is spoken by approximately 14 million people, 4 million of which speak it as their L1 while 10 million speak it as their L2. Two additional languages that are widely spoken include Fulfulde Masasina, with 1.04 million speakers, and Soninke, with 1.28 million speakers (Eberhard et al., 2020). Given the linguistic diversity of Mali, there are also many languages that are spoken by a small minority of people, including Malian Sign Language, which has an estimated 50,000 speakers nationwide (Eberhard et al., 2020). For more information on the geographic dispersion of indigenous languages spoken across Mali, please see Figures 2a–2e.

Most widely-spoken languages in Mali

Language	Speakers
Bamanankan	14 million speakers
French	2.95 million speakers
Soninke	1.28 million speakers
Fulfulde Masasina	1.04 million speakers

Source: Eberhard et al., 2020

Figure 1. Map of Mali

Table 1. Assessing Language Vitality: EGIDS Scale

Institutional	The language is used by institutions beyond the home and community
Developing	The language is in vigorous use and with literature in a standardized form
Vigorous	The language is not standardized but it is used among all generations
In Trouble	Intergenerational transmission is breaking down
Dying	Only fluent users, if any, are middle-aged or older
Extinct	The language is not used

Source: SIL International, n.d. For more information, please see: www.ethnologue.com/about/language-info
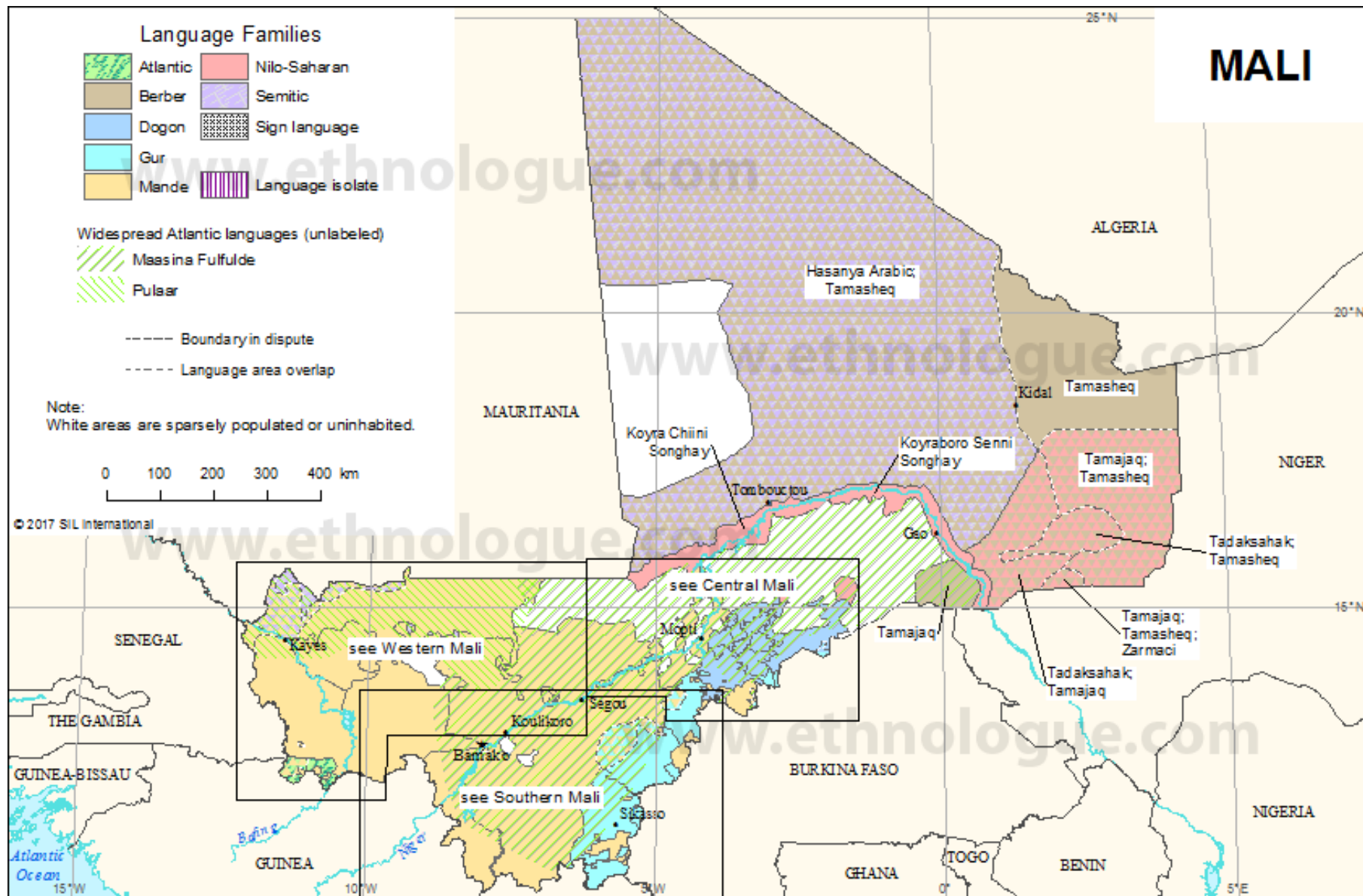
Figure 2a. Mapping of Indigenous Language Families in Mali

