IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY TENSIONS

'The more time passes, the greater the probability of violence.'

NOVEMBER 2025

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Note to the Reader: The primary audience of this document is stakeholders familiar with the contexts of Mali and Niger. As such, the report does not provide extensive historical or contextual background that would be considered common knowledge for this audience.

Executive Summary

The *Justice and Stability in the Sahel* (JASS) programme, funded by the United Kingdom and led by Mercy Corps alongside local partners, seeks to strengthen stability in Mali and Niger by promoting inclusive land governance, sustainable natural resource management, and improved access to justice for marginalised communities. Launched in central Mali in 2021 and expanded in 2023 to cover 24 communes across both countries, JASS is a three-year initiative that runs through 2026. The programme focuses on enhancing conflict management mechanisms, building community resilience to climate-related shocks, and generating evidence to inform locally driven, adaptive interventions.

This report, produced under the JASS *Evidence and Learning Agenda* (ELA), assesses the design, implementation, and performance of the *Système d'Alerte Précoce* (SAP) — JASS's community-based early warning and response system — across intervention zones in Mali. The study draws on SAP incident data collected between May and December 2024, complemented by key informant interviews (KIIs) with programme staff and a sensemaking session with Mercy Corps's security advisors, to analyse conflict trends, response patterns, and the system's overall effectiveness.

The report is divided into two main parts. **Part 1** explores the historical evolution of early warning and early response systems (EWERS) in the Sahel, the design and establishment of SAP under JASS, and the challenges and lessons emerging from its implementation. **Part 2** examines SAP incident data to identify key conflict dynamics, assess the effectiveness of local response actors, and draw strategic insights to inform future programming.

Together, the findings offer critical lessons for strengthening community-based conflict prevention systems and ensuring early warning mechanisms lead to timely, effective action.

Part 1: Localising Early Warning and Response: Lessons from the Sahel to the Commune

Early warning systems across West Africa, from regional mechanisms like ECOWARN[1] to national and community-based models, have demonstrated a consistent lesson: **information alone does not guarantee action**. **Transforming early alerts into effective early interventions requires trusted local actors, community ownership, and sustained political will.** Mercy Corps's Early Warning System (*Système d'Alerte Précoce*, SAP), a crucial component of JASS, builds directly on these lessons by localising conflict monitoring and response through Community Response Committees (*Comités de Résolution des Conflits*, CRCs) and community-based conflict monitors; **simplifying and contextualising incident categorisation to focus on the most relevant local threats** (community conflict, violence and armed violence, land disputes, and natural and man-made disasters); and **embedding conflict prevention within traditional governance structures** while **reinforcing inclusivity and trust-building with vulnerable groups**.

The establishment of SAP across JASS intervention zones involved mapping community structures, revitalising or setting up CRCs, training local monitors, and strengthening community forums for incident reporting, dialogue, and localised early action. Despite challenges — such as resource constraints, occasional ambiguity in actor roles, and barriers to reporting sensitive incidents — SAP has substantially

---

[1] Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN).

improved communities' ability to detect, analyse, and respond to emerging threats before they escalate into broader violence.

Part 2. From Early Warning to Early Action: Conflict Trends and Response Dynamics in JASS Zones

Analysis of SAP incident data reveals several key patterns concerning SAP's four incident categories: community conflict, land conflict, natural and man-made disasters, and violence and armed violence. **Community conflict was the most frequently reported**, often reflecting historical grievances, leadership disputes, and fierce competition over agricultural resources. **Climate shocks and social tensions were found to be closely linked**, with peaks in community conflict and disaster incidents following nearly identical seasonal patterns, suggesting that environmental stress intensifies competition over resources. In contrast, **land conflicts appeared more rooted in ownership issues and displayed different temporal dynamics**.

Significant geographic variations emerged. **Koutiala recorded the highest incident levels across all categories**, highlighting a critical need for targeted conflict prevention and disaster resilience measures. In **Niono, high levels of armed violence were reported**, but minimal reporting of other conflict types suggested altered conflict dynamics under pervasive security threats. **San exhibited particularly high levels of land conflict**, reinforcing the importance of strengthening land governance structures.

Gender and actor involvement patterns were also notable. **Women were rarely sole actors in reported incidents, while farmers, pastoralists, and traders were the most frequently involved groups**. The **primary responders to incidents were administrative authorities, community leaders, CRCs, and land commissions (*Commissions Foncières*, COFO)**, with **administrative authorities achieving the highest number of successful resolutions overall**. **Resolution rates were strongest for community conflicts (73%) and weaker for land conflicts (51%)**, reflecting the differing complexity and governance structures surrounding these disputes. **Overall, 61% of incidents were resolved**, underscoring the effectiveness of SAP's localised, community-led response model.

Strategic Implications

The SAP experience in JASS zones reaffirms the critical importance of prioritising community ownership, trusted local structures, and inclusive governance in early warning and early response systems. **Tailored programming that adapts to specific conflict and climate dynamics at the local level is essential, particularly given the regional variations identified across Koutiala, San, and Niono**. Strengthening land governance mechanisms, reinforcing disaster preparedness, and expanding security coordination — especially in highly insecure areas — are vital to sustain gains made through SAP.

Moreover, continuous investment in technical training, data refinement, and qualitative research on conflict drivers is required to enhance SAP's credibility, adaptability, and long-term impact. Ultimately, SAP's success reinforces a central lesson of conflict prevention in fragile environments: **early warning must be paired with early, effective, and community-driven action to prevent escalation and promote resilience**.

Recommendations for Strengthening SAP and Early Response under JASS

1. Improving SAP Functionality

(JASS Programme Implementation and Learning)

- **Expand technical training and operational support for CRCs and COFOs**, particularly for land dispute mediation and disaster response, to strengthen early intervention capacities.
- **Refine SAP data collection and actor and incident categorisation protocols** to enhance reporting accuracy, support more rigorous analyses, and reinforce adaptive programming.

2. Improving Early Warning Systems

(JASS Programme Implementation and Learning + FCDO and Broader Policy Stakeholders)

- **Reinforce prioritisation of community ownership and inclusion**, strengthening the participation of women, youth, and people living with disabilities in SAP structures — CRCs and beyond — to increase legitimacy and trust, without which SAP cannot function.
- **Continue to invest in targeted climate resilience programming** to address the links between environmental shocks and conflict, including support for local land governance and disaster preparedness systems and quantitative and qualitative assessments of the factors that underpin geographical and temporal variations in identified conflict patterns.

3. Improving Early Response Mechanisms

(JASS Programme Implementation and Learning + FCDO and Broader Policy Stakeholders)

- **Strengthen local referral and escalation pathways** between CRCs, administrative authorities, and national security actors to address complex cases and reinforce trust in formal conflict resolution mechanisms.
- **Deepen partnerships with security forces in high-risk areas, such as Niono**, to protect civilians, support early interventions, and better integrate security considerations into local conflict management strategies.

Key Messages

KEY MESSAGES

Information alone is insufficient for conflict prevention, **the strength of local structures and political will**

Community ownership, trust, and **inclusivity**—particularly the **participation** of women, youth, and people living with disabilities—are essential to SAP's effectiveness

Ciimate shocks and resource-based tensions are major drivers of conflict, reinforcing the need for integrated resilience and governance programming

Land conflicts, while frequent, are less violent than community conflicts, underscoring the importance of fallored **mediation** and land governance efforts

Local Conflict Resolution Committees (CRCs) are pivotal **actors** in conflict prevention but require strengthened technical **support**, operational funding, and referral pathways

Areas with higher insecurity, like Niono, require integrated approaches that combine early warning with civillan protection and strengthened state engagement

SAP has demonstrated the potential of decentrralised, community-driven early warning systems to prevent conflict escalation, but continued investment and adaptation are essential for sustaining impact

Strengthening localised early warning and early response systems offers one of the most **effective pathways** to building lasting stability in fragile Sahellian contexts

Background and Overview

Introduction

Across the Sahel, community-based conflict monitoring systems are gaining importance as governments and humanitarian actors seek to address the rising complexity of local disputes, climate shocks, and extremist violence. The limitations of national early warning and early response systems (EWERS) — often under-resourced, overly centralised, or disconnected from local realities — have highlighted the value of decentralised, community-led approaches. In Mali, the Early Warning System (*Système d'Alerte Précoce*, SAP) developed by Mercy Corps as part of the Justice and Stability in the Sahel (JASS) programme represents one such model.

This report examines SAP as a localised EWERS mechanism deployed in Mali's JASS intervention zones. Through real-time community monitoring, structured data collection, and coordinated response via Conflict Resolution Committees (*Comités de Résolution des Conflits*, CRCs), SAP aims to detect conflict risks early and respond before they escalate. By analysing SAP's functionality and performance, this report provides a window into how early warning systems can be adapted to fragile, climate-affected contexts in the Sahel.

JASS and the Theory of Change

Funded by the United Kingdom, the JASS programme promotes stability and inclusive governance in Mali and Niger, particularly in areas experiencing rising insecurity. After launching in central Mali in 2021, the programme expanded in 2023 to cover 24 communes across both countries and is scheduled to run through 2026. It is implemented by Mercy Corps in partnership with AMEDD in Mali and Cercle Dev in Niger.

JASS is built around a complexity-aware Theory of Change and three mutually reinforcing outcomes:

- **Outcome 1**: Strengthened capacity and collaboration between communities and institutions to prevent and resolve disputes over land and resources.
- **Outcome 2**: Increased resilience to climate shocks and stressors to reduce the frequency and impact of land- and resource-related conflict.
- **Outcome 3**: A strengthened evidence base to inform more effective programme design, adaptive implementation, and coordinated action by key stakeholders.

The Theory of Change holds that if conflict management institutions are inclusive, better coordinated, and supported by empowered local actors (Outcome 1), and if communities are more resilient to environmental stressors and youth have access to climate-adaptive livelihood opportunities (Outcome 2), then resource-based tensions can be mitigated before escalating. By grounding this work in rigorous, field-based evidence (Outcome 3), JASS seeks to strengthen programming and influence broader investment in land justice and conflict prevention.

SAP is central to JASS's operationalisation of these outcomes. It enables real-time monitoring of conflicts and disasters, facilitates community-led response, and contributes data to inform programmatic decision-making. As such, SAP directly supports **Outcome 3**, while also offering a mechanism to test key assumptions under **Outcomes 1 and 2**.

Objectives of this Report

This report contributes to JASS's Evidence and Learning Agenda (ELA), which aims to test critical assumptions within the Theory of Change and strengthen programme learning. Specifically, this study seeks to:

- Assess SAP's design, implementation, and performance as a localised early warning and early response mechanism;
- Identify longitudinal trends in conflict and disaster incidents across JASS intervention zones;
- Understand how different actors respond to reported incidents and with what outcomes;
- Generate evidence to inform adaptive management and the refinement of programme strategies around awareness-raising, dialogue facilitation, and monitor training;
- Explore the intersection of climate shocks and conflict dynamics and highlight opportunities for conflict-sensitive climate resilience programming.

In doing so, the report addresses key learning priorities related to conflict mediation, land and natural resource governance, and climate-sensitive livelihoods — while also incorporating cross-cutting themes of gender, inclusion, and geographic variation.

Methodology

Overall Approach

This study combines original analysis of SAP (*Système d'Alerte Précoce*) incident data with consultations with programme stakeholders and a review of internal evaluations. The approach focuses on identifying longitudinal conflict and disaster trends, understanding response dynamics, and supporting evidence-driven programme adaptation, particularly under Outcomes 1, 2, and 3 of the JASS Theory of Change.

Data Sources

The analysis draws on three core sources of evidence:

- **SAP Incident Reports:** Data collected continuously by trained conflict monitors across JASS intervention communes in Mali between May and December 2024, covering incidents of community conflict, violence and armed violence, land conflict, and natural and man-made disasters;
- **Stakeholder Consultations:** Semi-structured interviews conducted with eleven senior programme staff (seven in Mali and four in Niger) between August and December 2024, supplemented by follow-up discussions. In December 2024, a sensemaking session was held with Mercy Corps Mali's security advisors to validate emerging trends and refine interpretations.
- **Internal Programme Documents and Evaluations:** Additional contextual and analytical insights were drawn from internal assessments and previous programme evaluations related to conflict management and early warning systems.

