

Building the capacity of the Malian police

Why MINUSMA needs to think outside the box

Gustavo de Carvalho and Liezelle Kumalo

Key points

- 1** MINUSMA needs to restore confidence in the mission of the local population and help to address the lack of trust among the key stakeholders.
- 2** Urgent attention must be given to the development of infrastructure and the provision of logistical support so that security services become functional.
- 3** The UN needs to create better systems to develop infrastructure that would enable its missions to implement a mandate more speedily.
- 4** MINUSMA should follow the UN Secretary-General's recommendations and increase its focus on the north of Mali. This will enable the Malian police to operate where they are most needed.
- 5** Confidence-building measures need to be applied to increase the capacity of the mission to reach out the local population.
- 6** The police need support beyond training, including logistical and technical support.

Summary

The goals of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) are to support the re-establishment of state authority throughout Mali and to stabilise key areas, especially in the north. Rebuilding the Malian security sector is one of the core pillars of the mission's mandate. However, the mission is rapidly falling out of favour with Malians, particularly due to its inability to deploy in the north of the country. This policy brief recommends how the capacity-building aspect of the police component of MINUSMA can be strengthened.

AFTER A YEAR in the field, the problems encountered by the United Nations (UN) Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) have demonstrated that it requires a more robust mandate and greater capacity. The changing nature of the conflict requires capabilities that are equal to meeting the challenges present on the ground.

MINUSMA's deployment was greeted with goodwill since its aim was to stabilise key population centres and support the re-establishment of state authority. However, the mission is losing its initial popularity among the Malian community given considerable frustration with the lack of MINUSMA achievement.

The aim of this policy brief is to outline how the capacity-building aspect of the police component of MINUSMA can be strengthened to achieve the mission goal of assisting the re-establishment of state authority and the rebuilding of the security sector. We argue that MINUSMA not only needs to strengthen its presence in the country, but must also find new ways to approach capacity-building in a more holistic manner.

The policy brief is based on field research conducted in Mali in May 2014 by the Training for Peace (TfP) programme at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). The research was aimed at identifying the role of MINUSMA's police component in relation to its ability to meet critical

peacebuilding challenges in the country. Peacekeepers and national stakeholders from MINUSMA, the Malian national police and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were interviewed.

Throughout the research, two key challenges were highlighted as areas of particular concern, namely the inability of MINUSMA to deploy in the north of the country and the public's negative perception of the mission. It became clear that since the conflict is concentrated in the north of the country, the heavy footprint of the mission in Bamako is not only counter-productive, but also has a negative impact on the image of the mission.

The conflict in Mali

Mali currently faces an important period of consolidation. During this period, it needs to create stability and address some of the root causes of the conflict that escalated so dramatically in 2012. Immediate challenges include the establishment of national unity, obtaining a clearer picture of what the rebels want and managing increased autonomy for the north within a collective political framework.

After rebel government forces overthrew the Malian government in a military coup in March 2012, insurgents capitalised on the power vacuum to take control of the sparsely populated northern region. Three extremist Islamist groups (Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb – AQIM, the Tuareg National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad – the MNLA, and Ansar al-Din) seized control of major towns in the north. The MNLA demanded that Mali's government grant independence to the regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal.

The rebellion itself started in the capital, Bamako. It was led by Tuaregs who considered themselves marginalised and neglected by the state, especially

in times of drought and famine.¹ The situation worsened after the March 2012 military coup led by junior army officers, especially when other Islamists sidelined the MNLA and created a de facto partition of the country. For the first time Islamic themes became part of the rhetoric of a Tuareg-led rebellion.

To complicate the situation further, extremist groups in the north do not share a common agenda because of the tensions between them. As noted by Zyck and Muggah,² a more alarming development is that armed groups and army factions in Mali and the Sahel are financed by crime. The region is a hub for the trafficking of drugs, humans, arms and other contraband to Europe. The political chaos in Bamako and the military challenge in the north are interrelated, adding to confusion over who has legal authority and the political power to govern, thereby further hampering efforts to consolidate peace efforts in the north.³

In January 2013 the UN reported that the security situation in Mali remained tense and volatile, and that cases of serious human rights violations such as illegal arrests and kidnappings had occurred in northern Mali.⁴ Elements of the Malian security forces committed human rights violations against Tuareg, Arab and other communities they associated with the rebels. By March 2013 the need to restore the integrity of Mali's territory and ensure the physical security of communities in the north had been identified as a key priority.

