

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Mali is located in western Africa and has a surface area of 479,079 km<sup>2</sup>. Mali is a landlocked country, bordered to the east by Niger, to the north by Algeria, to the west by Mauritania and Senegal, to the south by Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, and to the south-east by Guinea. Access to the sea is provided by rail to Dakar and by road via Bamako and Bouaké to Abidjan.

Mali has a population of around 9.5 million, distributed very unevenly around the country, and 51.20 per cent of its population are women (78 per cent of whom live in rural areas). In the south, where the climate is relatively mild, the population density is twenty people per km<sup>2</sup>. The north is a vast, virtually empty region, where the population density rarely exceeds five people per km<sup>2</sup>. Overall, the country's population is young, with the under-twenty age group making up 60 per cent of the population. The birth rate is high (5 per cent), while the natural growth rate is above 3.5 per cent. Average life expectancy is 58 years. Over 80 per cent of the population are illiterate.

Mali's economy is a classic developing-country economy, in virtually every respect. Over 80 per cent of the population are employed in the primary sector, characterized primarily by the use of traditional agricultural techniques, a low level of technical training, and very low incomes. Food crops (millet and rice) continue to be grown across vast areas, especially in the country's southern, western, and eastern regions. And yet, these regions benefit increasingly from substantial agricultural training initiatives, thanks to the presence of associations such as the Compagnie Malienne pour le Développement des Textiles (Mali Textile Development Corporation, CMDT), the Office du Niger (Niger Office), the Office de la Haute Vallée du Niger (Office of the Upper Niger Valley) and l'Opération Riz (Operation Rice). Furthermore, machinery for plowing (plows and tractors) have been used in Mali for many years. Toward the country's central regions, the agricultural activities consist mostly of dry millet farming and the flood-farming of the rice growing industry.

No matter where in the country they live, Mali's rural communities must work extremely hard, simply to survive. The combination of the varied climate, soil degradation, a lack of technical training, and illiteracy makes Mali's rural environment a fragile one. And yet, along the great rivers of the Sahel, skilful irrigation techniques have successfully tamed the water for the rice farmers. A modern agricultural sector is taking shape in this region, although unfortunately it is a sector largely dependent on external subsidies.

The livestock-farming that thrives in the country's northern regions is not, however, combined with crop farming. But the constant drought and desertification have also pushed livestock farmers farther south (Sikasso, Southern Kayes), where the technical services (CMDT) are encouraging rural communities to combine crop farming with livestock-farming by harnessing their oxen to the plow and incorporating animal dung and compost into their farming methods.

The fishing industry is successful in some areas of the country, less so in others. Although it once thrived in the lower and middle delta regions of the Niger, the industry there is currently in crisis, largely as a result of weak floodwaters. Catches are gradually being depleted and the fishermen are having to take up rice growing as a secondary occupation. Farther south, fishing is beginning to flourish around the reservoirs of the Sélingué and Manantali dams.

The rural sector of the economy employs no less than 80 per cent of the working population. Accounting for 40 per cent of the country's GDP, the sector ranks as the country's second-largest, after the service sector (44 per cent in 1994). Mali's export income, however, is earned largely through sales of cotton, livestock (1994) and, in more recent years, gold.

The situation in the health sector is disturbing. The infant mortality rate is still very high (102 per one thousand live births) and very few people have access to healthcare. Only around 40 per cent of the population have access to potable water. Mali's illiteracy rate is still among the highest in the world (80 per cent), while the enrolment rate scarcely exceeds 40 per cent. The country's average per capita income is US\$ 280.

### 1.1. Context for Appraisal of the Action Plan

As described above, Mali's economy is still extremely underdeveloped, and poverty and destitution rates are particularly in evidence among women. And yet, it is women who play the central role in both rural and urban life. Traveling through the Mali countryside, one is struck above all by women's extremely heavy seasonal and daily workload. In the country's southern regions, the women are the main actors in the economy, taking part in every stage of production: plowing the fields, sowing the seeds, monitoring the harvest, and packaging the final product. They must also look after the household, prepare the food, and care for and educate their children. Household tasks are particularly

exhausting for women, who spend much of their time fetching water, gathering wood, and converting local produce.