SAP Incident Overview (May–December 2024)

Over the course of the eight-month analysis period:

- A total of **291 incidents** were recorded.
- Of these, **284 incidents (98%)** received some form of response.
- **174 incidents (61% of those responded to)** were successfully resolved.

Incidents were categorised as follows:

Category	Subcategories	Number of Incidents
Community Conflict (A1–A15)	15	130
Violence and Armed Violence (B1–B14)	14	69
Land Conflict (C1–C21)	21	58
Natural and Man-Made Disasters (D1–D8)	8	34

Community conflict emerged as the most frequently reported incident type, followed by violence and armed violence, highlighting the importance of sustained conflict management and community resilience efforts. Natural and climate-related shocks, while less frequent, caused the highest number of fatalities and material damage.

Analytical Approach

Quantitative SAP incident data were analysed using Tableau software for visualisation and longitudinal trend analysis. To ensure consistency, only incident reports collected after the recategorisation of SAP incident types in April 2024 were included. Earlier datasets were excluded due to incompatibility with the revised categorisation framework.

Triangulation was undertaken with incident data from the International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO), although differences in reporting mandates and categorisation limited direct comparability. SAP reflects community-reported incidents, while INSO primarily captures incidents affecting humanitarian access and operations.

Challenges encountered included community underreporting of sensitive incidents (such as domestic violence or radical group activity), ambiguities in categorising actors who occupy multiple roles (e.g., administrative authorities who are also CRC members), and inconsistencies in referral feedback, especially for incidents escalated to the Malian Defence and Security Forces (*Forces de Défense et de Sécurité*, FDS).

Findings are disaggregated by cercle (Banamba, Bla, Koutiala, Niono, and San), but apply only to JASS intervention communes and villages and should not be generalised to entire administrative areas.

Roadmap for this Report

The report is divided into two main parts.

Part 1 explores the broader context and operationalisation of SAP in Mali. It begins with a review of the evolution of early warning and response systems in the Sahel, situating SAP within regional trends. It then traces the development of Mercy Corps's community-based conflict prevention approaches, all forms of EWERS, culminating in the establishment of SAP under JASS. The section includes a detailed account of SAP's setup, structure, and functionality — highlighting how CRCs, community conflict monitors, and community forums work together to enable early response — and concludes with a discussion of key challenges and lessons learned.

Part 2 presents the results of a longitudinal analysis of SAP incident data from May to December 2024. It examines trends across incident types (community conflict, land disputes, disasters, and violence), disaggregated by geography, gender, and actor profile. It assesses patterns in incident response and resolution; explores implications of conflict impacts; and reflects on the operational and strategic value of SAP data for programming and policy.

Together, the two parts offer an integrated view of SAP as a model for locally grounded EWERS — highlighting both its contributions to JASS and its relevance for broader peacebuilding efforts in the Sahel.

Part 1: Localising Early Warning and Response: Lessons from the Sahel to the Commune

Part 1 traces the evolution of early warning and early response systems (EWERS) in the Sahel and examines how these mechanisms have been adapted and localised under the JASS programme in Mali, based on their use in precursor Mercy Corps programmes. It begins by situating Mercy Corps's Early Warning System (*Système d'Alerte Précoce*, SAP) within a broader regional context, exploring the ambitions and limitations of large-scale systems such as ECOWARN[2] and the role of civil society actors like WANEP[3]. It then analyses the development of SAP as a community-based model for conflict prevention and early response — rooted in traditional governance structures, responsive to local dynamics, and designed to prioritise early, community-led action.

The SAP experience affirms a critical insight: information alone is not enough. The effectiveness of early warning systems hinges on political will, the strength and legitimacy of local structures like Conflict Resolution Committees (*Comités de Résolution des Conflits*, CRCs), and communities' ability to translate alerts into timely responses. Where CRCs are trusted, inclusive, and well-supported, SAP has demonstrated real potential to prevent escalation. Yet persistent challenges — including resource constraints, capacity gaps, and competing governance structures — underscore that early warning must be continuously matched by investment in early, trusted, and collective action.

Localising EWERS like SAP offers important lessons for conflict prevention in fragile settings. However, sustaining and scaling these gains will require not only technical improvements but also deeper engagement with the political and social dynamics that determine whether early warnings are heeded — or ignored. This section explores both the progress made and the hurdles that must still be overcome to realise the full potential of community-based early warning and response in the Sahel.

From Regional Mechanisms to Local Solutions: Early Warning Systems in the Sahel

Mercy Corps's Early Warning System, *Système d'Alerte Précoce* or SAP, implemented under JASS builds on a long history of early warning and early response systems (EWERS) in the Sahel. While regional mechanisms such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) laid the initial foundations, persistent challenges — including limited national ownership, operational complexity, and weakening civil society engagement — have highlighted the need for more localised, community-driven solutions. SAP's design reflects critical lessons from these regional efforts, offering a model better suited to the realities of conflict prevention and response in fragile contexts like Mali.

---

[2] Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN).

[3] West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), a coalition of 300 civil society organisations.

Following a 1993 treaty revision and a 1999 security protocol, ECOWAS committed to creating a regional peace and security observation system.[4] This led to the establishment of ECOWARN, supported by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), a coalition of 300 civil society organisations.[5] ECOWARN was designed to collect and analyse real-time, verifiable data across West Africa, drawing from UN agencies, regional bodies, governments, NGOs, civil society, and media sources.

Grounded in a human security framework, ECOWARN monitored an extensive array of sectors — including agriculture, economy, governance, health, crime, social services, communications, natural disasters, mediation, security, culture, and vulnerable groups (such as women, children, and refugees).[6] Its computerised platform tracked **93 indicators** and produced regular situation reports intended to guide contingency planning for ECOWAS leadership.[7]

However, ECOWARN's **operational complexity** and **broad sectoral scope** ultimately became significant vulnerabilities. Rather than enabling targeted and rapid responses, the system's expansiveness often diluted focus. Additional challenges — such as competition and coordination issues with other regional initiatives like the African Union's Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) — further undermined its effectiveness.

Moreover, ECOWARN's success was critically dependent on the strength and responsiveness of local conflict management structures. Where such mechanisms were weak, early warning often failed to trigger meaningful early response.

> *'Lessons of interventions in West Africa and beyond suggest that it is often political will – and not lack of information – that determines early responses to warnings.'* — Angela Ndinga-Muvumba & Abdul Lamin, 2006

This underscores the centrality of strong, legitimate local actors — such as Conflict Resolution Committees (*Comités de Résolution des Conflits*, CRCs) — for any early warning and early response system to succeed. In response to these challenges, ECOWARN was decentralised in 2015 to foster faster, locally anchored responses.[8] Mali established the first National Early Warning Centre in Bamako in 2018, and by 2024, 11 such national centres were operational across the Sahel. These centres rely on **92 monitors** reporting on **42 event types** and **52 predefined human security indicators; Commune-level Reconciliation Committees (Comités Communaux de Réconciliation, CCRs)** are the formal, national structures tasked

---

[4] Angela Ndinga-Muvumba and Abdul Lamin, 'West Africa's Evolving Security Architecture: Looking Back to the Future', The ECOWAS Early Warning System (Centre for Conflict Resolution, 2006), chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep05185.9.pdf.

[5] Ndinga-Muvumba and Lamin.

[6] WANEP, 'Alerte Précoce et Prévention Des Conflits – WANEP-TOGO', ND, https://waneptogo.org/site/warn-warning-response-network/.

[7] Ndinga-Muvumba and Lamin, 'West Africa's Evolving Security Architecture: Looking Back to the Future'.

[8] WANEP, 'Alerte Précoce et Prévention Des Conflits – WANEP-TOGO'.

with managing and resolving, or escalating to higher levels, matters reported to them.[9] WANEP remains embedded within these wider EWERS as a key partner.

Despite decentralisation efforts, national systems continue to face significant hurdles. WANEP-Mali's website (https://wanepmali.org/), established in 2002, has been inactive since 2021, and WANEP-Niger's site (https://www.wanepniger.org/) is no longer accessible. The most recent WANEP reporting in Niger coincided with the July 2023 coup d'état, and no further systematic updates have followed. WANEP continues to analyse developments in Mali and Niger using secondary data from UNICEF, UNHCR, BBC, The Guardian, VOA, ACLED, Aid Worker Security Data (AWSD), and other media sources.[10]

It is within this context that Mercy Corps's SAP stands out. SAP draws inspiration from the original ECOWARN principles and the experience of WANEP, but intentionally addresses many of its shortcomings by:

- Narrowing the focus to conflict-specific and community-prioritised indicators;
- Promoting full community ownership from indicator definition to response actions;
- Streamlining data collection and analysis for more actionable early warning;
- **Strengthening and empowering local response structures, particularly Conflict Resolution Committees (*Comités de Résolution des Conflits*, CRCs) established as part of Mercy Corp's SAP, to ensure that early warnings lead to timely, credible, and locally owned responses.**

By leveraging local structures and knowledge, SAP reinforces resilience, trust, and adaptability — exactly where larger regional systems have faltered. As regional mechanisms weaken, the importance of localised early warning and early response systems like SAP becomes ever more apparent, offering a scalable model for conflict prevention and resilience-building in fragile environments.

The Evolution of Mercy Corps's SAP: A Community-Based Model for Conflict Prevention and Early Response in Mali

The prevention and management of local conflicts, alongside the strengthening of social cohesion, have been central to many Mercy Corps programmes in Mali. These efforts often incorporated an early warning and early response (EWER) component, such as the SAP. Unlike ECOWARN, SAP is not based on a broad human security framework. Instead, it is a **community-driven, locally owned system** that focuses on a narrower set of incident categories:[11]

- Inter- and intra-community conflicts;
- Violence and armed violence;
- Land disputes;

---

[9] ReliefWeb, 'ECOWAS Early Warning Directorate Exchange and Assessment Mission to Liberia National Early Warning Center - Liberia', 26 July 2024, https://reliefweb.int/report/liberia/ecowas-early-warning-directorate-exchange-and-assessment-mission-liberia-national-early-warning-center.

[10] WANEP, 'West Africa Early Warning Outlook 2024' (WANEP, February 2024), chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://wanep.org/wanep/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/WANEP-Annual-Peace-and-Security-Outlook-2024.pdf.

[11] JASS Staff 2, KII EWERS Koutiala, 4 September 2024, 2.

- Natural and man-made disasters.

Crucially, SAP was designed as an **endogenous mechanism**, with communities themselves defining the indicators to be monitored. This facilitates not only **relevance** but also **ownership** of local responses. SAP's simplified structure, tailored to local needs, enhances its implementation while still addressing the complex realities of security.

Mercy Corps's SAP builds on the understanding that Malian communities have historically relied on **customary governance structures, cultural values, and foundational myths** to manage conflict. Traditional mechanisms — including customary tribunals, village chiefs' councils (*Chefferie du village*), family councils, land committees, and religious leaders or *cadis* — played critical roles in maintaining stability. *Cadis*, serving as religious judges and mediators, hold particular influence given the predominance of Islam in Mali and the broader Sahel.

Regardless of the form these mechanisms take, trust between these bodies and the community is essential for their legitimacy and effectiveness.[12]

However, over a decade of overlapping crises — spanning security, governance, climate, health, and economic challenges — has severely weakened these systems. Insecurity and conflict have eroded community trust, making access to reliable, timely information increasingly difficult and hindering conflict resolution efforts.

Revitalising traditional conflict management structures and integrating them into effective early warning systems is now vital. Poor road conditions, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and armed attacks often delay security forces' responses by half a day or more, making community-based rapid response mechanisms essential to prevent escalation.[13]

Yet, even globally, conflict EWERS often struggle to trigger timely responses due to resource constraints — a challenge that has also impacted Mercy Corps's SAP initiatives in the past and remains a priority for continuous improvement.

Special Features of SAP

Despite these challenges, SAP has demonstrated strong potential to **strengthen local actors and build community resilience** to conflict.[14] Key features include:

- A dedicated mechanism for preventing tensions and violence and strengthening social cohesion;
- Full community ownership — from defining indicators to developing responses;
- Local monitors and analysts selected by the communities themselves, respecting cultural norms around internal information sharing;
- Conflict responses anchored in endogenous conflict resolution practices.