Language Families

- Atlantic
- Berber
- Dogon
- Gur
- Mande
- Nilo-Saharan
- Semitic
- Sign language
- Language isolate

Widespread Atlantic languages (unlabeled)
- Maasina Fulfulde
- Pulaar

- ----- Boundary in dispute
- - - - - Language area overlap

Note:
White areas are sparsely populated or uninhabited.

0   100   200   300   400 km

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MALI

ALGERIA

NIGER

MAURITANIA

SENEGAL

THE GAMBIA

GUINEA-BISSAU

GUINEA

BURKINA FASO

GHANA

TOGO

BENIN

NIGERIA

Atlantic Ocean

Hasanya Arabic; Tamasheq

Kidal Tamasheq

Koyra Chiini Songhay

Koyraboro Senni Songhay

Tombouctou

Gao

Tamajaq; Tamasheq

Tadaksahak; Tamasheq

see Central Mali

Mopti

Tamajaq

Tamajaq; Tamasheq; Zarmaci

Tadaksahak; Tamajaq

Kayes see Western Mali

Segou

Koulikoro

Bamako

see Southern Mali

Sikasso

25°N

20°N

15°N

15°W   10°W   5°W   0   5°E

Source: Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). (2020). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World.* Twenty-third edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: http://www.ethnologue.com.

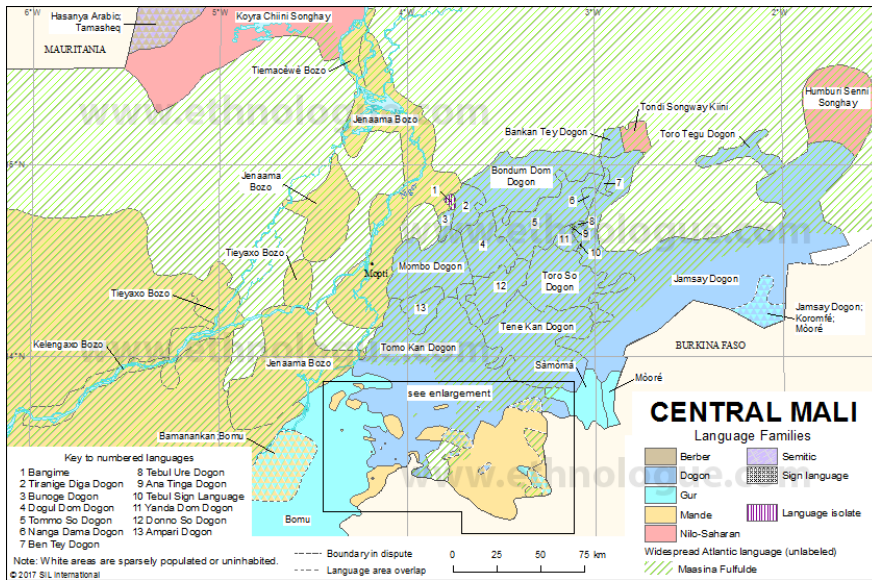## Figure 2b. Mapping of Indigenous Language in Central Mali