In Mali's Central and Northern regions, it is a tedious task simply to ensure a daily supply of water. Converting local products (soubala mustard, shea butter, and groundnuts) is the exclusive province of women. Product conversion requires a tremendous amount of gathering, processing, and marketing. And yet the products are then sold in competition with industrial products, thus reducing their profitability.

In the Sahel, the young girls work as shepherds, while the women are responsible for converting and marketing the by-products of livestock-farming. These by-products are the staple food of the livestock-farmer's family, and it is the women who must procure the large part of it.

In Mali's fishing regions, women have a crucial role to play, participating not only in the fishing itself (especially young girls), but also in the processing and marketing of the catch. It is quite clear, however, that women do not profit sufficiently from their labours. In a society that is partly nomadic and partly sedentary, the dependence on women is especially marked, and women's daily workload is extremely heavy.

In any event, the fact that young girls must help with farming and household tasks is a major obstacle to their education. As a result, the literacy rate is lower among women than among men. School enrolments are lower among young girls because of early marriage and/or unwanted pregnancies.

It is in fact quite common, especially in rural areas, to see girls of twelve marrying (whether by choice or through coercion), and ending their schooling as a result. The mentality behind the belief that a woman's role in life is "to stay at home" is still very much alive.

As for the legislative environment, women's status is largely based on the founding traditions of Mali society. Women's inferiority is legalized by the marriage laws, which still state that "a man may marry four women." Many women are illiterate, and are not even aware of their legalized inferiority or of the fact that they are exploited. Even intellectual women are afraid to make too many demands. Clearly, a great deal of work remains to be done in terms of informing women, raising their awareness, and educating them.

In short, the status of women in Mali continues to be dominated by economic poverty. The main characteristics of that poverty are the following:

women's financial resources are very poor in comparison to their extremely high outlays. Between eighty and ninety per cent of women's meager financial resources are spent on caring for the family (including food, clothing, healthcare, and education);

women's seasonal and daily workload (which includes household chores, agricultural labor, fetching and carrying, and childcare) is too heavy;

women's work is extremely hard. Among other tasks, it includes grinding, converting raw cereals into food at an astonishingly fast pace, fetching water, gathering wood, and working in the field. In both a legislative and a sociocultural sense, women either do not participate at all, or participate only marginally, in family decision-making. They must submit to "men's law," sometimes without uttering a word of protest.

Thus, in order to alleviate poverty among women, their daily workload must be reduced and they must be given greater access to financial resources. Legislative review (revision of laws) is also required. This is what the authorities in Mali have been trying to achieve for a number of years, by implementing a genuine policy for the advancement of women. In an effort to encourage the development of women's associations, the authorities began by creating a support and guidance body called the Commission for the Advancement of Women. It was this Commission which in 1995 formulated Mali's Action Plan for the Advancement of Women (1996-2000), which was based on both Mali's "National Public-Policy Strategies for the Advancement of Women" and the resolutions of the Beijing Conference. The action plan was developed according to the following broad objectives:

to enhance the image of women in our society and to foster an enabling environment for women to become more involved in the current democratic process,

to find ways to ensure that women's rights are recognized and respected,

to promote women's access to the factors of production and to economic resources,

to ensure that women can reconcile their various roles with the tasks of production and that women's productivity and incomes increase,

to facilitate the access of mothers and children to social welfare services,

to implement the new policy of radically reforming Mali's education system.

The action plan focuses on six priority areas of concern where inequalities between men and women were considered to be so great that they could be reduced only through dramatic short- and medium-term measures.

education,

health,

women's rights and their participation in public life,

economic advancement,

the environment,

institution-building.