---

[12] 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali BRiKS Document B', January 2023.

[13] Fété Impact Cabinet de Conseil et de Formation, 'Evaluation Qualitative et Apprentissage Du Projet "Building Resilience in Kayes and Sikasso (BRiKS)" Ou "Ben Ni Bassigui"' (Bamako: Mercy Corps, March 2023).

[14] 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali BRiKS Document B'; 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali JASS Document C', November 2023.

Evolution Across Mercy Corps Programmes

Mercy Corps has applied and refined SAP through multiple programmes across Mali:

- **Advancing Reconciliation and Promoting Peace (ARPP) (2016–18)**: Launched early warning efforts through a people-to-people approach in Gao, Timbuktu, and Menaka, uniting diverse ethnolinguistic groups.

- **Lafia (2019–20)**: Increased resilience to conflict and violent extremism in southern Mali.[15]

- **Position Refine and Operate for Peace (PROP) (2019–20)**: Developed an EWER system that significantly strengthened Niono's resilience to conflict;[16] inspired efforts to integrate climate indicators, meteorological data, and traditional weather forecasting into SAP (though regional integration workshops were never realised).[17]

- **PASERREL (2019–24)**: Transitioned from rapid response mechanisms to conflict management and social cohesion,[18] incorporating conflict prevention training and strengthening SAP through PASERREL II and III.[19]

- **Ben ni Baara (BnB) (2020–24)**: Leveraged Conflict Resolution Committees (CRCs) to promote social cohesion and conflict resolution.[20]

- **Building Resilience in Kayes and Sikasso (BRiKS) (2021–23)**: Established early warning systems (EWS) including CRCs, enabling local stakeholders to contain conflicts before they escalated into violence.[21]

Addressing Key Conflict Prevention Challenges

Across these programmes, SAP has helped address persistent challenges:

- Lack of reliable, timely information on conflict incidents;
- Low stakeholder legitimacy and representativeness, fuelling mistrust;
- Limited stakeholder understanding of modern conflict dynamics.

To overcome these barriers, interventions included:

- Conflict management training for stakeholders;
- SAP implementation to provide real-time conflict alerts;
- Revitalisation and creation of CRCs (where CCRs are defunct) to anchor local resolution efforts.

Demonstrated Impact

---

[15] Mercy Corps Mali, 'LAFIA, l'atout Par Excellence Face Aux Conflits Dans Le Sud Du Mali', Mercy Corps, 2025, https://mali.mercycorps.org/fr/research-resources/lafia-excellence-conflict-southern-mali.

[16] Mercy Corps Mali, 'Résultats Du Programme "Position Refine and Operate for Peace in Mali" (PROP)', Mercy Corps, 2025, https://mali.mercycorps.org/fr/blog/position-refine-and-operate-for-peace.

[17] JASS Staff 3, KII EWERS Ségou, 4 October 2024, 3.

[18] 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali PASERREL Document E', 2019.

[19] 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali PASERREL II Document D', September 2021.

[20] Mercy Corps, 'Building Evidence for CLimate Adaptation and Peacebuilding: Insights from Mali' (Mercy Corps, January 2025).

[21] 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali BRiKS Document B'.

SAP's evolution demonstrates significant impacts in JASS and broader Mercy Corps programming, notably:

- Preventing community violence and reducing tensions;
- Enhancing women's participation in local governance;
- Building trust in governance structures through transparent, fair processes;
- Facilitating inclusive dialogue between historically disconnected groups;
- Encouraging community-driven problem-solving over reliance on formal court systems;
- Systematically circulating information on emerging tensions, fostering an early warning culture within communities.

Positioned as a foundation for broader peacebuilding efforts, SAP was identified early on as a critical tool for the JASS programme. As one Mercy Corps team member reflected:

> *'Amongst the first of JASS activities, for peacebuilding, was imperatively to put in place SAP.'*
> — KII EWERS Ségou, 4 October 2024

Its success in Mali highlights the potential of community-driven, locally owned early warning and early response systems as scalable models for conflict prevention and resilience-building in fragile contexts.

Setting Up SAP

To revitalise or establish SAP in JASS intervention areas, programme field teams follow a **community-driven process** that leverages existing local structures and knowledge while promoting inclusion, participation, and full community ownership.

The process begins with a field assessment, during which teams engage communities to understand local contexts and identify key actors and existing community-based conflict resolution mechanisms.[22] This often includes a series of community forums or workshops attended by the mayor, village chiefs, religious leaders, land commission (*Commission Foncière*, COFO) representatives, and youth and women's representatives from across all social strata.

Communities commonly cite a variety of conflict management mechanisms already in use, including:

- **Radio broadcasts;**
- **Complaint boxes;**
- **Self-defence groups** that support local police;

---

[22] 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali BRiKS Document B'; 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali JASS Document C'.

- **WhatsApp groups** (though these are underutilized in areas with poor network coverage);
- **Watch Committees**, composed of farmers, pastoralists, religious leaders, traditional chiefs, civil society, and local elected representatives to manage crises (e.g., food insecurity, drought, epidemics, or armed incursions);
- *Comités Communaux de Réconciliation* **(CCRs)**, Commune-level Reconciliation Committees that are part of Mali's national EWERS, founded in ECOWARN.

> *'We built on existing community conflict resolution mechanisms and CCRs to ensure the inclusion of marginalized groups, embedding inclusivity from the start.'*
> — KII EWERS Koutiala, 4 September 2024

Particular attention is paid to the role of CCRs. **While CCRs closely resemble Mercy Corps SAP's CRCs in structure and function, only CCRs are formal state structures integrated into Mali's national EWERS.** In some JASS communes, CCRs already existed but were inactive and required revitalisation — as was the case in Bla cercle. In other intervention areas, JASS supported the establishment of new CRCs, with the long-term objective of formalising them as CCRs through a process of verification against national guidelines and criteria.

Revitalising or establishing these committees is essential: **without trusted, capable local actors, early warning cannot lead to effective early response.** By embedding inclusivity, local ownership, and local government linkages into SAP structures from the outset, JASS strengthens both community resilience and fosters alignment with national systems.

Establishing the CRC

Once community structures are mapped and forums held, the programme moves to the formal establishment of a CRC at the commune level, **where a state CCR does not exist or cannot be revitalised**.

Typically, the mayor serves as president of the CRC, with additional members drawn from a broad cross-section of the community. These commonly include:

- Village chiefs;
- Land commission (*Commission Foncière*, COFO) representatives;
- Internally displaced persons (IDPs);
- Religious leaders;
- People living with disabilities (PLWD);

- Women and youth representatives;
- Members of the **Network of Traditional Communicators for Development (*Réseau des Communicateurs Traditionnels pour le Développement*, RECOTRADE)**.[23]

RECOTRADE brings together griots, **traditional communicators and custodians of oral history**. Griots play a significant role in raising awareness within communities, promoting messages of peace, national unity, and social inclusion across social status, ethnolinguistic identity, sex, age, race, and political affiliation. **Their advocacy for a shared Malian identity positions them as key actors in peacebuilding and the fight against violent extremism.**

Challenges in Ensuring Representation and Inclusivity

Despite efforts to ensure broad-based representation, several challenges arise depending on the size and composition of communes. As one Mercy Corps team member noted:

> *'Some communes have many villages, making full representation difficult. If a commune has 25 villages, each must be represented by its village chief and customary leaders, limiting space for women and other social groups. But in communes with only three villages, inclusivity is easier. As a result, CRCs vary widely in size and composition.'*
>
> — KII EWERS Ségou, 4 October 2024

CRC membership is capped at 30 individuals, with at least one representative from each village within a commune. Composition aims to ensure diversity in sex, ethnolinguistic group membership, age, and disability status. However, in larger communes, mandatory representation by village chiefs often limits space for women, youth, and other marginalised groups. Consequently, the size and inclusivity of CRCs can vary significantly across intervention zones.

Validating the CRC and Selecting Community Conflict Monitors

Once the proposed list of CRC members is ratified by the community, the mayor formalises the committee at commune-level through an official signature. CRC members then select three community conflict monitors per commune — typically two men and one woman — based on the following criteria:

- **Permanent residence within the community;**
- **Strong local networks to ensure communication reach;**

---

[23] JASS Staff 2, KII EWERS Koutiala, 2; JASS Staff 3, KII EWERS Ségou, 3.

- **Literacy to report incidents via smartphone**[24]

Where needed, monitors receive support from Mercy Corps programme assistants. This support may include assistance with triangulating incident data, accurately completing written reports, or submitting reports to **SAP** or to Mercy Corps field teams for entry into the SAP database.

Capacity-building and Incident Reporting

After CRCs are formalised, members and monitors participate in capacity-building workshops covering:

- Incident reporting;
- Information verification and triangulation;
- Conflict prevention and mediation techniques.

They are also equipped with essential materials, equipment, and technical and financial support to enable effective monitoring and response.[25]

Incident Reporting and Response

Monitors record incidents daily and submit reports via phone calls, text messages, or hard copy (as piloted under BRiKS Fété). Urgent alerts follow the same channels. All alerts are triangulated through multiple sources before escalation to conflict resolution actors and bodies.

The CRC plays a central role in response, relaying verified incidents to decentralized state technical services and Mercy Corps analysts when necessary. Response efforts follow a tiered system:

1. **Village councils** address local disputes, escalating only unresolved cases;
2. **Commune-level CRCs** intervene in more complex disputes;
3. **Higher-level authorities** respond to severe or large-scale incidents.

Reporting Systems: ODK and CommCare

Incident data was initially captured using ODK (Open Data Kit) and updated monthly.[26] More recently, data has been managed through CommCare dashboards. However, the transition to CommCare has introduced new challenges, as one programme coordinator explained:

---

[24] 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali JASS Document C'.

[25] 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali JASS Document C'.

[26] JASS Staff 2, KII EWERS Koutiala, 2.

> *'There are issues with the switch to CommCare. With ODK, we could go directly to monitors and clarify inconsistencies if the categorisation of the event did not match its narration. CommCare, on the other hand, forces rigid categorisation and is not easy to amend. We now have to first send back the report to SAP, revise, verify, then send it to MEL for amendment and analysis in CommCare.'*
>
> — KII EWERS Koutiala, 4 September 2024

Limitations of CommCare include:[27]

- Restriction to monthly data extraction;
- Difficulty amending incident categorisation;
- Limited disaggregation of incident details, reducing analytical depth.

Efforts are ongoing to strengthen data quality and ensure SAP reporting remains timely, accurate, and actionable.

Community Awareness and Follow-up

Raising community awareness is critical for SAP's success. Educational materials explain SAP's purpose, stress confidentiality, and encourage incident reporting without fear.[28]

Regular follow-ups and continuous data collection assess incident trends and the effectiveness of community responses. To further strengthen SAP, more attention is needed to measure:

- How quickly information is received and verified;
- Who acts on it;
- What responses are triggered and how effective they are.

Some of these questions are addressed in Part 2 of this report, through SAP data analyses.

Community Forums and CRC Engagement

---

[27] JASS Staff 3, KII EWERS Ségou, 3.

[28] 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali JASS Document C'; Fété Impact Cabinet de Conseil et de Formation, 'Evaluation Qualitative et Apprentissage Du Projet "Building Resilience in Kayes and Sikasso (BRiKS)" Ou "Ben Ni Bassigui"'.

Due to resource constraints, CRCs often meet on an as-needed basis rather than monthly. Distance, travel costs, and limited funding are key barriers. To adapt, bi-monthly community forums serve a dual function: maintaining CRC operations and strengthening community engagement.

In community forums, CRCs:

- Share monthly incident reports via CommCare dashboards;

- Clarify and update incident records;

- Discuss resolutions and incident status updates;

- Gather community feedback to improve SAP processes.

While participation varies, forums remain a critical tool for transparency, trust-building, and adapting SAP based on community needs. They also help identify priorities for microprojects addressing challenges surfaced through SAP reporting – part of their original function.

Summary of Key Challenges

While SAP has significantly strengthened local conflict prevention and early response capacities, building and sustaining a community-driven early warning system in fragile contexts like Mali inevitably presents complex challenges. These challenges span both the **collection and analysis of information (Early Warning)** and the **triggering and implementation of effective responses (Early Response)**. Understanding these obstacles — and adapting systems to overcome them — remains central to SAP's continuous improvement.