It has often been noted that while the rule of law is an important aspect of what needs to be achieved in the Malian peacebuilding context, its establishment is a difficult task.⁵ The judicial system in Mali has been weak because it lacks credibility among local communities. The UN Secretary-General's report of June 2013 stated that justice and correctional services were still not functioning in

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the north as insecurity impeded the return of personnel.⁶ The extension of state authority in the north was also impaired by logistical challenges such as a shortage of vehicles, communication equipment and premises. This undermined the operational effectiveness of the security institutions.

Adding to an already tense situation, the rule of law was affected by the killing of a police officer and the wounding

at the same attempting to negotiate a peace settlement. Then, in January 2013, Islamist fighters pushed south into the Mopti region, which triggering an immediate response from France. It deployed forces to the northern region and by the end of that month the French and Malian forces had recaptured Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal.⁸

Even so, the situation in the north remains volatile, with ongoing reports

groups.¹⁰ He has appealed for better coordination of the international response to Mali's needs and maintains that there can be no sustainable development without peace and stability.

In the mandate of MINUSMA the need for restoring democratic governance and constitutional order is stressed. The mandate assigns the primary responsibility for resolving the interlinked challenges facing the country and protecting all citizens to the transitional Malian government. However, it also tasks MINUSMA with the responsibility of supporting the authorities to move towards an inclusive dialogue and active engagement with political groups and others who have advocated independence. It states: 'The responsibility ultimately lies with the Malian authorities to take steps towards consolidating stability, enhancing a culture of national reconciliation and foster social cohesion. This process is more political than military and demonstrates that ultimate peace would come from within the country.'¹¹

Security Council Resolution 2100¹² mandated two critical tasks to MINUSMA's police component. Firstly, it is expected to support the capacity of police services in Mali and, secondly, to assist the return of Malian authorities to the north. The latter includes not only the provisioning of security, but also the re-establishment of state authority, support for the implementation of the transitional road map, and help with the application of national and international justice.

With this in mind, the mission is developing several strategies that move beyond the direct implementation of peacebuilding tasks to helping national actors to build capacity so that they have a better opportunity to lead and implement the necessary actions. Currently MINUSMA and the national police are developing a strategic plan for strengthening the capacity of the

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of a soldier in April 2013 when a joint military-gendarmerie force attempted to end clashes between police officers in Bamako. The violence was attributed to tensions caused by a disagreement between pro-junta and other police officers over perceived unfairness in promotions. Sixteen police officers were arrested and a large quantity of weapons were seized after the incident. Despite the clashes, it was reported that the gendarmerie, the national police and the National Guard had resumed law and order functions in northern Mali.⁷

Terrorist activity in the country has been supported by criminality that includes kidnapping and hostage taking. Poor policing has allowed criminal networks to settle down and expand with impunity, making government less relevant to Malian society. These criminal networks have even expanded beyond Mali into a region that is not equipped to deal with it. As a result the region is confronted with increased instability, small arms smuggling and Al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist groups.

To curb Islamist attempts to take control of the whole of Mali and impose sharia law, West African governments prepared to intervene military, while

of human rights violations. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)⁹ reported that security in and around Kidal is of particular concern as a range of military participants, including Malian and French army units, MINUSMA contingents and MNLA troops are based in the area. MNLA fighters are confined to their barracks but have not been disarmed, and there are problems with the implementation of formal law enforcement mechanisms in the area.

MINUSMA and its police component

MINUSMA was deployed in 2013 with the authority to take over from the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). Its function is to support the re-establishment of state authority throughout Mali and to stabilise key areas, especially in the north. Rebuilding the Malian security sector is considered essential and comprises one of the core pillars of the mission's mandate.

Tieman Coulibaly, Mali's former Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, sees MINUSMA as an important factor in efforts to stop the activities of the MNLA and similar

Malian police, specifically by training, and to building new infrastructure where necessary. Through discussion needs and requirements are identified jointly and the particular roles to be played by the each party are determined.

MINUSMA struggles to extend its presence in Malian territory, especially as regards its capacity to deploy approved military, police and civilian personnel. Military deployment attained only 74% of capacity in the first year.¹³ The police, another critical component of the mission, faces even bigger problems; it reached just 38% of full deployment of authorised individual police officers in May 2014.¹⁴ The wide gap between military and police deployment can be explained in particular by MINUSMA's limited capacity and infrastructure for accommodating the mission's full police components. The result is that the mission has great difficulty in providing the necessary capacity-building support to Malian police, particularly in the north of the country.