Figure 2c. Mapping of Indigenous Language in Additional Areas of Central Mali
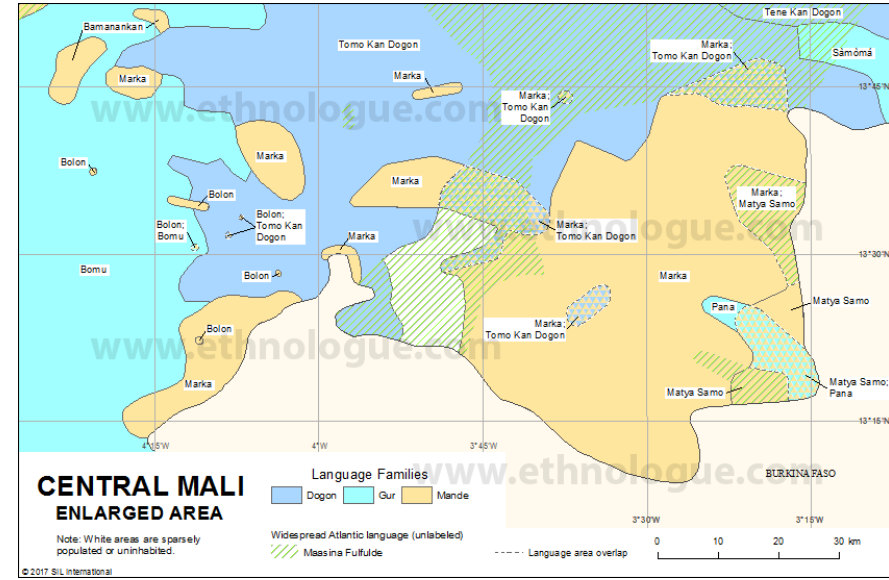

Figure 2d. Mapping of Indigenous Language in Southern Mali
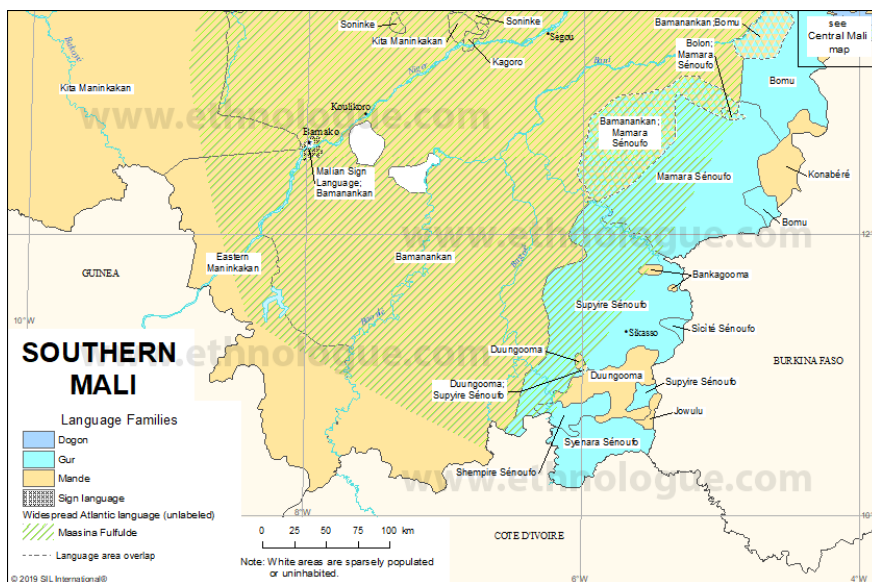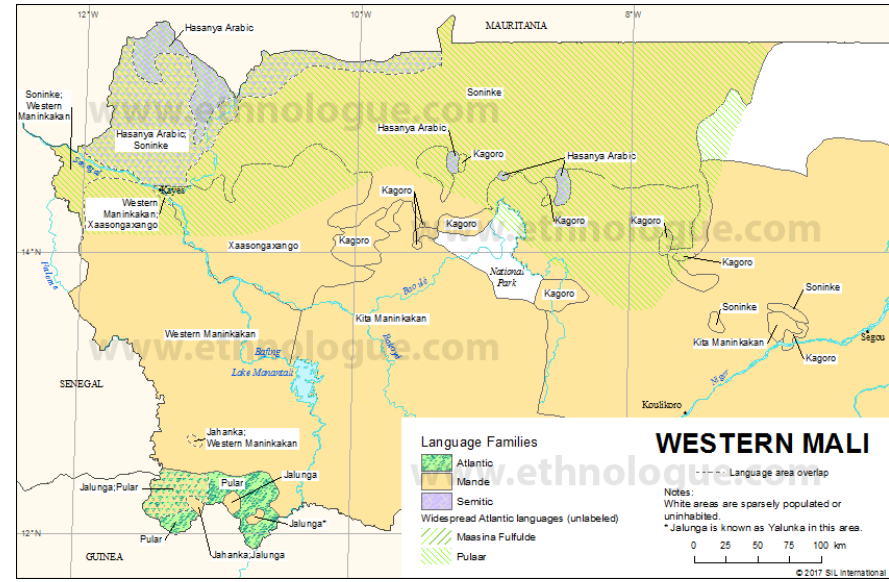