Early Warning Challenges: Gathering, Verifying, and Analysing Information

Technical and Operational Challenges

- **Confidentiality concerns in reporting sensitive incidents:** Secure protocols are needed to safeguard information about radical groups, preventing leaks and ensuring monitor safety.[29]

- **Public reluctance to report sensitive issues:** Domestic violence, family conflicts, and chieftaincy disputes are often underreported due to stigma, fear, or distrust in formal mechanisms.[30]

- **False alarms and misinformation:** Some alerts are exaggerated or unverified, highlighting the need for stronger verification protocols before escalation.[31]

- **Network issues and communication delays:** Poor connectivity hinders the timely transmission of incident reports, affecting the responsiveness of SAP mechanisms.[32]

- **Monitors' literacy and technical capacity gaps:** Difficulties in reading, writing, and using digital reporting tools lead to incomplete or low-quality incident data. Many issues only surface during monthly data downloads, limiting opportunities for real-time correction.[33]

---

[29] 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali JASS Document C'.

[30] Fété Impact Cabinet de Conseil et de Formation, 'Evaluation Qualitative et Apprentissage Du Projet "Building Resilience in Kayes and Sikasso (BRiKS)" Ou "Ben Ni Bassigui"'.

[31] Fété Impact Cabinet de Conseil et de Formation.

[32] Fété Impact Cabinet de Conseil et de Formation.

[33] JASS Staff 3, KII EWERS Ségou.

- **Inflexibility in CommCare data management:** The switch from ODK to CommCare has complicated data verification and categorisation, requiring additional steps before analysis.[34]
- **Low community awareness and trust in SAP:** Limited knowledge of SAP's purpose weakens community engagement and incident reporting rates.[35]

Community Confidence and Trust

- **Competition with alternative justice systems:** In areas with weak state presence, communities increasingly turn to swift justice systems established by radical armed groups, particularly *Shari'a* courts.[36]
- **Perceived corruption in state administration:** Distrust of state structures drives communities toward non-state actors, further complicating trust-building efforts for SAP.[37]

Capacity and Resource Limitations

- **Limited training for monitors:** Infrequent and insufficient training reduces monitors' ability to accurately collect and verify incident data.[38]
- **Limited opportunities for experience-sharing:** Infrequent SAP forums limit cross-community learning and the improvement of incident verification and reporting practices.[39]

Early Response Challenges: Triggering and Implementing Effective Actions

Operational and Financial Challenges

- **Inclusivity constraints in CRC composition:** In large communes, the 30-member cap often limits space for women, youth, and other marginalised groups, affecting the inclusiveness of conflict response mechanisms.
- **Lack of structured meeting spaces and resources:** Many CRCs lack regular meeting venues and financial means to conduct activities, affecting continuity and coordination.
- **Financial constraints on CRC operations:** Late payments for communication and travel expenses limit CRCs' ability to respond rapidly to emerging conflicts.[40]
- **Lack of funding for conflict resolution missions:** Without dedicated resources, CRC members and village mediators are unable to travel to affected areas, delaying conflict resolution efforts.[41]
- **Distance and logistical barriers:** Geographic dispersion and poor transport infrastructure make regular CRC meetings and conflict mediation missions difficult.

Political and Social Challenges

---

[34] JASS Staff 3.

[35] 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali JASS Document C'.

[36] JASS Staff 5, KII EWERS Bamako, 10 September 2024.

[37] JASS Staff 5.

[38] Fété Impact Cabinet de Conseil et de Formation, 'Evaluation Qualitative et Apprentissage Du Projet "Building Resilience in Kayes and Sikasso (BRiKS)" Ou "Ben Ni Bassigui"'.

[39] Fété Impact Cabinet de Conseil et de Formation.

[40] Fété Impact Cabinet de Conseil et de Formation.

[41] JASS Staff 3, KII EWERS Ségou.

- **Weak referral mechanisms for complex cases:** Some conflicts — particularly chieftaincy disputes, intercommunal tensions, and major land conflicts — exceed CRC capacity and require clearer protocols for escalation to state authorities or specialised actors.[42]

- **Conflicts of interest within local governance structures:** In some instances, CRC or COFO members are directly implicated in disputes they are tasked to mediate, undermining neutrality and legitimacy.[43]

- **Political will and social bias:** Even when early warnings are received, responses can be delayed or blocked by political interests, social hierarchies, or fear of backlash, particularly in sensitive disputes.

- **Interconnected conflict dynamics across borders:** Cross-border activities of armed groups and their influence on governance structures complicate local conflict dynamics and response efforts.[44]

Implications and Way Forward

The challenges identified highlight critical areas for improvement to strengthen both the early warning and early response components of SAP. Strategic actions are needed across two dimensions:

Strengthening Early Warning: Data Collection, Analysis, and Trust-building

- **Refine reporting protocols** to ensure greater confidentiality, accuracy, and verification of incident data, especially for sensitive information related to armed groups and emerging social tensions.

- **Enhance training and technical support for monitors** to improve data collection, digital reporting, and timely triangulation of information.

- **Expand community awareness campaigns** to reinforce trust in SAP mechanisms, increase incident reporting, and counter reliance on non-state justice systems.

- **Strengthen verification mechanisms** to reduce false alarms and misinformation and improve the reliability of incident data feeding into early warning analyses.

Strengthening Early Response: Conflict Mediation, Coordination, and Escalation

- **Increase financial and logistical support to CRCs** to enable timely mediation missions, regular meetings, and rapid community-based responses to emerging conflicts.

- **Improve integration of SAP with official referral pathways**, ensuring that complex or politically sensitive cases are appropriately escalated to state authorities or specialised actors without losing local ownership of conflict resolution processes.

- **Develop protocols to manage conflicts of interest** within CRCs and COFOs, reinforcing neutrality and credibility in mediation efforts.

---

[42] 'Internal Mercy Corps Mali JASS Document C'.

[43] JASS Staff 3, KII EWERS Ségou, 3.

[44] JASS Staff 5, KII EWERS Bamako, 5.

- **Promote opportunities for experience-sharing among CRCs and communities** to reinforce learning, best practices, and adaptive approaches to conflict prevention.

By addressing these operational, structural, and trust-related challenges, SAP can continue to evolve as a scalable, community-based model for early warning and early response — enhancing resilience and preventing conflict escalation across fragile settings.

Building on the operational lessons and strategic shifts explored in **Part 1**, the **next section moves from systems to evidence**. **Part 2 analyses SAP incident data** collected between May and December 2024, identifying trends in conflict and disaster dynamics, response patterns, and community resilience. These insights offer a deeper understanding of how early warning systems function in practice — and where further adaptation and investment are needed to strengthen early, effective action in fragile contexts.

Part 2. From Early Warning to Early Action: Conflict Trends and Response Dynamics in JASS Zones

Building on the broader context and operational foundation presented in Part 1, this section examines the evidence generated through SAP incident monitoring between May and December 2024. It analyses patterns of conflict and disaster incidents across JASS intervention zones; the actors involved; the effectiveness of community and institutional responses; and the human and material impacts of reported incidents.

Over the course of those eight months, **291 incidents** were recorded across JASS intervention zones. Of these, **284 incidents (98%)** were responded to, and **174 incidents (61% of those responded to)** were successfully resolved. These figures reflect both the responsiveness of local actors and the early achievements of SAP in strengthening conflict management systems at the community level.

The data reveal important trends in the types, timing, and geography of incidents, underscoring the intersection between climate shocks, resource-based tensions, and broader security dynamics. Patterns of actor involvement and response outcomes shed light on the operational strengths of SAP, while also highlighting where early warning does — and does not — translate into early, effective action.

While the findings demonstrate the value of community-led early warning systems in detecting emerging risks and facilitating local responses, they also point to persistent challenges: the differential capacity of Conflict Resolution Committees (*Comités de Résolution des Conflits*, CRCs) across cercles, the influence of broader insecurity on reporting behaviours, and the structural barriers that sometimes limit conflict resolution outcomes.

Understanding these dynamics is critical not only for strengthening SAP within JASS but also for informing broader efforts to localise conflict prevention in fragile environments. **Part 2** thus moves from documenting **how SAP operates** to examining **what the data tell us**—offering actionable insights for programme adaptation, policy development, and investment in community-based resilience.

2.1. Overview of Conflict Incident Types

Community Conflict and Violence and Armed Violence

SAP incident data are categorised into four major groups (see Appendix B for details):

- **Category A:** Community Conflict
- **Category B:** Violence and Armed Violence
- **Category C:** Land Conflict
- **Category D:** Natural and Man-Made Disasters.

This section focuses on Category A and Category B incidents, which represent a significant share of overall reports. The figures below present the frequency of different types of community conflict (Category A, left panel) and violence and armed violence (Category B, right panel). The x-axis identifies the subcategories of

incidents (A1–A14 for Community Conflict; B1–B14 for Violence and Armed Violence), following the SAP categorisation scheme detailed in Appendix B. Subcategories are further explained in the analysis below when referenced.

It is important to note that **land conflicts — although often closely related to community disputes — are classified separately under Category C** and are analysed in a subsequent section.
Similarly, **natural and man-made disasters** are classified under **Category D**.

**Community Conflict
Incident Category (A)**
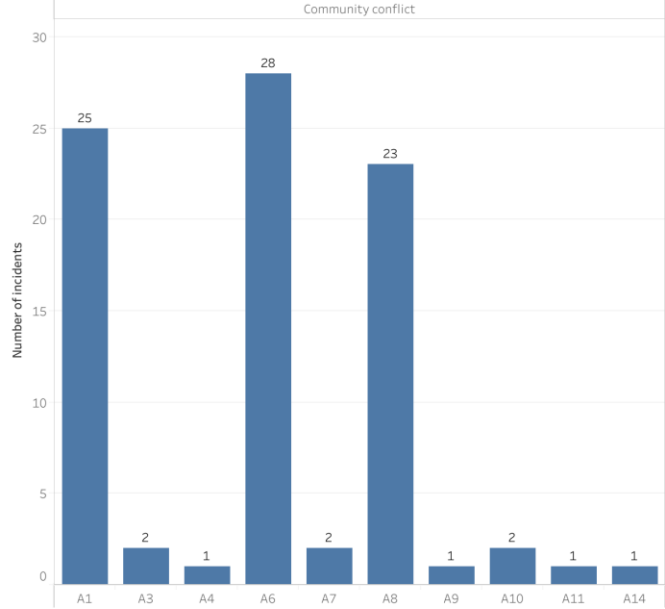
**Violence, and Armed Violence
 Incident Category (B)**
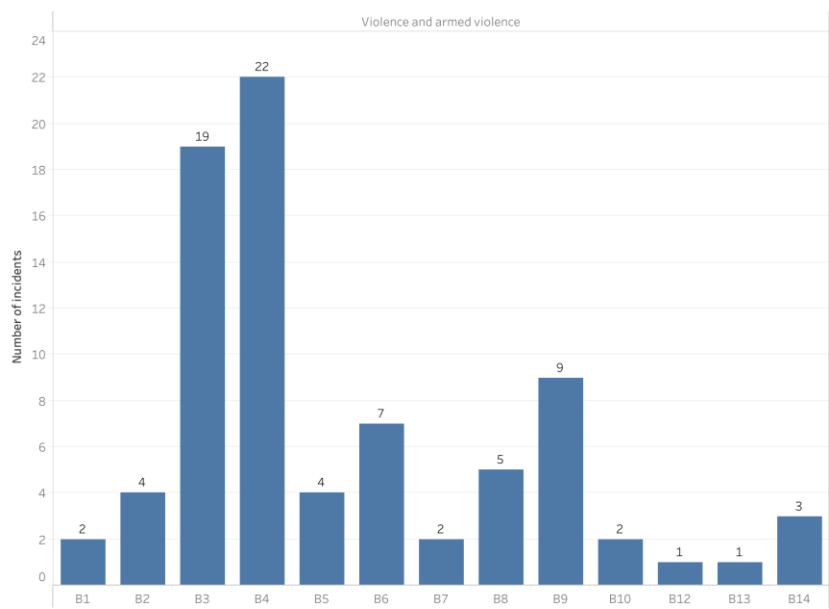
Community Conflict Trends

Community conflict incidents varied significantly over the eight-month reporting period. The three most frequently reported conflict types were:

1. **Latent interpersonal confrontations (A6)** – 28 cases. These incidents reflect the resurfacing of long-term disputes and/or historical grievances.
2. **Chieftaincy disputes and contests over customary or religious authority (A1)** – 25 cases.
3. **Seizure, theft, or destruction of agricultural products, livestock, or fisheries (A8)** – 23 cases.

