



Country strategy paper:

Mali country programme 2023 – 2027

Introduction

ERIKS development partner has been working in Mali since 2005 through local partner organizations.

Despite the country's gradual recovery from the aftermath of the crisis, progress in child protection and education is still low, causing unprecedented insecure mobility of children inside and outside the country, despite the high risks of such mobility. The country is facing numerous issues and needs related to girls' rights and gender equality, violence against children, early child marriage, lack of education as well as a high and stagnating gender gap. These challenges are in their turn linked to the humanitarian crises due to terrorism and climate change development crisis. In this context, which is compounded with a political change through an ongoing transition to civil governance, ERIKS has developed its country strategy framework 2023-2027 to address key issues

that affect girls and boys, and that limit their rights and the equality between them:

- Primary health care and child rearing practices in early childhood do not allow children to develop their full potential, and do not sufficiently protect children from harm and preventable diseases.
- Girls and young women in Mali are at high risk of female genital cutting, early and forced marriage, and other harmful community practices. They are exposed to gender-based violence and have limited access to information and services for sexual and reproductive health.
- There are insufficient opportunities for girls and young women in Mali to participate in the public and economic life of the country at all levels on an equal basis with men.

Insecurity disrupts the population's livelihoods and access to basic services, such as drinking water, health, and education. In working towards its global objective, ERIKS will reorient its programmatic focus in Mali to be a more efficient and effective child rights and gender transformative organisation in Mali.

While continuing to play a role in the humanitarian assistance in Mali, for Education in Emergencies and nutrition, ERIKS will analyse opportunities for partnership and learn from stronger implementing partners in humanitarian action. The result of new partnership exploration will support informed decision making and promote continuous im-

provement through lessons learning and sharing in ERIKS' contribution to humanitarian response in Mali.

ERIKS will develop and operate more efficient project monitoring, and knowledge management strategy in a participatory manner with communities including children and implementing partners. The strategy will support informed decision making at the project management level, provide the evidence for advocacy work, and promote continuous improvement through learning and sharing of lessons. A regular monitoring of the evolution of progress markers will be conducted with implementing partners and external stakeholders.

Strategic orientation

The role and contribution of ERIKS

ERIKS is a trusted organization in Mali, respected by communities in the areas of intervention and a credible convener for implementing partner organizations. However, ERIKS has not always been able to sufficiently demonstrate the added value of its efforts with government actors at the central level. Due to the lack of programme staff based in Mali, rooms for improvement are still there when it comes to ERIKS' participation in relevant networks on a regular basis.

In the **education** component, the focus of ERIKS and its implementing partners has been on access to quality education, school governance, and speed school programmes. ERIKS and its partners contributed to improving access to quality

education for girls and boys. Support of school feeding programmes, school sanitation with the separation of latrines for boys and girls, and efforts to eliminate the practice of early and forced marriage have all been key activities that have contributed to increased school attendance and completion by girls in Mali.

ERIKS, through its funded projects, supported the establishment and revitalization of communities' **child protection** committees in interventions areas. This has increased the communities' awareness of the need to protect children against violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect. At local level, ERIKS and its partners supported the establishment of children's clubs in schools and provided them with training and opportunities to advocate for their rights.



A speed school learner in Mali. After a year in a fast school programme, she joined the formal school to continue her studies



A mother attending a community meeting with her child

In the **health** component, ERIKS has mainly worked to strengthen child nutrition through the recovery of malnourished children and the training of parents to produce the porridge enriched through local ingredients.

In terms of **advocacy**, ERIKS and its local partners have achieved good results in community sensitization for behavioural change. The number of female genitals cutting abandonment communities is good evidence of this. Advocacy with traditional and religious leaders and public campaigns for the change of social norms resulted in the declaration of the abandonment of female genital cutting in 29 villages in the ERIKS funded projects areas. For the coming period, ERIKS intends to play a more active role in relevant groups such as FONGIM. It will work to foster the involvement of partners in relevant networks and groups, etc.

The role of ERIKS in the coming period will be to support the partner organisations' capacity development in Child rights-based programming principles, to support them to develop and implement their own child safeguarding policies as well as gender, conflict and environment sensitive projects. ERIKS will also strengthen the capacities of its partners in child Protection and Education in Emergencies.

ERIKS will encourage partner organisations to work to strengthen the national child protection system in synergy with other actors, through participation in relevant networks and groups. ERIKS will also participate in promoting positive social norms, improving social cohesion and influence with partners and in relevant networks for an end of harmful

practices and better protection of vulnerable children. Quality education and SRHR with focus on combatting harmful traditional practices and prevention of preventable disease of infants and young children will be ERIKS' advocacy priorities.