Figure 2e. Mapping of Indigenous Language in Western Mali

Source: Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). (2020). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World.* Twenty-third edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: http://www.ethnologue.com.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION POLICY

According to the National Education Policy, which was enacted into law in 1999, there are 11 official LOI used in primary education in Mali, in addition to French (as cited by Meysonnat & Torrano, 2020). The 11 languages include Bamanankan, Soninké, Fulfulde, Khassonké, Syenara, Mamara, Bomu, Dogon, Songhoy, Bozo, and Tamasheq (Diarra, 2020).

There are three different types of schools in Mali, each of which implements a different LOI to deliver instruction at the primary level: 1) classical schools (écoles classiques) provide instruction across all primary grades exclusively in French; 2) bilingual curriculum schools (écoles à curriculum) use local languages for initial literacy instruction in Grades 1-3 and teach French as an additional subject. French gradually transitions to become the LOI across all subjects starting in Grade 4; and 3) medersas schools which primarily teach in Arabic, with French typically taught as an additional subject (Meysonnat & Torrano, 2020).

While approximately 50% of primary schools across Mali employ the bilingual curriculum approach, challenges to implementing national language instruction include a lack of access to local language textbooks and instructional materials, a lack of teacher training in bilingual pedagogy, and shortages of teachers for some local languages (Davis et al., 2016; Meysonnat & Torrano, 2020)

CLASS TIME

The Ministry of National Education (Ministère de l'Education Nationale or MEN) utilizes a 3-6-6-4 education structure, in which pre-primary education lasts three years, primary education lasts six years, secondary education lasts six years, and tertiary education lasts four or more years. Six years of primary school and three years of secondary education are compulsory for all students (Meysonnat & Torrano, 2020).

In Mali, the primary curriculum takes a competency-based approach to learning. The primary curriculum reportedly covers subjects such as civic and moral education, science, technology, artistic education, physical education and sports, mathematics, and French. History and geography are introduced as subjects starting in Grade 4. In curriculum schools, where the mother tongue is used as the LOI for the initial primary grades, the mother tongue is also taught as a subject starting in Grade 1. French is introduced during Grade 2 as a subject, and it slowly transitions to be the primary LOI for all subjects by Grade 4 (Fafre & Lina, 2019).

Within the new competency-based curriculum, primary teachers are expected to develop students' competencies in five learning domains. For example, for the language and communication domain, students are expected to be able to communicate effectively both orally and in writing across diverse contexts (Galisson, 2012). Each of the five learning domains is allocated a specific number of instructional hours per week. Table 2 outlines the allocation of instructional hours across the five learning domains. As shown, the curriculum allots almost half of all instructional time to the teaching of language and communication. However, no additional information on how teachers are expected to structure the hours of instruction within each of the learning domains was available.