Other types of community conflict were rare, occurring only once or twice during the reporting period. These findings highlight key programmatic priorities for JASS:

- **Strengthen approaches to historical grievance mediation:** The frequency of latent interpersonal conflicts underscores the need for continued focus on social cohesion building, non-violent conflict prevention, and reinforcing both customary and formal conflict resolution mechanisms.
- **Develop alternative dispute resolution pathways for chieftaincy conflicts:** Given that CRC members are sometimes implicated in these disputes, neutral mechanisms must be promoted to avoid conflicts of interest and maintain community trust.

- **Reinforce SAP confidentiality and trust-building initiatives:** The active reporting of sensitive disputes indicates that awareness campaigns have been effective and should be sustained and expanded.
- **Enhance local security measures:** The prevalence of theft-related incidents suggests a need to support communities in strengthening basic security initiatives, such as neighbourhood patrols or community watch systems.

Together, these trends reinforce the importance of a dual strategy in JASS programming: addressing long-standing social tensions through dialogue and mediation, while simultaneously strengthening community-level mechanisms for trust-building and basic security.

Violence and Armed Violence Trends

Among **violence and armed violence incidents (Category B, right panel)**, the most frequently reported types were:

1. **Assaults or threats involving firearms or bladed weapons (B4)** – 22 cases.
2. **Robberies or stabbings with firearms or bladed weapons (B3)** – 19 cases.

Given their severity, such incidents are escalated directly to the state defence and security forces (FDS) for response.

Other types of violent incidents were less common, with most categories recorded nine times or fewer over the eight-month period. The least frequently reported incidents were:

- **Interpersonal and professional defamation (B12)** – 1 case.
- **Destruction of community property, religious, or cultural sites (B13)** – 1 case.

The low occurrence of these categories suggests either the effectiveness of SAP interventions in mitigating certain types of violence within JASS intervention zones, or a relative absence of such incidents during the reporting period.

These findings highlight the critical role of SAP in early detection and escalation of violent incidents, while also suggesting that sustained community engagement and coordination with state security actors remain essential for maintaining stability in JASS intervention zones.

Land Conflict and Natural and Man-made Disasters

The left panel of the figure presents the prevalence of land conflicts (Category C) reported in JASS intervention zones between May and December 2024, while the right panel illustrates incidents of natural and man-made disasters (Category D) recorded during the same period. The x-axis identifies the subcategories of these incidents (C1–C18 for land conflict and D1–D8 for natural and man-made disasters). Full definitions of these subcategories are provided in Appendix B, along with the categorisation schemes for the other incident types.

Land Conflict Incident Category (C)

Land conflict — Number of incidents by category: C1 = 23, C2 = 10, C3 = 3, C4 = 3, C5 = 1, C6 = 2, C7 = 5, C8 = 1, C11 = 6, C14 = 1, C17 = 1, C18 = 5

Natural and Man-made Disasters Category (D)

Natural and man-made disasters — Number of incidents by category: D1 = 37, D2 = 16, D3 = 2, D4 = 2, D5 = 7, D6 = 4, D7 = 5, D8 = 5
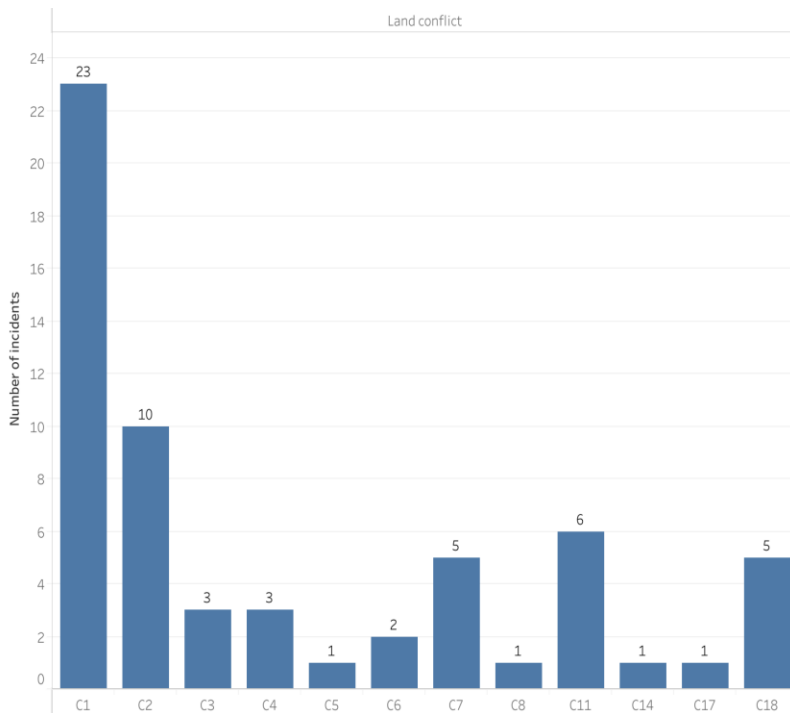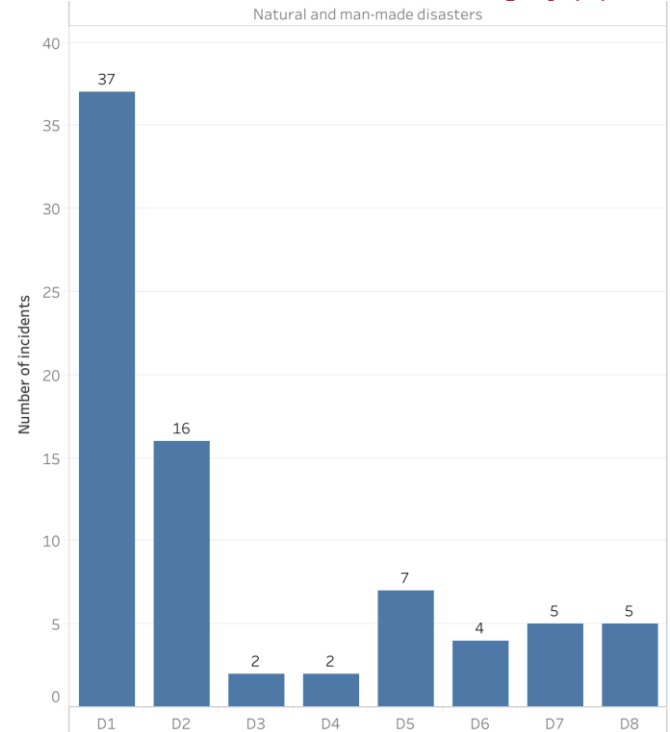
Land Conflict Trends

The analysis below examines the most frequently reported types of land conflicts and disaster incidents, highlighting key implications for conflict prevention, land management, and community resilience efforts within JASS intervention zones. The most frequent types of land disputes reported over the eight-month period were:

1. **Border conflicts between neighbours (C1)** – 23 cases.
2. **Ownership disputes due to inheritance (C2)** – 10 cases.
3. **Border conflicts between ethnic groups or villages (C7)** – 5 cases.
4. **Land use conflicts between farmers and livestock breeders (C11)** – 5 cases.
5. **Disputes over public vs. private land use due to disregard for land regulations (C18)** – 5 cases.

The first two types of land disputes — conflicts between neighbours and inheritance-related ownership disputes — are often linked to latent interpersonal grievances, which also emerged as the most common form of community conflict in the SAP data.

To address these challenges, JASS programming actively supports:

- **Community-led delineation of land boundaries** and the publicization of transhumance routes;
- **Training and awareness-raising initiatives** on land legislation and regulatory frameworks.

Addressing land-related grievances through community-driven mechanisms remains critical for preventing conflict escalation, strengthening local governance, and fostering long-term stability in JASS intervention zones.

Natural and Man-Made Disaster Trends

The **right panel of the figure** shows that the most frequently reported **natural and man-made disasters** were:

1. **Large-scale flooding (D1)** – 37 cases.
2. **Flooding with loss of life and major material damage (D2)** – 16 cases.
3. **Locust invasions (D3) and avian invasions (D4)** – 2 cases each.

Flooding presents a **significant** challenge across JASS intervention zones, reinforcing the need to:

- **Support land restoration initiatives** to improve the absorption capacity of the soil;
- **Increase community resilience** through **better storage of agricultural products and food stocks;**
- **Strengthen physical barriers** to protect structures and redirect floodwaters

While **locust and avian invasions** are **less frequent**, their impact on **crops and livelihoods is severe**. To address these threats, JASS should:

- **Expand rapid response funding for pest infestations;**
- **Replicate successful intervention models**, such as the September 2024 response in Bla, where collaboration with the Regional Plant Protection Service (*Service Régional de Protection des Végétaux,* SRPV) equipped and trained 25 plant protection brigade members, saving up to 70% of the area's harvest. By addressing climate-related disasters and threats to food security, these interventions directly contribute to JASS's broader goals of maintaining social stability and preventing resource-based conflicts.

Addressing climate-related disasters and threats to food security is essential for strengthening resilience, preventing resource-based conflicts, and contributing to JASS's broader goals of promoting social stability and inclusive economic recovery.

Understanding the distribution and impacts of these incidents across different geographic areas and social groups is critical for refining targeted interventions and ensuring inclusive resilience-building efforts.

2.2 Disaggregating SAP Incident Data: Geographic and Gender Analysis

The figure below presents SAP incident data disaggregated by **cercle** and by the **gender of actors involved** in incidents reported across JASS intervention areas between May and December 2024.
It highlights both **geographic variations** in incident frequency and **gender dynamics** across four main conflict categories:

- Community conflict (Category A);
- Land conflict (Category B);
- Natural and man-made disasters (Category C);
- Violence and armed violence (Category D).

The analysis below examines key geographic hotspots, patterns of gendered involvement in different conflict types, and implications for tailoring conflict prevention and resilience-building strategies across JASS intervention zones.
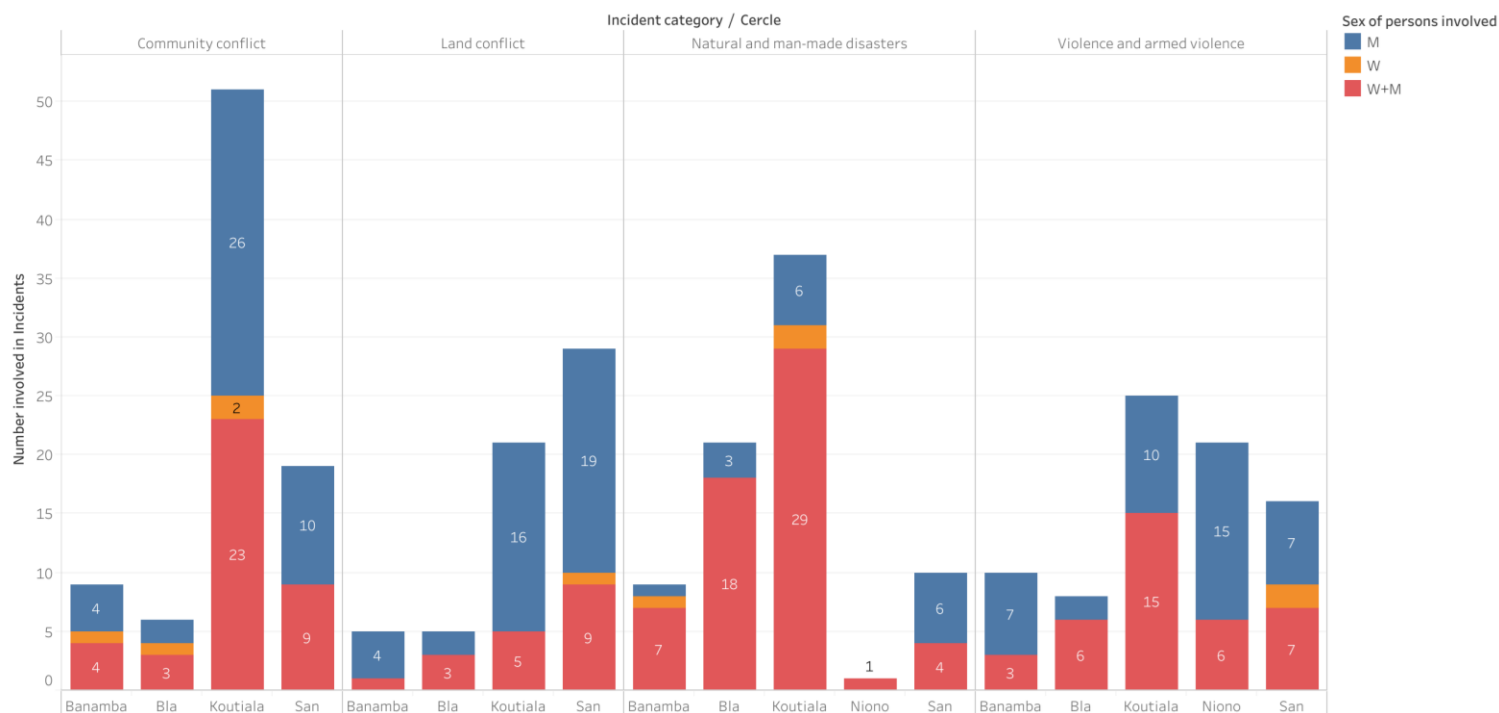
Geographic Trends in Incident Categories