Building on the strengths and lessons learnt, this country strategy sets a roadmap for the next five years. To maximise ERIKS' impact and effectiveness, ERIKS will build on the following key areas, which are also in alignment with ERIKS' international strategy and the Malian government priority areas in development and humanitarian response:

- Humanitarian preparedness, mitigation, response, recovery, and conflict management/peace building in line with the triple nexus
- Develop gender transformative programming
- Influence decision and policy makers to ensure that all children, and those who are excluded or marginalised, have the right to learn in safe circumstances, to grow up healthy in protective environment, to participate and thrive.

Learning and strategic choices

The review of the previous country strategy framework and highlighted the following key lessons learnt :

- Working with local organisations made it possible for ERIKS to work effectively with local communities, religious leaders, and traditional chiefs to dismantle existing taboos related to FGM/C. Local partners provided the expertise, community access, and credibility needed to do this.
- Community's child protection committees improve people's perception of child's rights issues, particularly girls and young women affected by traditional harmful practices like female genital cutting and early marriage.
- Savings and loan groups provide a highly effective communication channel for issues such as child rights, gender equality, resilience-building.
- Strengthening the capacities and technical knowledge of communities / parents on income generating activities makes a significant contribution to food security.
- Quality project management was an area of weakness under the previous strategic plan. For certain number of partner organizations, the growth of their financial portfolio was not supported with a commensurate development of structures and systems. It has led to weak management of projects and frustrations at partnership level. The root cause was primarily that human resources planning, and recruitment did not keep pace with the increasing volume of activities. The organizational assessment and open discussions have improved performance for certain partners, but there are still areas requiring improvement, related to procurement and project reporting.
- The former strategy in Mali, although largely oriented on education, did not make enough room for education in emergency, which, in view of the current context, is an absolute necessity. In addition to that, children who have passed the age of schooling should not be on the sidelines. Moreover, in view of the crisis which continues over time, malnutrition has taken on greater proportions in Mali, which also leads ERIKS to consider the nutrition of children under 5 as an absolute priority.

The situational analysis which laid the foundation of this country strategy also highlighted priority areas that require additional attention/intervention/investment. For the coming strategic period ERIKS will focus on:

1. Improving the access of vulnerable and excluded girls and boys under 5 years to quality, nurturing care within the family and to the community supports and services they need to grow up healthy and develop, free from negative gender attitudes and expectations.
2. Protecting children and particularly girls from harmful practices and strengthen their ability to make autonomous, free, and healthy choices about their sexuality, reproduction, and relationships.
3. Economic strengthening of vulnerable and excluded household, and particularly those affected by humanitarian crisis and the youth people access to decent work."
4. Humanitarian response focusing on Education in Emergency (EiE), Child Protection in Emergency (CPiE) and Child Nutrition linking to food security, oriented towards triple nexus approach perspective. This approach recognises the importance of meeting immediate humanitarian needs through ongoing disaster response management (DRM) while tackling obstacles to development, including gender inequality, intra- and inter-community conflict and violence, and the adverse impact of climate change.

This strategy is designed to support this ambition. It places a special focus on vulnerable and excluded children and particularly girls, focus on gender-sensitive child protection, decent employment and entrepreneurship, active citizenship (allowing children to participate to the development of their communities), sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Geographic focus: ERIKS will increase its intervention efforts where the need is greatest to have greater impact and position itself as a relevant and impacting organisation in the child rights field. But in all of this, ERIKS will also have to consider areas that are still accessible where the security challenges are not an obstacle to the monitoring to ensure quality of ERIKS' interventions.

Targeted rights holders/duty bearers: The country strategy of ERIKS in Mali has a special focus on vulnerable and excluded children and particularly girls, children living with disability, children affected by violence/humanitarian crisis as well as girls and boys under five.

Partners: ERIKS will identify potential partners that align with the country strategy ambitions. ERIKS will also analyse opportunities for partnership and learn from stronger implementing partners in humanitarian action. The result of new partnership exploration will support informed decision making and promote continuous improvement through lessons learning and sharing in ERIKS' contribution to humanitarian response in Mali.