To improve EGR outcomes, it is important that sufficient instructional time is dedicated to teaching foundational reading skills. However, within Mali, schools close unexpectedly and sometimes for long periods of time due to conflict, extreme weather, and teacher strikes among other factors. When schools are open, absenteeism among teachers and students is also common. An end line evaluation of the McGovern-Dole Food International Food for Education and Child Nutrition (McGovern-Dole) III project surveyed a sample of school management committees, and 54% of respondents reported that primary teachers were often absent. Furthermore, during the 2018-2019 school year, school closures resulted in a loss of approximately 64 school days, which equates to more than a third of all instructional days within the school year (Safarha et al., 2020).

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR LITERACY

In Mali, the MEN implements three different pre-service training programs to prepare primary teachers for the classroom. The first program, which the majority of primary school teachers complete, is conducted at 17 training institutes (Institut de Formation de Maîtres or IFM) nationwide (RTI International, 2015a). Within the IFMs, prospective teachers either complete a four-year program if they have completed Grade 9, or a two-year program if they have completed Grade 12. To meet the education systems' increasing need for primary teachers, MEN also implements a fast-track teacher training program (Stratégie Alternative de Recruitment du Personnel Enseignant or SARPE). Designed for older students and teachers already in the classroom that lack formal teaching qualifications, SARPE is conducted by local education staff over the course of six months (Meysonnat & Torrano, 2020; Safarha et al., 2020). The final pre-service training program is designed specifically for primary school teachers who work

Table 2. Allocation of Instructional Hours across Primary Learning Domains

Domain	Instructional Hours
Language and Communication	12 hours
Mathematic and Technical sciences	7 hours
Personal Development	3 hours
Arts	1.5 hours
Social Sciences	1.5 hours

Source: Diarra, 2020; Translated by Dexis Consulting Group.

at independent, community-run schools (École Communautaire or ECOM). Local education officials conduct the 45-day training. At the time of publication very limited information was available on how often this training is offered and the curriculum that is utilized. (Safarha et al., 2020).

The pre-service teacher training curriculum includes courses dedicated to educational psychology, instructional methods, and the primary subjects including languages, sciences and math (Safarha et al., 2020). In addition to courses, prospective teachers enrolled at IFMs must complete a one-year practicum at a local primary school during their final year in the program (Meysonnat & Torrano, 2020). For SARPE, the pre-service teacher training curriculum is condensed to fit within the parameters of the six-month training program. While the new primary education curriculum has introduced national language instruction in bilingual curriculum schools for Grades 1-3, the pre-service teacher training curriculum still emphasizes the classical curriculum, which is taught in French. Furthermore, the pre-service curriculum emphasizes the teaching of the French language, with eight topics dedicated to it, in contrast to the teaching of reading, which only has one topic dedicated to it despite its critical importance in the early grades (Akyeampong et al., 2013).

Due to protracted conflict, teacher mobility in and out of the profession, and teacher shortages, many teachers already in the classroom still lack formal qualifications. According to a 2016 study examining the bilingual curriculum, 50% of all sampled teachers reported that they had not received any teacher training. Furthermore, respondents reported that the pre-service curriculum was largely theoretical, rather than practical, and it lacked sufficient courses dedicated to teaching national languages and bilingual pedagogy to support effective early grade reading instruction (Davis et al., 2016).

To fill this gap, donor-funded projects, including the USAID-funded Selective Integrated Reading Activity (SIRA) have supported pre-service teacher training in Mali in recent years. In 2018, SIRA staff worked with the MEN and IFM to revise the pre-service training curriculum to include a module on the balanced literacy approach, which emphasizes the explicit teaching of letter sounds, decoding, and reading comprehension skills. To support the implementation of the new modules across IFMs, the activity conducted training with 321 lecturers in 2019. However, as of 2020, full integration of the new module into pre-service training has not yet been completed (Giuliano Sarr et al., 2020).