The general objectives of the action plan are the following:

to promote the education of the girl-child and of women,

to promote improvements in women's health,

to take concrete actions to protect women's rights and interests,

to increase women's participation in public life,

to ensure that women can participate fully in economic development and environmental protection,

to support institutions working toward the advancement of women.

The types of action involved in the plan may be summarized as follows:

dissemination of information/awareness-raising,

training,

conducting studies,

construction and renovation of infrastructures,

provision of institutional and financial support to the public bodies responsible for the advancement of women and to women's associations and groups,

the translation and dissemination of documents on the status of women,

the allocation of resources to the Commission for the Advancement of Women,

follow-up and appraisal of actions.

It was intended that these actions should be fully implemented over a period of five years, and that an interim appraisal should be undertaken in 1998, in order to determine how much progress had been made toward implementing the actions and to determine what adjustments needed to be made.

### 1.2. Goals of the Appraisal

According to its terms of reference, the interim appraisal of the action plan for the advancement of women must determine whether the plan's initial goals have been achieved, review the status of the budget, and assess the pertinence of the overall strategy, the effectiveness of the actions implemented, and the impact of those actions on the plan's principal beneficiaries, the women of Mali. To be more precise, this appraisal exercise has the following specific goals:

to assess the implementation of the Action Plan 1996-2000,  
to assess the financial situation, as required under the approved funding plan,  
to draw up a summary document, both reviewing the plan's goals and intended actions and providing an assessment of the actions implemented, economic indicators, participants, and financial resources.

### 1.3. Expected Outcomes:

A final document, which evaluates the degree to which qualitative and quantitative goals have been achieved and the impact of the actions implemented.

The document must serve as the cornerstone both for a set of new initiatives to be recommended under a 1998-2000 operational strategic plan soon to be drawn up by the department, and for the preparations for the special session to review and assess progress achieved in implementing the Platforms for Action.

The document must include the initial economic indicators on which the new strategic plan will be based.

## 1.4. Methodology

### 1.4.1. Methodological Approach

Our appraisal was based on a methodological approach combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. On the quantitative side, we presented questionnaires to the ministerial departments responsible for the plan's six areas of concern: health, education, environment, economic advancement, women's rights and their participation in public life, and institution-building.

Our qualitative research involved both on-site observation and interviews (both semi-directional and non-directional) conducted with those targeted by the plan, financial partners, senior officials of NGOs and women's associations, former ministerial officials of the ex-Commission for the Advancement of Women, regional and local administrative and technical officials, directors of operations and projects for rural development, as well as officials from the department responsible for the advancement of women. The interviews were conducted on both an individual and group basis.

Quantitative data were broken down jointly by the consultancy team and officials working on two projects led by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children, and the Family - namely, the Program for the Advancement of Women (MLI 94006 UNDP/ILO) and the Project for the Advancement of Women and Institution-Building (MLI 009201).

Qualitative data were interpreted by the coordinator of the consultancy team, who then combined the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis and presented the results in the form of a provisional report.

The provisional report was discussed at a validation workshop attended by representatives from the eleven ministerial departments involved in the actions defined under the action plan, representatives of the NGO groupings and women's associations, representatives of projects and operations for rural development, and representatives of the financial partners. The provisional report was improved and enhanced to reflect the wealth of new information and the numerous suggestions provided during the workshop. The present appraisal combines the outcome of the validation workshop with the data provided by the provisional report.

#### 1.4.2. Appraisal Tools

Two main types of research tool were used in the preparation of this appraisal:

questionnaires for ministerial departments;

various interview guides, each designed for a specific category of interviewee.