The mission has faced considerable disapproval from the local population. Bombande and van Tuijl note that MINUSMA has been unsuccessful in explaining its mandate to the people.¹⁵ The authors warn that MINUSMA must not be used as a bodyguard service for the Malian government. Even so, they argue that it could become a credible force for establishing negotiations between the stakeholders.

The work of the MINUSMA police in Mali, similar to that in other peacekeeping operations, is conducted by two core components: individual police officers (IPOs) and formed police units (FPU). IPOs are unarmed (unless they have an executive mandate) and are deployed in advisory reform and capacity-building functions, or can even become members of observer missions. They perform specialised tasks and functions, including investigations.¹⁶ FPU are organised in

units of 140 armed police officers, and each unit can be deployed independently. The units are used to ensure the safety and security of UN personnel and material, and for crowd control.¹⁷

Whilst there are expectations that MINUSMA will deal with a dynamic and complex environment, the mission's available funding does not enables it to implement its initiatives effectively. Its funding derives from external sources, but this is considered inadequate by some stakeholders.

The following table shows total MINUSMA deployment in Mali, as per the UN Secretary-General's report of June 2014:¹⁸

Table 1: Total police officers deployed as a percentage of approved mandate

	Total deployed in June 2014	Total approved	Percentage of total deployed
Individual police officers	122	320	38%
Formed police units	857	1 120	77%
Total	979	1 440	69%

Source: United Nations

Tables 1 and 2 (on page five) reflect one of the most common criticisms made by interviewees during the fieldwork, namely the mission's inability to deploy fully, particularly in the north. The shortfall in police officers is reflected not only in the mission's lack of operational capacity in the region, but in the challenges it has in reaching certain parts of the country. Interviewees in addition often referred to the fact that the mission is still heavily based in Bamako, especially when it comes to IPOs, which they saw as limiting the capacity of the mission to implement its mandate to a considerable extent.

MINUSMA REACHED JUST

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Table 2: Evolution of police deployed

	October 2013 ¹⁹	January 2014 ²⁰	March 2014 ²¹	June 2014 ²²	Total approved
Formed police units	743	883	884	857	1 120
Individual police officers	56	73	73	122	320
Total	799	956	957	979	1 440

Source: United Nations

In contrast, FPU were seen as having a better distribution in the northern regions.

Capacity-building and peacekeeping

Considering the capacity challenges faced by Mali when it comes to the individual skills of police officers and the inability of the state security sector to carry out its duties, MINUSMA, like other contemporary UN peacekeeping operations, is tasked to develop capacity wherever possible. This, as part of an increasing engagement by peacekeepers in broader peacebuilding efforts, enables peacekeepers to provide measures for short-term stability and to lay the foundations for longer-term capacity and institutional building.²³

In the evolution of peace operations, the introduction of police components have permitted the implementation of specific tasks to support the wider efforts aimed at introducing the rule of law and human rights. Capacity-building or development can be broadly defined as the process through which individuals, organisations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time.²⁴ Peace operations are engaged in a wide range of police reform efforts, including the strengthening and reforming of security sector institutions, capacity development and the application of new approaches in

the process of professionalising national policing efforts.²⁵

The UN Policy on Police in Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions states that in the early stages, police peacekeeping has the relatively passive role of monitoring individual host-state police officers. Currently the mission's police components play a more active role in supporting longer-term reform and the restructuring of whole police organisations.²⁶ The police components in UN peacekeeping operations are expected to implement their core functions within the wider context of rule of law and security sector reform, and should in particular focus on the principles of ownership and the sustainability of its activities.²⁷

Peace operations are engaged in a wide range of police reform efforts, including the strengthening of security sector institutions

Traditionally capacity-building initiatives have focused on the individual with the priority areas being on the development of skills and knowledge, and the sharing of experiences. Increasingly, actors have identified the need for development at the institutional level, where organisational frameworks become a critical aspect. More importantly, there is a need for identifying more holistic approaches towards capacity-

building. The following table shows the types of engagement often provided by UN police peacekeepers in terms of capacity-building.²⁸

Instruments for capacity-building	Areas in which capacity-building can provide support
Provision of material support	Policing services
Training	Enabling services
Monitoring, advising and mentoring	Policy formulation on policing
Development of organisational infrastructure and management systems	Accountability and governance
Strengthening of governance, accountability and integrity	Stakeholder engagement

According to Howard et al., effective capacity-building is located at different levels or 'scale of human action', from the individual through to the many different collective endeavours of sectors and social institutions.²⁹ When designing or supporting specific initiatives to build capacity it is important to consider at what level the initiative is directed and the linkages with other

levels. Capacity-building is based on trust, which it is important to maintain throughout the process.