Incident reports varied significantly across the five cercles:

- **Community conflict** was most frequently reported in **Koutiala (51 incidents)** and **San (19 incidents)**.
- **Land conflict** was highest in **San (29 incidents)** and **Koutiala (21 incidents)**.
- **Natural and man-made disasters** were most reported in **Koutiala (37 incidents)** and **Bla (21 incidents)**.
- **Violence and armed violence** occurred most often in **Koutiala (25 incidents)** and **Niono (21 incidents)**.

Koutiala recorded the highest number of incidents across almost all conflict categories, except for land conflicts, which were more prevalent in San. This pattern highlights the complex relationship between climate pressures and conflict dynamics.

At the same time, Bla — which reported the second-highest number of natural and man-made disasters after Koutiala — had the **lowest** incidence of community conflict, land conflict, and violence among the five cercles. Similarly, Banamba consistently recorded the lowest or second-lowest number of incidents across all conflict categories.

These variations again underscore the complexity of the climate–conflict nexus and point to the need for further qualitative research into differences between cercles that could serve as explanatory factors, such as variations in governance structures, social cohesion, or resilience capacities.

In contrast, Niono displayed a distinct conflict profile: no land or community conflicts were reported during the eight-month period, and only one natural or man-made disaster was recorded — yet it had the second-highest number of violence and armed violence incidents. This pattern likely reflects Niono's greater exposure to attacks by extremist groups and banditry compared to the other cercles, suggesting a different set of conflict drivers linked to broader regional insecurity. Drawing on the analysis of Conflict Incident Types above, these incidents overwhelmingly involve firearms or bladed weapons and comprise assaults or threats (B4, 24 cases) or robberies or stabbings (B3, 19 cases).

These geographic patterns highlight the importance of context-specific analysis and programming, as different conflict drivers and vulnerabilities shape the security landscape across JASS intervention zones. While disaggregated incident data provides valuable insights into where conflicts and disasters are occurring, a fuller understanding of *why* certain cercles are more conflict-prone than others remains critical for informing targeted interventions.

Further analyses of underlying conflict drivers — including environmental pressures, institutional capacity, governance dynamics, and social cohesion factors — would strengthen programme design and allow for more tailored resilience-building strategies. Where possible, future SAP monitoring and complementary qualitative studies should aim to explore these dimensions in greater depth.

Programmatic Priorities Based on Geographic Trends

These findings suggest key programmatic priorities for targeted intervention across JASS zones:

- **Koutiala:** Expand training in conflict mediation and disaster mitigation across all incident categories, given consistently high levels of conflict and disaster reporting.

- **San:** Prioritise community and land conflict mediation efforts, as these were the most frequently reported issues.

- **Niono:** Reinforce security efforts in collaboration with the Malian Defence and Security Forces (*Forces de Défense et de Sécurité,* FDS) and local communities. While no community or land conflicts were reported and only one disaster recorded, high levels of violence and armed violence — combined with broader insecurity — suggest likely underreporting of other types of incidents.

- **Bla and Koutiala:** Strengthen disaster preparedness through training and improvements to physical infrastructure aimed at protecting structures and redirecting floodwaters, following the severe flooding impacts reported since July 2024.

- **Banamba:** Continue monitoring stability and SAP performance. Low reported incident levels across all categories may reflect relative resilience or the effective functioning of SAP mechanisms.

Understanding geographic variation is essential, but fully capturing the dynamics of conflict and vulnerability also requires examining how different social groups experience and engage with these incidents.

Gender Dynamics in Incident Reports

The data categorizes actors in incidents as **all men, all women, or mixed-gender groups (men and women together)**. The analysis reveals several key trends:

- **Women were sole actors in very few incidents** across all categories, and never in more than two incidents per cercle per category.
- **Community conflicts involving only women** were recorded in **Banamba, Bla, and Koutiala.**
- **Land conflicts involving only women** were reported in only one case, in **San.**
- **Natural and man-made disasters solely affecting women** were recorded twice in **Koutiala** and once in **Banamba.**
- **Violence and armed violence incidents involving only women** were reported only in **San** (2 cases).

The data also shows near parity between incidents involving only men and those involving mixed-gender groups, except in the case of natural and man-made disasters, where mixed-gender involvement was notably, and expectedly, higher. Incidents in this category predominantly relate to flooding, large-scale (D1, 37 cases) or involving the loss of life or major material damage (D2, 16 cases) – catastrophes that would impact men and women in equal measure.

The most significant finding is that **women are rarely primary actors** in conflict incidents. When women are involved, it is typically as part of broader, mixed-group dynamics rather than as sole participants.

Implications for Conflict Prevention and Mediation

- **Target conflict prevention and mediation efforts equally toward men and women,** recognising that both groups are similarly involved in the majority of conflict and disaster incidents.
- **Conduct targeted outreach and research to better understand women's roles in conflict and disaster dynamics.**

Women's limited representation as sole actors may reflect underreporting, social norms, or barriers to engagement, all of which require further exploration to inform inclusive peacebuilding strategies.

Strengthening gender-responsive conflict prevention strategies will require not only supporting women's participation in resilience efforts but also addressing the systemic factors that limit their direct involvement in reported incidents.

2.3. Profiles of Actor Involvement in Conflict and Crisis Incidents

Beyond understanding where and when incidents occur, it is equally important to analyse **who** is involved in reported conflicts and crises. This section examines patterns of actor involvement across different incident types, highlighting the roles of farmers, pastoralists, religious leaders, youth, and other key community

groups. These insights are critical for informing conflict prevention, mediation, and resilience-building strategies that reflect the social realities of JASS intervention zones.
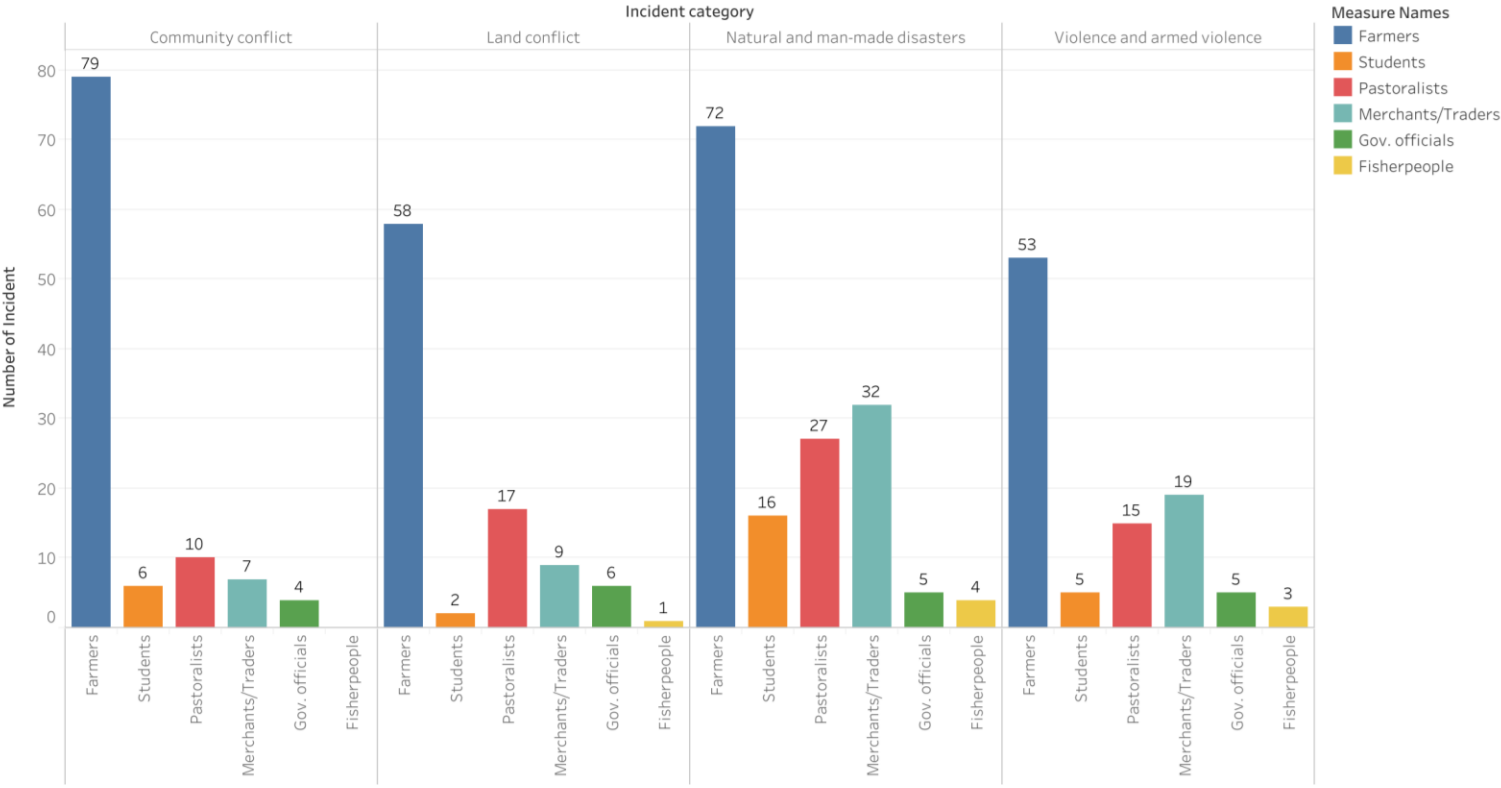
The figure above illustrates the distribution of incident involvement across different socio-professional groups between May and December 2024. The data shows clear disparities in participation, with **farmers overwhelmingly the most frequently involved group** across all conflict and disaster categories. This concentration reflects both the central role of agricultural livelihoods in JASS intervention areas and the vulnerability of farming communities to disputes over land, resources, and environmental shocks.

Key Findings

1. **Farmers are the most frequently involved group across all incident categories, far exceeding other professional groups:**

   - **Community conflict:** 79 cases (next highest: pastoralists, 10 cases).
   - **Land conflict:** 58 cases (next highest: pastoralists, 17 cases).
   - **Natural and man-made disasters:** 72 cases (next highest: merchants/traders, 32 cases; pastoralists, 27 cases).
   - **Violence and armed violence:** 53 cases (next highest: merchants/traders, 19 cases; pastoralists, 15 cases).

2. **Even accounting for a potentially higher farmer population in JASS intervention zones, their involvement remains disproportionately high, suggesting:**

- **Increased exposure to resource-based disputes** (e.g., land and water access).

- **Greater vulnerability to climate-related shocks**, leading to heightened tensions.

- **Frequent interactions with other at-risk groups, particularly pastoralists and traders**, in contexts where competition over land, trade routes, or governance structures fuels conflict.