#### 1.4.3. Sampling

Systematic sampling methods were used in the case of ministerial departments, former ministry officials; regions; projects of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children, and the Family; NGOs; NGO groupings and women's association groups; rural development operations; local and regional administrative and technical officials, ministry officials responsible for the advancement of women; financial partners, and regional coordinators. A purposive sampling approach was used in the case of the communities and associations visited in the regions and in the District of Bamako. Eleven ministerial departments were selected, because they were the departments involved in implementing the actions included under the different areas of concern identified in the action plan. Those ministerial departments were the following:

Ministry of Health, Social Services, and the Elderly,

Ministry of Basic Education,

Ministry of Secondary Education, Higher Education, and Scientific Research,

Ministry of Rural Development and Water,

Ministry of Justice,

Ministry of Finance,

Ministry of the Environment,

Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Crafts,

Ministry of Labor, the Civil Service, and Employment,

Ministry of Town Planning and Housing,

Ministry of the Armed Forces and Veterans.

At the various ministries, we met with six officials responsible for the advancement of women, four of whom are former ministry officials:



1. Education
2. Housing and Town Planning
3. Industry and Crafts
4. Justice
5. Rural Development
6. Ministry of the Armed Forces and Veterans

At the Department responsible for the advancement of women, we met with four members of the ministry staff, two of whom are former officials of the ex-Commission for the Advancement of Women.

Interviews were conducted with the Directors of all the projects led by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children, and the Family. The projects concerned are the following:

Program for the Advancement of Women (MLI 0 94006 UNDP/ILO),

Project for the Advancement of Women and Institution-Building of the Commission for the Advancement of Women,

Project for the Advancement of Women and the Alleviation of Poverty,

"FAAF Layidu" Fund for Women's Actions,

Project for the Advancement of Women (MLI 009201),

Project for the Development of Women's Businesses.

Four NGO groupings (CCA/ONG, SECO/ONG, CAFO, YIRIBA SUMA) and nine NGOs (ALPHALOG, AMADE, AEN, AID, DED, CARE/MALI, GRDR, USC, and SNV) were involved.

Thirteen bilateral and multilateral financing bodies were contacted, and there were eight operations and projects for rural development: CMDT, the Niger Office, Ségou Operation Rice, the North-East Mali Livestock Farming Project, ACODEP, the Project for the Development of Forestry Resources in the Kita District, the Bafoulabé Integrated Development Project, and the Kidal Region Food Security Program.

At a regional level, twenty-five districts and four municipalities of the District of Bamako (I, III, V, and VI) were visited. The communities visited in the country's interior regions were selected according to the following three criteria:

the presence of dynamic women's associations,  
the diversity of their activities,  
their accessibility.

Among the various communities, we visited a total of 105 women's associations (five of which are located in Bamako). The associations were selected according to the following criteria:

the energy and enthusiasm of the association,  
the diversity of the association's activities.

We interviewed at least three members of each association, and very often interviewed as many as five or ten members.

The following table shows the breakdown of the sample:

Table 1: Breakdown of Sample

<u>Component</u>	<u>No. of Staff</u>
Ministerial departments	11
Ministry officials responsible for the advancement of women	6
Staff members of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women	4
NGOs and NGO Groupings	13
Projects of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women	6
Financial Partners	13
Regions and District of Bamako	9
Regional and local technical and administrative officials	30
Regional coordinators	8
Operations and projects for rural development	8
Districts and Municipalities of the District of Bamako	29
Women's associations	105
Members of women's associations	315
Program directors	5

#### 1.4.4 Structure of the Report

We have divided our report into six main sections. After providing a general introduction in Chapter One, we proceed, in Chapter Two, to discuss the pertinence of the action plan. Here, we consider how far the areas of concern and actions identified in the action plan were in tune both with general political trends in Mali at the time and with women's concerns and needs. This second chapter also looks at the goals of the action plan, as well as the resources allocated for the various actions.

Chapter Three addresses the question of the action plan's implementation. The chapter begins by reviewing the methods used to disseminate and monitor the action plan. It then goes on to describe the actions implemented "on the ground" in the different areas of concern and to highlight those actions still requiring implementation. In Chapter Four we discuss the effects and impacts of the actions implemented, in terms of the lives of those targeted by the plan. Chapter Five provides a summary of the main strengths and weaknesses that we have identified in the design and implementation of the action plan. Finally, Chapter Six offers a number of recommendations and general conclusions.