TEACHER LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY/LANGUAGE SPECIFIC TRAINING

In accordance with the LOI policy, pre-service teacher training is conducted in French, and currently there are no courses dedicated to instruction in national languages (RTI International, 2015b). As such, there is a mismatch between the knowledge and skills taught during pre-service, and the skills required once teachers enter the classroom and begin to implement the bilingual curriculum. The MEN also does not consider the languages that teachers speak during its teacher recruitment process, and as a result, teachers may find themselves deployed to schools that use a LOI that they are not familiar with (Davis et al., 2016).

This mismatch was further highlighted in prospective teachers' survey responses from training institutes across six sub-Saharan African countries, including Mali. The survey found that 92% of respondents from Mali reported confidence in their ability to teach reading. However, only 2% reported confidence in teaching reading in local languages. The authors attributed this discrepancy to the fact that some respondents may not be familiar with local languages as most learned to read in French in school (Akyeampong et al., 2013). These results suggest that additional teacher training focused on national languages could be beneficial to ensure primary teachers enter the classroom with the confidence required to provide effective EGR instruction.

TEACHER IN-SERVICE

The National Directorate of Teacher Training (Direction Nationale de l'Enseignement Normal, DNEN) oversees government-sponsored in-service teacher training in Mali. However, in practice, it is largely implemented using the education system's decentralized structures. At the local level, pedagogical counselors or advisors (conseillers pédagogiques) have the mandate to provide ongoing support to a cluster of schools within a particular geographic region. Furthermore, Centers for Educational Support (Centres d'Animation Pédagogique) and Education Academies

(Académies d'Enseignement) are expected to organize and deliver in-service teacher training to school-level staff (RTI International, 2015b). Teacher learning communities (Communautes d'Apprentissage) organized at the school-level, convene teachers on a regular basis to support reflection and discussion on instructional practice. Furthermore, on an annual basis, teachers work with their school director to jointly develop and implement an in-service training action plan that aligns with their identified needs (World Bank, 2021). Despite these established structures, opportunities for in-service training are limited due to financial constraints, insufficient number of personnel, and a lack of guidance and support among other factors (RTI International, 2015b). There are also large discrepancies in both access to and the quality of the limited in-service training opportunities available depending on the region and school type (Meysonnat & Torrano, 2020).

According to the MEN's Education Sector Development Plan, *Programme Décennal de Développent de L'Education et de la Formation Professionnelle Deuxieme Generation* (PRODEC 2) covering 2019-2028, it intends to develop a new education policy focused on the provision of in-service teacher training and a detailed training plan to guide its implementation. The plan articulates that in-service teacher training should be based on the identified needs of teachers and also be aligned to Ministry policies and the new competency-based curriculum. Furthermore, MEN has set an initial target of providing 15 days of in-service teacher training to at least 20% of its teachers per year (MEN, 2019).

Donor-funded initiatives have also worked in close collaboration with MEN to leverage existing in-service teacher training structures to provide ongoing instructional support focused on EGR. Under both SIRA and the McGovern-Dole III program, in-service training was provided to primary teachers in Grade 1-2 and Grades 1-3 respectively. These programs utilized a cascade model, which included coaching and mentoring support provided by local pedagogical counselors and school directors. In-service training focused on how to effectively implement the balanced literacy approach,

evidenced-based classroom management techniques, and gender-responsive pedagogies among other topics (Giuliano Sarr et al., 2020; Safarha et al., 2020). According to the Mid-Term Performance Evaluation of SIRA, 81% of surveyed primary teachers reported that they had been observed by their school director since the start of the school year, with one third reporting it occurred on a weekly basis and a further 25% reporting that they were observed at least twice a week (Giuliano Sarr et al., 2020).

USAID READING PROGRAM APPROACH AND ONGOING PROGRAMS

In alignment with the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education, USAID's programming in Mali aims to support the needs and priorities of the partner country to ensure that gains from the programming are sustained.