To maximize ERIKS' impact and effectiveness, and to support its international Strategy, ERIKS will reinforce its capacity to build and manage partnerships, develop gender transformative programming, and influence decision and policy makers to ensure that girls and boys, and the most marginalized, have the right to learn, to be protected and to participate. Quality education, SRHR with focus on combatting harmful traditional practices and prevention of preventable disease



A student who thanks to the speed school was able to join formal school in Diabakoro in Mali

of infants and young children will be ERIKS' main advocacy priorities. The evaluation of program and core support will be done operationally through the evaluation of programs and projects.

The country strategy will allow to:

- Achieve transformative changes in the lives of vulnerable and excluded children, and particularly girls, ERIKS and its local partners will: Enhance children's, families' and communities' capacity and capability to create secure and enabling environments for children and youth and to withstand, adapt and recover from shock and stress caused by instability or crisis including food-shortage, conflicts, climate change impact, and epidemics.
- Promote life skills among children, and especially girls, in all interventions, seeking to promote their empowerment and to change perceptions about their status in the community.
- Work with boys and young men, to engage them as champions of change for fighting against gender-based violence and other matters related to inequality and for peace building and pacific coexistence.
- Use a gender transformative approach to tackle the root causes of gender inequality, particularly unequal gender power relations, discriminatory social norms and systems, and practices.
- Strengthen ERIKS' and its partners' accountability towards girls, boys, communities, and back donors and share documents and key reports with all relevant stakeholders.
- Promoting Core Humanitarian Standards, and engaging local partners in membership with CHS Alliance, in order to raise the level of transparency, accountability, and sustainability. This will reinforce partners' feedback and complaints reporting, monitoring and response mechanisms and make it more innovative.
- Develop durable forms of partnerships with a new local organization stronger in humanitarian action in order to ensure sustainable programme impacts.
- Strengthen partners structures and systems in the areas of procurement and project reporting.



Partial view of a speed school class in the community of Kolondjigüe in the rural commune of Maramadougou in Mali

Country outcomes

The following outcomes have been defined for ERIKS' work in Mali during this strategy period:

1. Outcomes under Partnership

- **1.1:1** Partner organisations apply a contextualised Child Right Based Approach and work according to the General Principles of the UNCRC
- **1.1:2** Partner organisations apply gender and conflict sensitivity, including religious sensitivity, working according to Do No Harm principles and Child Safeguarding Policy/ Child Protection Policy
- **1.1:3** Partner organisations enhance the respect of the natural environment and reduce the risks and consequences faced by girls and boys due to climate change within the local context.
- **1.1:4** Partner organisations are financially stable, cost efficient and apply democratic governance principles within their organisations

2.1. Outcomes related to girls and boys as right holders

- **2.1:1** Girls and boys, including those affected by humanitarian crisis, are equipped with the knowledge, skills, tools, and possibilities to advocate, to protect themselves and their peers and demonstrate positive coping mechanisms.
- **2.1:2** Adolescents (girls and boys) benefit from quality services and youth make healthy choices about their sexual and reproductive health and rights
- **2.1:3** Vulnerable and excluded young people, particularly those affected by the humanitarian crisis, acquire market-oriented skills for employment or entrepreneurship and are committed for gender equality and peace building actions
- **2.1:4** Girls and boys affected by humanitarian crisis understand child protection risks and behaviours, including those related to psychosocial distress and mental disorder, and have access to family and community based psychosocial support.
- **2.1:5** Out-of-school girls and boys (victims of conflict, or exclusion) pursue and complete their basic education with

the support of their communities through innovative accelerated education programmes tailored to their context.

2.2. Outcomes related to legal duty bearers

- **2.2:1** Local and national authorities establish and implement policies that guarantee children, adolescents and youth equal access to quality and gender responsive SRHR services.
- **2.2:2** Legal duty bearers fulfil their obligation to provide quality education to girls and boys and those affected by humanitarian crisis
- **2.2:3** Legal duty bearers provide functional safe, accessible, and effective child protection systems that prevent and respond to child protection concerns.

2.3. Outcomes related to moral duty bearers

- **2.3:1** Community leaders, volunteers and networks support essential household and community interventions to ensure health including the sexual health of children, adolescents and young people and their protection against preventable diseases, including malnutrition.
- **2.3:2** Parents, caregivers, communities, and leaders actively support and take responsibility for ensuring girls and boys get safe, inclusive, quality formal and non-formal education in communities.
- **2.3:3** Communities have functional, safe, accessible, and effective child protection systems that prevent and respond to child protection concerns.
- **2.3:4** Parents, caregivers and communities are resilient, and able to cope and provide continued care and support to girls and boys affected by climate change, conflict and displacement and are active and positive in peace building and pacific cohabitation initiatives.

ERIKS

For the children. And the world they dream of.