#### 1.5 Constraints and Problems:

Ideally, it would have been possible to procure detailed and accurate information from all those involved (technical services and government administrators, NGOs, women's associations, projects, financial partners, development operations, etc.), about all they had achieved toward the advancement of women and how much their actions had cost. Unfortunately, this did not prove to be feasible. Firstly, it was impossible to devote the time and resources necessary to reach all those who have participated (and this is rarely possible!). Secondly, the participants whom we did manage to contact were not always able to tell us exactly how much they had spent on women's advancement. This is because they have global budgets, which they use to finance the activities of both men and women.

But we experienced the biggest problems with data gathering at ministerial departments, the CMDT, and certain financial partners, such as US AID. Those problems were of two kinds: the delays in the provision of information and the quality of information provided. Only the Ministry of Education really provided usable information on time. The Ministries of Finance, Justice, and of Town Planning and Housing supplied usable information, but did so somewhat late. The Ministries of Rural

Development and the Environment provided incomplete and late information. The Ministries of Industry and Trade, of Secondary Education, Higher Education, and Scientific Research, and of Civil Service and Labor, as well as US AID were not even prepared to provide us with information. These various delays in the collection of data had a significant impact on the timetable for the appraisal and led to a number of missed deadlines.

All is not lost, however! There is a Minianka proverb that says: "let the sparrow-hawk tarry as it may in its flight, so long as it returns with a red head."<sup>1</sup> And the fact that we were not provided with data or complete information by certain participants does not detract from the quality of our results.

## 2. PERTINENCE OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (1996-2000)

In order to achieve a better understanding of how far the action plan conformed to the general political trends in the country at the time and to women's concerns and needs, we shall begin by outlining the process involved in formulating the action plan. In doing so, we shall describe the country's political trends at the time and the major concerns expressed by women.

### 2.1. Process and Strategy for Formulating the Action Plan:

The Action Plan for the Advancement of Women (1996-2000) is not the product of spontaneous generation. It is the result of a long process which, to a certain degree, was both participatory and repetitive in nature, since it involved many different kinds of people and institutions at different times and in different places (women from rural areas, intellectuals and women from the cities, technical, administrative, and political leaders, national and international institutions, NGOs, associations, and financial partners). The action plan was based on treaties and conventions ratified by Mali, sectoral action plans and recommendations developed during the National Women's Forum (Mali, 1991) and the workshop for the definition of a policy on the advancement of women (Mali, 1992), the African

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<sup>1</sup> The sparrow-hawk is a bird of prey which often attacks small birds, chicks, and small fowls. If it returns from a hunting expedition with traces of blood on its head, it means that the hunt has been successful. It is forgiven for the time it has taken for the hunt, because it has, so to speak, brought back a hunting bag filled with game!

Platform for Action (Dakar, 1994), and the Platform for Action from the Beijing World Conference (1995).

The National Women's Forum (October 17-19, 1991) had brought together 300 women, from both rural and urban environments and from every region in the country. The women represented technical services, NGOs and women's associations, international bodies, and other partners for development. During the forum, a rigorous and detailed analysis of the situation of women was conducted at all levels, embracing institutions, the sociocultural environment, the law, healthcare, economic production, IEC, politics, and strategic matters. The analysis enabled participants at the National Forum were able to define their overall policy direction more effectively and to formulate general, sectoral, and specific recommendations.