As such, USAID launched the five-year (2016-2021) **Selective Integrated Reading Activity (SIRA)** in early 2016. The project, which is implemented by Education Development Center (EDC), aims to improve EGR outcomes among Grade 1 and 2 students drawn from public and community schools in the Kouliloro, Segou, and Sikasso regions (EDC, 2020). SIRA interventions aim to achieve three primary objectives, which include: 1) improved EGR instruction by providing teachers with training on evidenced-based approaches to teach reading, supporting the use of Bamanankan as the LOI, developing and distributing instructional reading materials and strengthening coaching and supervision support; 2) improved service delivery systems in EGR through strengthening the capacity at the national and local levels to use Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) data to inform programmatic and policy decision-making; and 3) increased parent, community, and private sector support for EGR, which is discussed in more detail in the subsequent section, *Community Engagement in USAID programs* (EDC, 2020).

Under the **All Children Reading: Grand Challenge for Development (ACR GCD),** USAID, working in partnership with World Vision and the Australian government, awarded SIL Lead the Begin with Books prize in May 2020. Under this

award, SIL Lead will develop 200 storybooks in two local languages, Soninke and Sénoufo, as well as 20 stories in Malian Sign Language. Under this two-year project, named Digital Books for Our Children in Mali (Livres Numériques Pour Nos Enfants au Mali), books already developed from existing platforms such as the Global Digital Library and African Storybook will be adapted, and some new books in all three languages will also be developed (Anderson, 2020). To strengthen local partners' capacity to develop local language reading materials, SIL Lead will conduct book production workshops on how to use its Bloom Software[1] to adapt, create, and translate fiction, non-fiction, and decodable books. Furthermore, audio and Malian Sign Language will be added to selected titles to make them accessible for students with disabilities. All books will be reviewed and approved by MEN and promoted both at schools and among local communities (Anderson, 2020).

In 2017, USAID also launched two small-scale inclusive education projects. The three-year (2017-2020) **Inclusive Education for Visually Impaired Children** project was implemented by Sightsavers in collaboration with the Union of Blind Persons in Mali and the Committee of Blind Women in Mali. Its primary objectives were to support increased access to and the quality of education for children with visual impairments in three regions, Bamako, Kouikoro, and Segou, as well as improved capacity of the MEN to implement inclusive education programming (USAID, 2019a). Specifically, the project established six demonstration schools to test three different implementation models to be replicated across Mali, including four mainstream schools, an integrated school, and two special education schools for children with visual impairments (USAID, 2018). The project developed and distributed reading materials in Braille, conducted training with teachers and school administrators on inclusive pedagogies, and worked with parent teacher associations to encourage enrollment (USAID, 2019a) Furthermore, it developed an EGRA for children with visual impairments to measure students' literacy skills (USAID, 2019a).

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1 For more information on SIL Lead's Bloom Software, which enables users to develop stories, leveled readers and decodable books in local languages, see: https://bloomlibrary.org/create

The complementary, three-year (2017-2020) **Inclusive Education of Deaf and Blind Children into Mainstream Schools Activity,** which was implemented by Handicap International, aimed to increase enrollment and improve literacy skills among children with disabilities in the Sikasso region (USAID, 2019b). Specifically, it provided training to parents and school staff on Malian Sign Language and/or Braille as well as developed inclusive pedagogical materials to support teachers' instruction (USAID, 2019b).

To support access to educational opportunities for children and youth living in areas of conflict, USAID launched the five-year (2015–2020) **Education Recovery Support Activity (ERSA)** in June 2015. The activity supported out-of-school children in the Gao and Menaka regions to reintegrate into the formal education system through a two-year Accelerated Education Program (AEP) (Bell et al., 2018). The AEP included two levels, the first of which covered foundational literacy, math, and critical thinking skills in alignment with the MEN curriculum for Grades 1–3. ERSA's curriculum, the Adapted Program for Resilience and School Entry (Programme Adapté pour la Résilience et l'Insertion Scolaire) also emphasized the balanced literacy approach similar to other USAID projects in Mali. Instruction was intentionally conducted in French to support children's transition back into the formal education system in Grade 4. However, local languages were used to teach life skills and social and emotional learning activities. The second level of the AEP was designed to align to the Grade 4-5 curriculum to enable students to transfer back into the formal system at Grade 6. Over the course of five years, the activity established approximately 300 AEPs, which successfully reintegrated 7,460 children back into formal classrooms (Bell et al., 2018).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITHIN USAID PROJECTS

To support local ownership and sustainability, one of SIRA's primary objectives is to strengthen parent and community involvement with EGR outcomes. SIRA aims to achieve this objective by conducting a targeted social behavior change communication (SBCC) campaign organized around three themes: bilingual education, gender equity, and parent support for education (EDC, 2020). The campaign is conducted through diverse mediums including radio broadcast, printed posters and flyers, and flipbooks.