3. **Pastoralists and merchants/traders are the second most frequently involved groups**, with:

- **Pastoralists** involved in **69 incidents** across all categories.

- **Merchants/traders** involved in **67 incidents**.

4. **Students, government officials, and fisher people are the least involved groups, collectively appearing in only 57 cases.**

- The only category where their total involvement exceeds that of farmers is in violence and armed violence, where farmers were involved in 53 incidents.

Key Takeaways

- **Expand targeted conflict prevention and resilience efforts for farmers.**
  Farmers' high involvement across incident categories reinforces the need to strengthen ongoing interventions in resource management, land governance, and climate resilience.

- **Continue engaging pastoralists and traders in dialogue and economic stability initiatives.**
  Their significant roles in conflict incidents highlight the importance of sustained efforts to address resource competition and livelihoods vulnerabilities.

- **Investigate the limited reported involvement of government officials and fisher people.**
  Their low visibility in SAP data may reflect either a genuinely limited role in conflict-prone areas or underreporting, warranting further examination through qualitative inquiry.

Understanding which groups are most frequently involved in incidents provides critical insight into vulnerability patterns, but analysing when these incidents occur offers additional perspective on seasonal and contextual drivers of conflict and crisis across JASS intervention zones.

2.4. Patterns and Trends Over Time

Incident Patterns and Temporal Trends
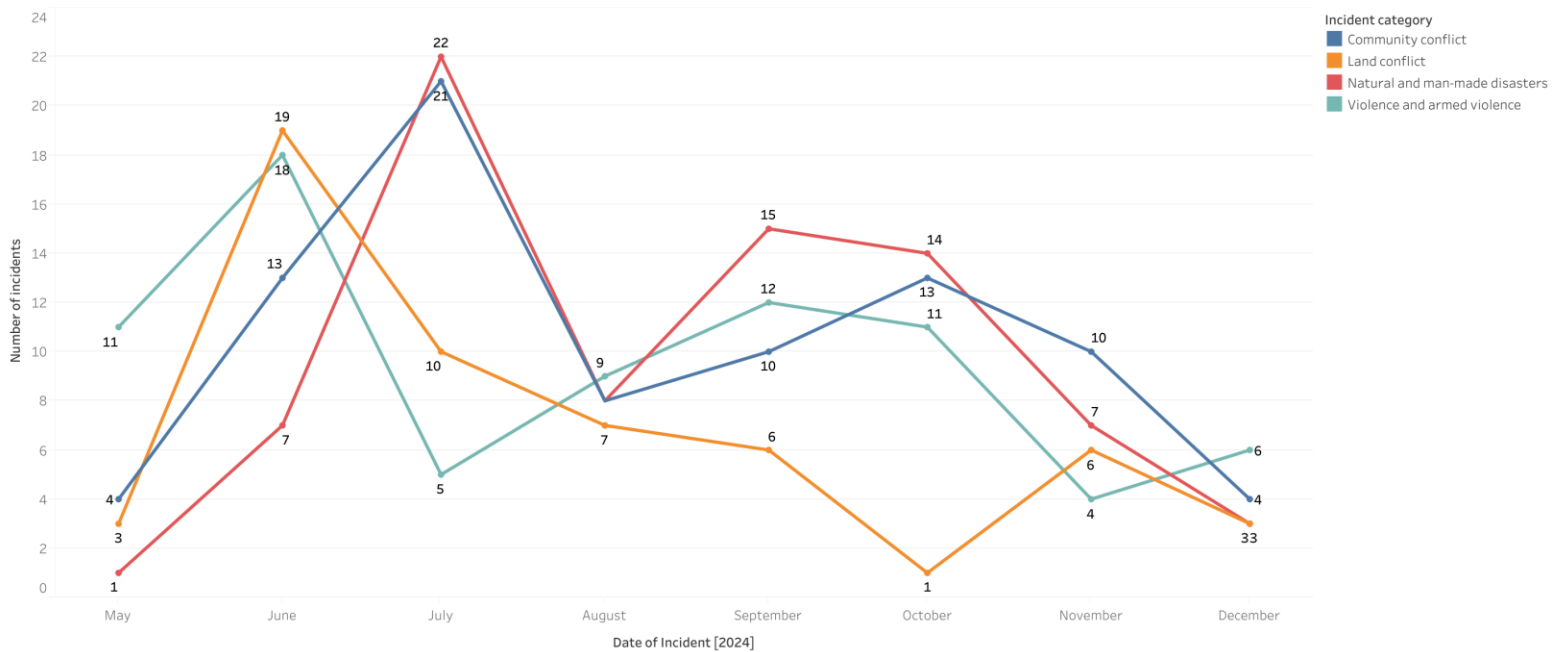
The figure above illustrates **changes in incident frequency** across the four incident categories in JASS intervention zones between **May and December 2024**.

Climate-Conflict Dynamics and Incident Trends

Incident reports increased across all categories between May and June 2024.
Following this initial rise:

- **Land conflicts** and **violence and armed violence** incidents began to decline;
- **Community conflicts** and **natural and man-made disasters** continued to rise, peaking in July with 21 and 22 incidents, respectively.

Both community conflict and disaster incidents declined through August, rose again in September and October, and then gradually decreased through December.

These temporal patterns suggest a strong correlation between climate shocks and conflict dynamics:

- **Community conflict and natural and man-made disasters follow nearly identical patterns**, indicating that climate shocks may intensify social tensions at the community level — particularly around access to and use of critical resources such as land, water, and agricultural goods.
- **Violence and armed violence incidents initially mirror this trend**, peaking earlier (in June, at the start of the rainy season) before declining sharply in July when disaster and community conflict incidents peak. From August onward, violence and armed violence incidents realign with broader trends.

- **Land conflicts diverge from these patterns**, peaking in June (19 incidents) — coinciding with the start of the agricultural production phase — and then declining steadily through October. A temporary rise from October to November likely reflects tensions linked to the end of the planting and production cycles.

Further analysis of incident subcategories supports this interpretation:

- Among **community conflicts**, the third most frequently reported subcategory was **seizure, theft, or destruction of agricultural products, livestock, or fisheries** (A8, 23 cases), highlighting the importance of resource access and competition during periods of environmental stress.
- In contrast, by far the most common form of **land conflict** was **border disputes between neighbours** (C1, 23 cases), pointing to longer-term ownership and boundary issues rather than immediate survival-driven resource use.

These findings suggest important nuances in conflict dynamics:

- **Community conflicts** — which rise alongside natural disasters — may largely revolve around immediate competition over access to essential resources, exacerbated by climate shocks.
- **Land conflicts**, conversely, appear more rooted in structural ownership disputes, which may become temporarily deprioritised during crises as communities focus on coping with acute environmental stressors.

This distinction may help explain why land conflict incidents decline during peak periods of natural disaster and community tension, whereas community conflict incidents surge.

While these preliminary findings challenge the common assumption that land conflicts are the primary driver of violence and armed violence, a fuller understanding of conflict typologies — particularly the drivers and nature of community versus land conflicts — is necessary to strengthen these interpretations. Given the limited eight-month dataset and restricted geographic scope, further data collection and qualitative inquiry are required to validate and deepen these observations.

These patterns underscore the need to analyse conflict dynamics not only by category but also across time and geography, as localised variations in exposure, vulnerability, and resilience significantly shape incident trends.
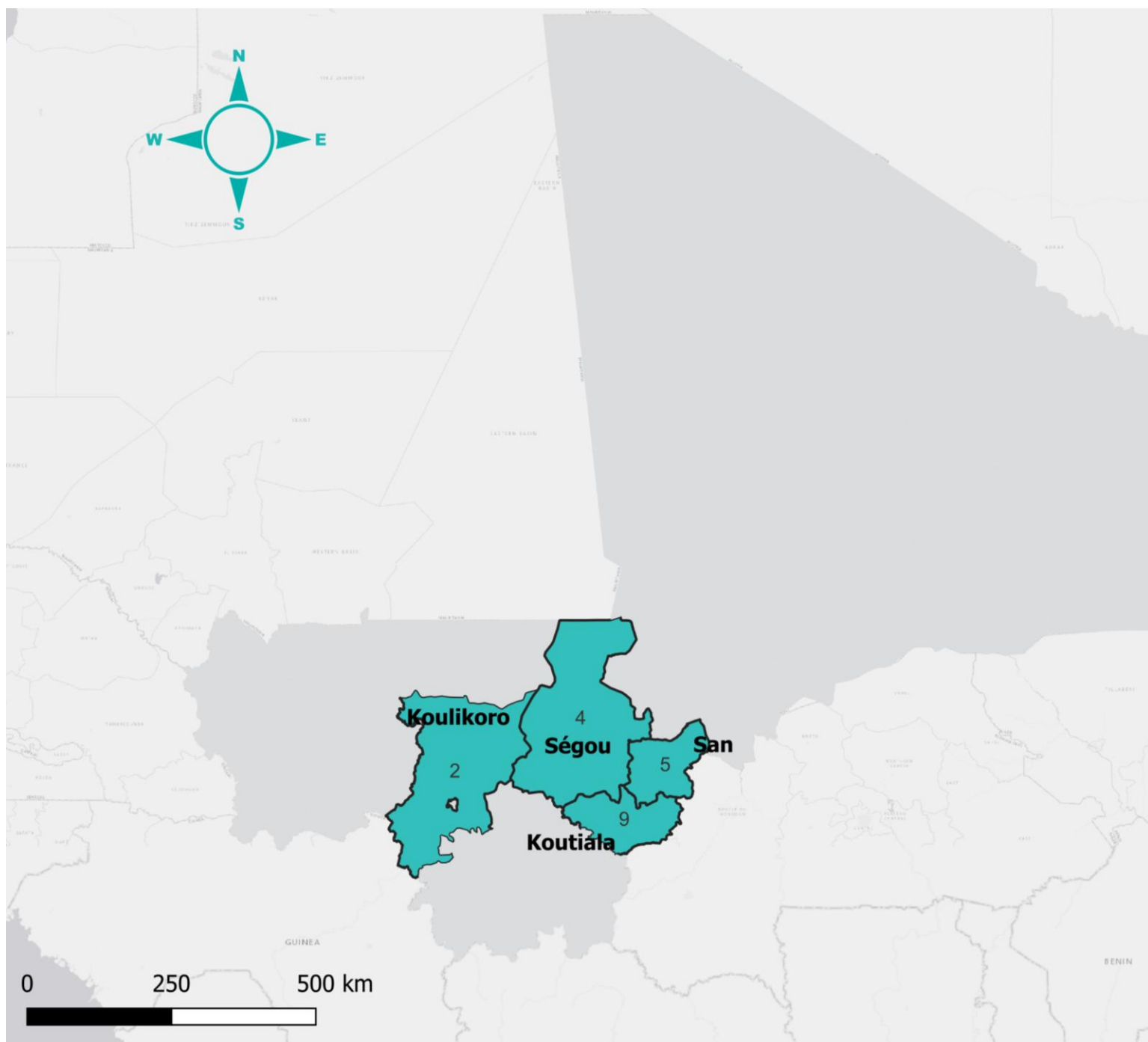
The map above shows Mali in dark grey, with the regions in which JASS zones of intervention are located coloured in teal — Koulikoro (2), Ségou (4), San (5), and Koutiala (9). In Mali, the administrative unit below that of the region is the cercle, and JASS works in five cercles across these four regions. The cercle of Banamba is in Koulikoro region. Bla and Niono are located in Ségou region. Koutiala cercle is in Koutiala region, and likewise San cercle is found in San region.