A few months later (January 23-31, 1992), a workshop was held in Bamako, in order to define a policy on the advancement of women. The aim of the workshop was to consider the documents produced at the National Forum and to formulate public-policy strategies for the advancement of women in Mali. Four key areas of concern were identified : health, education, the economy, and the law. For each of these sectors, the particular situation of women was described in frank terms, constraints were identified, goals were fixed, and strategies and actions were defined. These National Public-Policy Strategies on the advancement of women were subsequently studied by the Joint Commission of the Government and the Women's associations, at its first session of December 21-31, 1993. The Commission enhanced and improved the strategy document during its inaugural session, and the document was subsequently endorsed by the Mali Government.

After the "public-policy strategies" had been defined, the Commission for the Advancement of Women proceeded to formulate an action plan intended ultimately to become fully operational. The Inter-Ministerial Committee and the Joint Commission held a joint workshop between December 27 and 30, 1994 to consider how the various actors involved in the advancement of women might work together most effectively. In order to develop the ability of the Commission for the Advancement of Women to formulate and implement an operational action plan, a training workshop had been held between November 29 and December 2, 1994. That workshop had been attended by representatives from the Commission, the ministerial delegates, the regional coordinators, and the members of the Inter-Ministerial Committee and the Joint Commission. The Commission for the Advancement of Women then built upon the recommendations made at all these various gatherings (the Forum and

the workshops) to formulate a draft action plan. This document was then revised in the light of the decisions taken at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in 1995 in Beijing, China.

The draft action plan was then submitted for the consideration of the Inter-Ministerial Committee and the Joint Commission, in November, 1995. The remarks and recommendations of those two bodies made it possible to incorporate the concerns of individual sectors with regard to the advancement of women and to finalize the draft action plan. The draft was examined and approved by the Council of Ministers on January 31, 1996.

The approval of the Council of Ministers was sufficient to demonstrate that the Action Plan for the Advancement of Women (1996-2000) was in tune with government policy on the matter. 'Since the advent of democracy, in March 1991, each successive administration (beginning with the transition to the 3rd Republic) has affirmed its desire to increase the people's democratic rights; to promote a multi-party system, freedom of expression, and association; to foster the process of decentralization and, in particular, to promote the advancement of women by improving their standard of living and their status, to improve people's incomes and living conditions by fighting to alleviate poverty, to produce consistent growth aimed at sustainable development, and to develop and promote human resources.

The Action Plan for the Advancement of Women is divided into six areas of concern: education, health, women's rights and their participation in public life, economic advancement, the environment, and institution-building. These areas of concern were selected because they had been identified by previous studies as those in which significant differences between men and women were in evidence. Thus, for example, during the 1995/1996 school year, the gross enrolment rate among girls was 33.4 per cent, compared with a rate of 51.3 per cent for boys, while the ratio with respect to academic results was no better. In the informal education sector, the literacy rate in 1996 for both genders was 23 per cent (11 per cent for women only).

The second demographic and health survey conducted in Mali (EDSM II: 1995-96) showed that women's chances for survival were sharply reduced during their child-bearing years (the period that accounted for the largest category of women). Women in Mali had a one-in-ten or one-in-fifteen chance of dying during the period of procreation. The maternal mortality rate was estimated to be 577 per one thousand live births. Circumcision was practiced on 93.7 per cent of women between

fifteen and forty-nine years of age, while STM and AIDS were spreading at an alarming rate, with 3.4 per cent of women suffering from AIDS.

The various studies carried out by the DNSI and the World Bank (Profile of Poverty in Mali), and the UNDP, as well as the conclusions of the report on the Situation of Women in Rural Areas, showed that the economic situation of women was extremely precarious and that poverty had a particularly severe impact on women living in rural areas.

With regard to participation in public life and in decision-making processes, very few women were members of decision-making bodies, whether at a national, regional, or local level.

As regards legislation, numerous customary laws ensured that women's status remained inferior to that of men, and continue to do so. Furthermore, women were very often unaware of their rights. The existing women's associations were badly organized and also weak, from an institutional standpoint.