The authors further highlight that capacity-building works best when its purpose is clear and when it goes beyond simply transferring technical techniques. Practices are pushing the boundaries of third-sector capacity-building by calling for a greater focus

on leadership and adaptive capacities. In addition, capacity-building should start with a theory of change and locally identified needs. When identifying the theory of change, policymakers should consider the kinds of support that are most likely to achieve the change.

A World Bank publication argues that conventional capacity-building approaches and its assumptions often fail to recognise the importance and comparative advantage of wider engagements in social development.³⁰ The publication states that local capacity needs to be tapped when making use of better monitoring strategies that enable actors to identify needs and requirements to achieve expected results. As such, tapping into and building local capacities takes time and does not fit the simplified systems that are often advocated by policymakers.

Building the capacity of the Malian police: the challenges

As demonstrated in the previous sections, developing initiatives that build capacity in the context of peacekeeping operations does not go without its problems. MINUSMA's mandate has a strong component for training local police components. This includes training in human rights aspects and in other skills required by a well-functioning police force. However, interviewees also were of the opinion that beyond the training of individuals, it was important for MINUSMA to provide logistical support and on-the-ground assistance to enable the police to function more effectively. As important as the combined effort was to identify individual skills and knowledge gaps, so was coordination with wider mechanisms that would enable the police service to function.

The provision of such wider support is often problematic owing to a lack of programmatic funding of the mission, which limits the reach of the engagement

of a peacekeeping force. MINUSMA and the Malian police have engaged in joint planning processes where capacity needs were identified. Often those needs were focused on infrastructure and material resources and MINUSMA identified external donors, for particular projects.

Beyond the training of individuals, it was important for MINUSMA to provide logistical support and on-the-ground assistance

Persons interviewed often made reference to the need to develop Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). However, their focused and limited nature does not enable them to have a wide impact. It is important to note, though, that QIPs can contribute to building relationships with the local population.

A critical challenge of capacity-building in Mali is related to the mission's absence from areas where it is mostly needed. For instance, while there is an increased dependency on the police in the north, including Kidal, MINUSMA has struggled to fully establish its presence in that region. As a result, the majority of capacity-building initiatives by the mission's police component were still being conducted in Bamako at the time of the fieldwork. Interviewees often mentioned that while FPU were mostly deployed in the north, IPOs, whose main task is to support capacity-building initiatives, were still not fully deployed. This was mostly as a result of the inability of the UN to provide the conditions that would enable IPOs to live in the area.

Many interviewees drew attention to wider issues beyond the training of individuals. MINUSMA had engaged in different processes with Malian counterparts, including a pluridisciplinary reflection group on security sector reform. As such, MINUSMA had been

able to support nationally led processes on the security sector and been able to share experiences with local actors. Some projects, externally funded, had assisted MINUSMA to address some of the issues, but these were still limited. Some of the interviewees even suggested that donors would prefer

giving money to MINUSMA, instead of the Malian government.

The political nature of the conflict is also something that needs to be addressed and provides a critical challenge to MINUSMA, especially within the complex and dynamic environment of Mali. As the mission increases its development support to the local and national police, it increases the potential for mistrust between the local population and the mission. It was made clear by many interviewees that the local population in the north mistrusts the police and gendarmerie as they are perceived to have disappeared from the area when the war started. People in the north also have a deep-seated perception of corrupt practices in the police and judiciary, which contributes to the mistrust of those institutions. As a result, confidence building measures have to be conducted alongside the development of capacity-building initiatives.

Conclusion

Mali presents to the international community an important opportunity to address the need for appropriate capacity-building challenges in peacebuilding. While the country was for many years regarded as an example of democratic processes in Africa, recent developments have shown that

underlying conflict issues, if not properly addressed, can have a disastrous affect on particular countries.

There are many challenges in Mali and to address those MINUSMA needs to restore the local population's confidence in the mission and help reinforce the role of the Malian government among the people. The lack of trust that exists among key stakeholders needs to be addressed to reach a peaceful settlement. Urgent attention must be given to the development of local infrastructure and logistical support so that security services become functional in the country.

Although the capacity-building aspect of MINUSMA's mandate is lagging and proving difficult to implement, the training aspect is providing necessary skills to the police force. MINUSMA and the Malian police are busy developing a strategic plan for strengthening capacity-building initiatives and once this is completed all stakeholders will have to support the framework and provide the necessary funds for its implementation.

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