

Mali

One of the world's least developed countries, Mali has suffered through droughts, rebellions and military dictatorship since the 1960s. Democratic elections in 1992 ushered in a brief period of economic growth and social stability. However, the new millennium has seen instability and volatility with ethnic and Islamists rebels taking over regions of northern Mali.

At the start of 2012, the Malian government faced growing tensions with Tuareg ethnic militias and was overthrown by the Malian army. During this period the Malian military lost control of northern regions to ethnic militias. Hundreds of thousands of northern Malians fled the violence to southern Mali and neighboring countries, exacerbating food insecurity in these areas.

Since 2007, ACDI/VOCA has successfully implemented food security and agribusiness programs throughout Mali. The programs have worked with the country's most vulnerable farmers to link producer groups and the private sector.

Using Value Chains to Strengthen Linkages between Farmers and Markets

Many of our programs in Mali have targeted existing linkages between producer groups and the private sector in order to boost



productivity and trade. ACDI/VOCA first implemented activities in Mali as a subcontractor to Abt Associates under the **USAID Agricultural Value Chain Initiative Program** (2007-2010) to address value chain constraints in Mali. During this program, we created key partnerships with banks and financial institutions and collaborated with the government of Mali to facilitate trade.

ACDI/VOCA continued its work addressing value chain constraints in Mali with the \$2.1 million USAID-funded **Mali Agricultural Value Enhancement Network (MAVEN)** program. MAVEN aimed to improve production, processing, storage and marketing of select agricultural crops while enhancing business management skills of farmers and farmer associations.

Perhaps the most far-reaching program in Mali has been the **Agricultural Development Systems Activity (ADSA)**, which ran from 2009-2012. This \$10.8 million project, funded by the Millennium Challenge Account, targeted farmers in the Segou region, a semi-arid zone of Mali where farmers have struggled to subsist as nomads. ADSA worked to increase the productivity and profitability of the agricultural activities of Segou farmers by improving agricultural techniques and establishing relationships among the various value chain actors to create a sustainable market system.

Through the ADSA program, farmers in the Segou region were able to harvest 3,000 tons of high quality rice, which benefited 10,000 family members. ACIDI/VOCA also provided a new model of improved irrigation and agriculture which helped to foster long-term food security and real economic growth for Malians.

In addition to aiding the rice sector, ACIDI/VOCA improved Mali's mango sector through the **Agricultural Value Chain Initiative** program, in which we linked producer groups with financial institutions. For example, ACIDI/VOCA connected Youssouf Coulibaly, a mango processing plant owner, with Kafo Jiginew, a microfinance institution, and facilitated a loan to Youssouf of 10 million CFA (about \$25,000), which he used to fund staff training. With this loan, Youssouf could buy more mangoes from local farmers and also added five new drying ovens, greatly increasing his processing capacity.

Drawing on our multifaceted value chain approach, ACIDI/VOCA combined programs and strategies to help businesses improve locally and internationally. By integrating value chains into Malian agribusinesses, ACIDI/VOCA is working to ensure the long-term sustainability of this important sector.

Addressing Food Insecurity Among Vulnerable Populations

Although agricultural productivity in Mali is slowly increasing, food insecurity still remains a large problem for many smallholder farmers in the Sahel and several of ACIDI/VOCA's programs have worked to improve food security in the country. In 2009, ACIDI/VOCA continued work with vulnerable agricultural producers in northern Mali as a subrecipient to the Aga Khan Foundation under a three-year, USDA-funded **Food For Progress (FFP) Program**. This program addressed agricultural challenges for vulnerable farmers in the Mopti region and worked with producer organizations to expand farmers' access to markets and increase and diversify incomes.

ACIDI/VOCA also recently implemented a 10-month, \$1.05 million program called **Response, Recovery, and Resiliency in Mali (R3M)**. Started in July 2012, R3M has worked to increase immediate and midterm access to food while improving community assets and food security in the Mopti region. We hope to extend this program by an additional seven months to incorporate additional disaster risk reduction and other trainings to vulnerable farmers in the area.

Our Future in Mali

Looking ahead, ACDI/VOCA will build upon its robust presence in Mali through a combination of project extensions and new programs. Mali III, a follow-on to the current USDA-funded FFP program, will continue to provide marketing trainings to producer organizations using ACDI/VOCA's **Farming as a Business (FaaB)** approach. Mali III, in addition to the R3M extension, ensures our future presence in the country as we continue to target the agricultural sector's sustainability and to combat persisting food insecurity.

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