The various constraints described above demonstrate why the areas of concern selected for the advancement of women were indeed of primary importance and pertinent. In order for women to catch up with men in these different areas of concern, appropriate goals and actions were determined. In the following chapters, we will ask whether or not those goals and actions were measurable, attainable, realistic, and limited in time.

## 2.2. Specific Goals and Actions Identified in the Action Plan:

The specific goals and actions identified for each area of concern are as follows:

### 2.2.1. Education:

#### 2.2.1.1. Specific Goals:

to increase the enrolment rate among girls by 20 per cent;

to increase the literacy rate among women by 20 per cent;

to improve access to professional training, scientific and technical teaching, and permanent education.

#### 2.2.1.2. Actions:

- to make the population (especially those living in rural areas) aware of the need for girls to attend school;
- to introduce a system under which rewards are given to girls who distinguish themselves at different grades of education;
- to encourage debate on how daughters of poor parents can be looked after;
- to teach literacy to women in existing literacy centers and in those to be constructed;
- to organize a national forum for the formulation of a national policy on the teaching of literacy to women;
- to support the production and publication of post-literacy documentation;
- to monitor and assess the actions of the DNAFLA's unit for girls' enrolment and its division for the advancement of women;
- to support the training and retraining of literacy teaching staff;
- to build and equip centers for functional literacy (ten centers per region per year, or 360 in total);
- to restore 174 centers for functional literacy;
- to provide training and refresher courses to staff members teaching in professional training centers;
- to build professional training centers (two in each region) and restore one center in each region;
- to renovate the CFARs at Ouélessébougou and Dougouolo;
- to set up scholarships enabling girls and women to be trained abroad.

#### 2.2.2. Health:

##### 2.2.2.1. Specific Goals:

- to improve women's health;
- to foster the creation of a sociocultural environment that encourages women to visit and use reproductive-health services.

##### 2.2.2.2. Actions:

In order to ensure that these goals can be achieved, the following actions are planned:

steps will be taken to inform young people about EFV, RH/FP, STD, and AIDS;



information and education campaigns on specific health themes will be organized;

the population will be made aware of the dangers of customary practices that are harmful to women's health (circumcision, infibulation, early marriage, home births, restrictions on the use of certain medication);

medical and paramedical personnel will be made aware of the need to encourage women to visit health institutions;

a framework for discussing women's health problems will be established, embracing the Department of Health, the Commission for the Advancement of Women, the NGOs, and the women's associations;

research will be conducted on how women visit and use health services;

the performance of health services will be monitored and assessed.

### 2.2.3. Women's Rights and Participation in Public Life:

#### 2.2.3.1. Specific Goals:

to eliminate legislative measures and practices that discriminate against women and the girl-child;

to guarantee non-discrimination and gender equality, both in law and in practice;

to help ensure equality between men and women;

to promote the awakening of people's consciences to the issue of women's rights;

to take concerted action to prevent and eliminate violence toward women;

to protect women living in situations of armed conflict and the victims of such situations.

#### 2.2.3.2. Actions:

In order to achieve these goals, the following actions will be implemented:

legislation that includes measures discriminating against women will be rewritten;

help will be given toward the setting up of legal aid and counseling centers in each region;

legislation relating to the status of women will be widely disseminated;

a campaign will be organized to increase people's awareness of women's rights;

leaders of women's associations will be given elementary training in women's rights;

laws concerning the legal status of women will be translated into Mali's national languages;

help will be given toward ensuring that social welfare services are provided for women working in the informal sector;

people will be informed and made aware of the problem of violence toward women and its effects; a study will be conducted on how specific actions designed to protect war widows and orphans may be implemented;

special actions designed to protect widows and war orphans will be implemented;

a national debate will be instituted on ways to increase the participation of women in national and international affairs;

a system will be introduced that will encourage women to stand for elections;

support will be given to women seeking to stand in national elections;

the whole range of women's skills will be both highlighted and exploited;

the Mali committee of the international network of women ministers and parliamentarians will be established and made operational;

public events will be held to recognize the life and works of women who excel in various fields.