To reinforce these messages and encourage community participation, activities such as home visits, round tables, and community meetings were organized by trained community volunteers with support from SIRA community facilitators. Furthermore, SIRA has conducted training with parents on how they can support their children's literacy development at home and organized community events such as reading clubs and literacy games (EDC, 2020). While the SBCC campaign is ongoing, at the end of the fourth implementation year, SIRA had conducted more than 13,254 radio broadcasts, 3,580 home visits, trained 35,485 parents, and distributed 390,000 flyers to parents and communities within the three regions in which it works (EDC, 2020).

OTHER DONOR FUNDED READING PROGRAMS

Alongside USAID, several other organizations are involved in implementing projects to address literacy and language issues across Mali, which are described below.

Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) Mali COVID-19 Response[2]
GPE awarded the 18-month, $7 million grant to the World Bank in July 2020 to work in collaboration with the MEN to implement its COVID-19 response. The grant aims to support the continuity of learning during school closures and support the education systems' ability to re-open while ensuring student and staff health and well-being (GPE, 2020). The project's interventions are organized around four pillars, including: 1) continuity of learning during school closures through the creation and dissemination of learning content and psychosocial support messages via radio broadcast, TV, a remote learning platform, and printed materials; 2) safe reopening of schools by developing school health and safety protocols, training school staff on how to implement them, and distributing soap and other hygiene materials; 3) equity in access to disadvantaged groups such as girls, internally displaced children, and students with disabilities through the distribution of solar radios and printed materials, and the provision of psychosocial support and remedial learning programs to help students who are behind to catch up; and 4) gender sensitive awareness advocacy for parents and communities to encourage remote learning, especially for girls (GPE, n.d.).

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2 For more information, please visit: https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2020-07-requete-financement-accelere-covid-19-document-programme-mali.pdf

McGovern-Dole Food International Food for Education and Child Nutrition (McGovern-Dole) III

In September 2015, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched the five-year (2015 – 2020) McGovern-Dole III project, which was implemented by Catholic Relief Services in collaboration with local and international partners. The project aimed to support both literacy and health outcomes among primary school children in the Mopti and Koulikoro regions of Mali (Safarha et al., 2020). To improve literacy outcomes, the project distributed instructional materials and provided training to teachers and school staff on the balanced literacy approach. Furthermore, to increase accountability and community participation, the project trained school management committees and provided illustrated report cards to provide information on student and school-level progress. The project also provided school meals, nutritional supplements, and deworming treatment and also helped to establish access to water, school gardens and latrines to improve student health outcomes (Safarha et al., 2020). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, activities were modified for the last six months of the project's implementation prior to its completion in 2020.

The World Bank's Mali Improving Education Quality and Results for All Project (MIRQA)

In February 2021, the World Bank approved a $140 million package with joint funding from GPE to support the MEN to implement the six-year (2021–2027) MIRQA project. The project aims to improve primary learning outcomes, increase girls' access to secondary education, and improve MEN capacity and existing systems for education service delivery. Specifically the project is organized around three primary components, which include: 1) improvements in education quality through support to pre- and in-service teacher training, curriculum reform, improved access to teaching and learning materials, and new quality assurance initiatives; 2) supporting girl's successful transition to secondary education by constructing new lower and upper secondary schools in underserved areas, implementing parental and community awareness campaigns and expanding the provision of school feeding programming; and 3) strengthening the governance and resilience of the education system by expanding support to school-based management structures to design, implement and monitor school improvement plans, developing innovative solutions to continue learning during school closures and improving the MEN Education Management Information System to support data-driven decision-making at all levels (World Bank, 2021).

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