#### 2.2.4. Economic Advancement

##### 2.2.4.1. Specific Goals:

to alleviate poverty among the population in general and among women in particular;

to strengthen the economic role played by women in agriculture, livestock-farming, fishing, crafts, and the informal sector;

to facilitate the access of women (especially those living in rural and semi-rural areas) to the factors of production (land, economic inputs, public infrastructures, and loans).

##### 2.2.4.2. Actions:

technical and financial assistance will be given toward the creation of micro-enterprises and income-generating activities;

community-development and economic advancement programs for women will be designed;

forum's for the exchange of ideas among women will be instituted;

the fund for the support of women's activities will be strengthened;

a study will be conducted on how women's access to the land can be increased;

women will be given increased instruction in agricultural techniques;

vocational training schools will be established;  
export villages will be set up in rural areas;  
a study will be conducted on how to improve the situation of women who are made redundant by state enterprises and of those taking voluntary retirement;  
the Hawa Kéita professional training centers will be restored and given new impetus;  
a study will be conducted on the informal financial sector;  
a guarantee fund and mutual loan institutions will be set up;  
women will be taught about and sensitized toward the workings of credit mechanisms and institutions;  
leaders of women's groups will be trained in cooperative management and cooperative principles;  
women's groups will be equipped with necessary resources;  
training courses and workshops will be organized on how to set up a company;  
assistance will be given in the setting up of groups working for the advancement of women;  
women entrepreneurs working in the informal sector will be trained in management, accounting, and marketing;  
technologies for converting and enhancing local produce will be taught more widely;  
women's groups will be given equipment that will make domestic work easier (windmills, improved hearths) and make the conversion and conservation of produce easier (threshing machines, shelling machines, fish-drying racks);  
gardens and kindergartens will be set up (one in each chief town and municipality).

## 2.2.5. The Environment

### 2.2.5.1. Specific Goals:

to increase women's involvement in the management of natural resources, by strengthening their role in decision-making;  
to support the struggle against environmental degradation.

### 2.2.5.2. Actions:

assistance will be provided in the setting up of a legislative code on the environment;  
people will be made more aware about the management of resources and environmental conservation;  
ovens and furnaces that are more energy-efficient will be distributed among women's groups;  
reforestation operations will be organized;

women will be encouraged to participate in reforestation projects, including the restoration of plants used for ground cover, management of water conservation, irrigation, and agro-forestry.

## 2.2.6. Institution-Building

### 2.2.6.1. Specific Goal:

to build the institutional capacities of administrations responsible for women's advancement, notably the Commission and the women's associations and groups, in order to help them discharge their tasks appropriately.

### 2.2.6.2. Actions:

The actions designed to foster institution-building are the following:

Commission officials will be trained in IEC, planning, monitoring, project appraisal, the creation of data and statistics banks, computing and similar skills;

workshops will be organized, for leaders of associations and for women's groups' organizers or leaders, on project monitoring and appraisal, and on the design and management of micro-projects;

CAFO members will be given civic and political training and training in the management of associations;

the CAFO will be given logistical resources;

associations for the advancement of women will be assessed;

the Commissioner for the advancement of women will be encouraged to participate in meetings and discussions carried out at a local, regional, and international level;

a national policy on the advancement of women will be formulated;

senior staff of the Commission will be encouraged to participate in international conferences and workshops;

the Commission's physical and logistical resources will be strengthened: the headquarters of the UNFM will be renovated;

the CFARs at Ouélessébougou and Bla will be provided with material and financial support;

paralegal staff will be trained to work at the legal aid centers;

a database will be set up;

surveys will be conducted (two per year), to enable information to be collected from the database;

an inventory of corporations run by women will be set up;

a forward-looking study will be conducted, to look at the situation of women up to the year 2025;

a study will be conducted on the impact on women of the structural adjustment program;

actions for the advancement of women will be monitored and assessed.