Tracking Incident Trends by Cercle Over Time
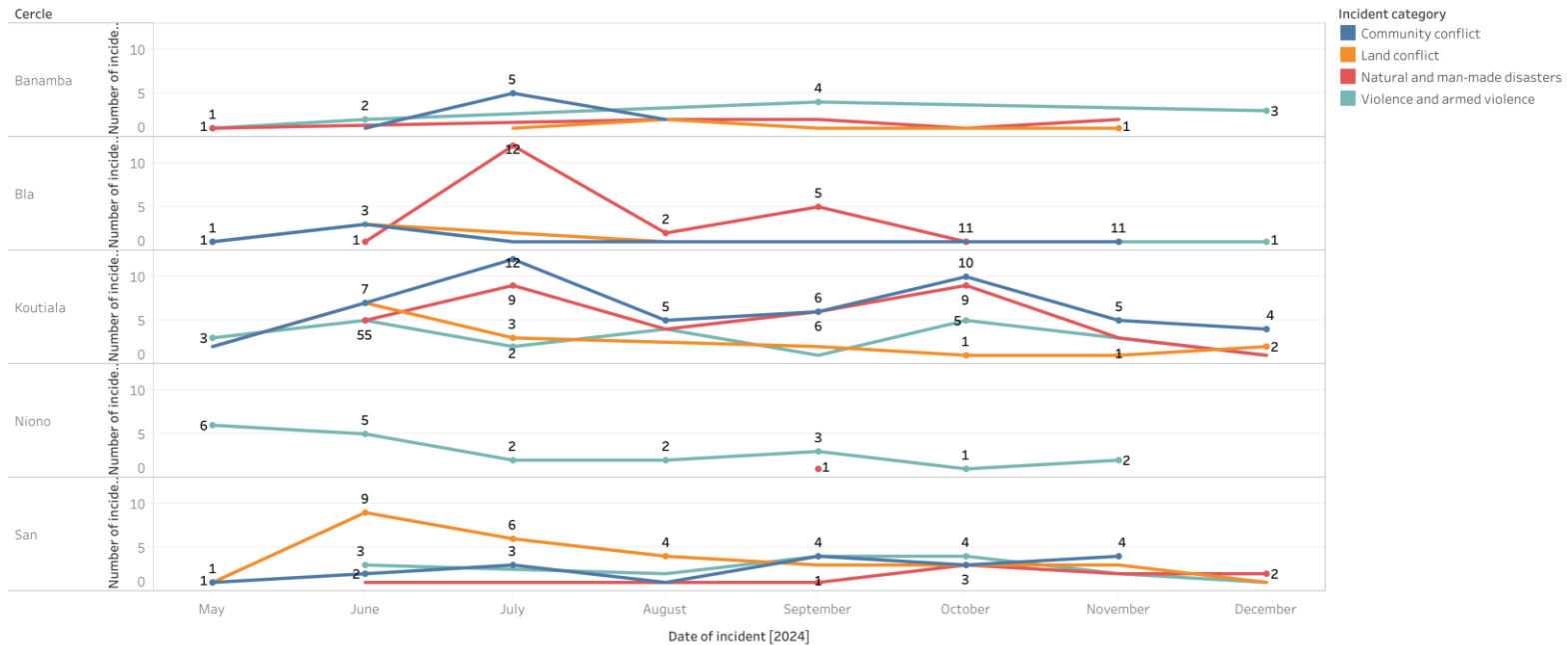
The figure above provides an overview of incident trends across JASS intervention cercles from May to December 2024. By disaggregating the data geographically, regional variations in conflict patterns become apparent, offering deeper insights into the climate–conflict dynamics identified in the previous section.

Banamba Cercle

Banamba recorded 31 incidents overall, with a peak in community conflicts in July (5 incidents). This spike coincides with seasonal pastoralist movements, as Banamba — home to the Port du Sahel and a major transhumance corridor near the Mauritanian border — sees increased interactions between farmers and herders during this period. The availability of pastureland in July heightens the risk of disputes. The second-highest incident spike occurred in September (4 cases), all related to violence and armed violence.

Bla Cercle

Bla recorded the highest number of natural and man-made disaster incidents, with 12 incidents in July, coinciding with the onset of seasonal inundations. However, community conflict remained minimal, diverging from broader climate–conflict trends. This exception may be attributed to Bla's socio-professional composition, where strong traditional conflict management mechanisms among farming and pastoralist communities — supported by lower population density — contribute to effective dispute resolution and SAP functionality.

Koutiala Cercle

Koutiala recorded 127 incidents, the highest across all cercles, with elevated numbers across all conflict categories. Community conflict was the most frequent incident type, with spikes in July (12 incidents) and October (10 incidents), mirroring trends in natural and man-made disasters. This alignment reinforces the relationship between climate shocks and social tensions.

Several factors may explain Koutiala's heightened vulnerability:

- **High population density** intensifies competition over land, water, and natural resources.
- **Diverse socio-professional groups** create overlapping claims and interests, increasing the potential for disputes.
- **Strained local governance structures** may struggle to manage growing social and economic pressures, especially during climate-induced crises.

Together, these factors create a volatile environment where shocks — whether climatic or security-related — more readily translate into conflict.

Niono Cercle

Niono recorded 21 incidents, all classified as violence and armed violence, peaking in May (6 incidents) and June (5 incidents). The absence of reported community and land conflicts may not necessarily reflect under-reporting, but rather a shift in conflict dynamics:

- Communities experiencing sustained external threats from armed groups may prioritise collective survival over reporting smaller-scale disputes.
- In some contexts, facing a common threat can strengthen internal social cohesion, reducing the visibility of local tensions.

Given Niono's location as a transitional zone between northern and southern Mali — and its accessibility to armed groups via surrounding forested areas — programming in Niono may require a stronger emphasis on **Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE)** approaches.
This could include:

- Addressing perceptions of exclusion and marginalisation,
- Strengthening state legitimacy and governance at the local level,
- Promoting narratives of community resilience and social cohesion.

San Cercle

San recorded 71 incidents, with land conflict emerging as the most prevalent category, peaking at 9 incidents in June. Community conflict also followed a seasonal pattern, with smaller peaks in September and November (4 incidents each), while violence and armed violence incidents peaked in September and October (4 incidents each). The high rate of land conflicts in San is closely linked to its predominantly autochthonous agriculturalist population, whose historical land claims and contested ownership disputes drive longstanding tensions. These findings underscore the critical importance of strengthening land governance mechanisms in San — a priority JASS is actively pursuing through awareness-raising on land legislation and the reinforcement of CRCs and COFOs.

Key Takeaways

- **Climate shocks and conflict trends are closely linked in Koutiala and Banamba**, where seasonal and environmental factors heighten competition over land and resources, fuelling community disputes.

- **Koutiala's high incident levels across all categories point to a convergence of high population density, diverse livelihoods, and strained governance capacities**, creating heightened vulnerability to both climate shocks and conflict.

- **Niono's high levels of armed violence and absence of other conflict types may reflect a shift in conflict dynamics**, with communities under collective threat from armed groups possibly prioritising survival over smaller-scale disputes.
Programming responses in Niono may benefit from incorporating **PVE approaches** that address exclusion, governance deficits, and social cohesion.

- **San's high rate of land conflicts highlights the critical role of contested land rights in fuelling tensions**, reinforcing the need for JASS's targeted land governance and conflict resolution initiatives.

- **Bla's low community conflict rates demonstrate the effectiveness of strong traditional dispute resolution systems and effective SAP mechanisms**, offering a model for adaptation elsewhere.

These regional variations emphasise the need for **tailored conflict prevention strategies** in each cercle, adapting interventions to local socio-political, environmental, and security dynamics.

Understanding the geographic distribution and evolving nature of incidents provides essential context for assessing not only where and when conflicts occur, but also the human and material toll they impose on affected communities.

2.5. Human and Material Impact of Reported Incidents
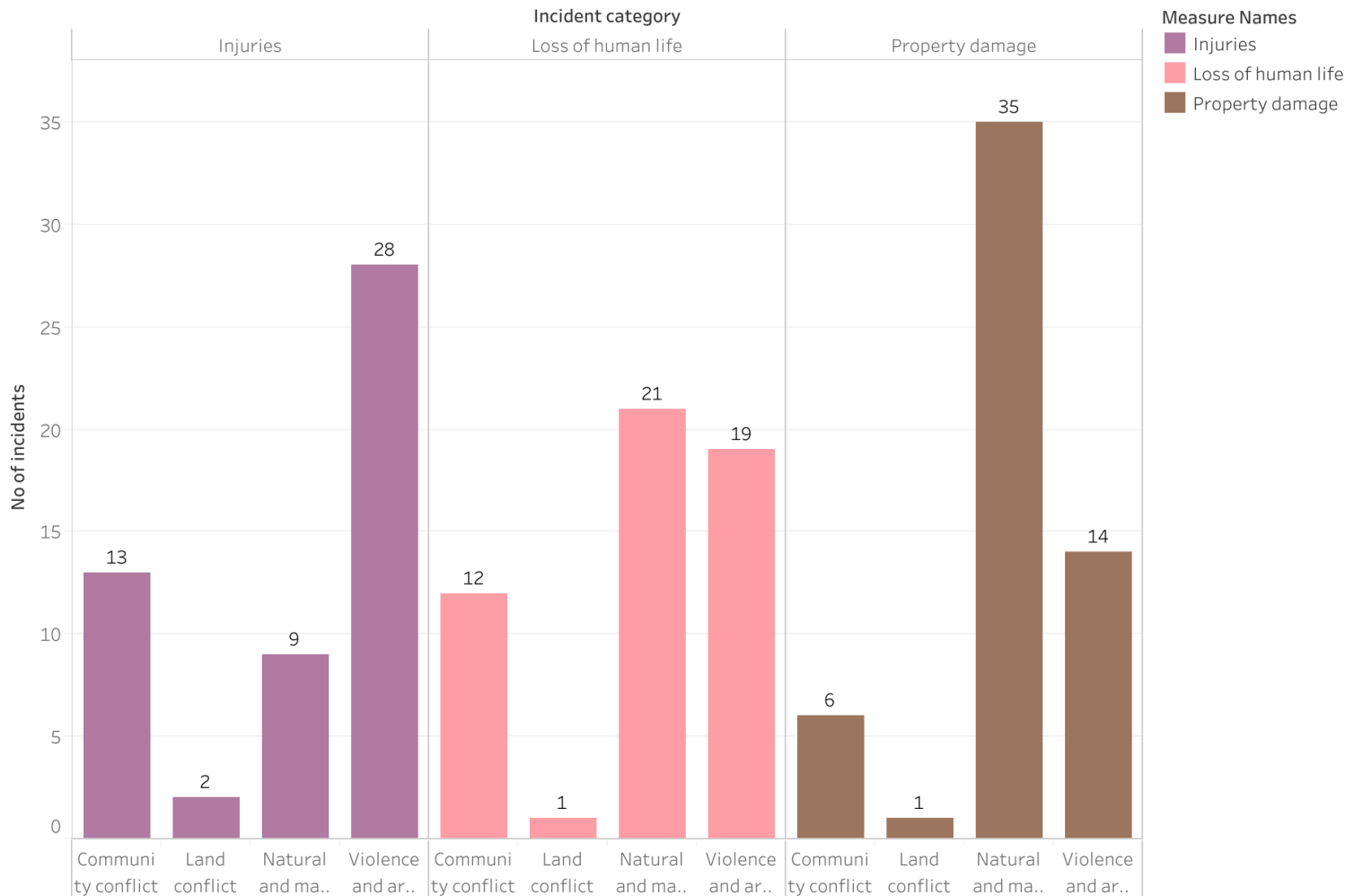
The figure above presents the distribution of injuries, fatalities, and property damage resulting from incidents across JASS intervention zones between May and December 2024.

The analysis reveals clear patterns linking different types of incidents to distinct forms of harm.

Key Findings

- **Violence and armed violence incidents are the leading cause of injuries** (28 cases), far exceeding other categories and most likely related to the prevalence of the use of firearms and bladed weapons (B4 and B3, 43 cases)
  Community conflict (13 cases) and natural and man-made disasters (9 cases) contribute to a lesser extent.

- **Natural and man-made disasters cause the highest number of fatalities** (21 cases), reflecting the devastating human toll of climate-driven shocks. These incidents were predominantly flooding that was large-scale (D1, 37 cases) or that which resulted in the loss of life and major material

damage (D2, 16 cases), substantiating the results.
Violence and armed violence follow closely with 19 deaths, illustrating the deadly consequences of insecurity. Earlier analyses showed that most often such incidents involved firearms or bladed weapons, used in assaults or threats (B4, 24 cases) or robberies or stabbings (B3, 19 cases).

- **Community conflicts contribute significantly to both injuries (13 cases) and fatalities (12 cases)**.
  Within community conflict, the most frequent subcategories — latent interpersonal confrontations (A6, 28 cases), chieftaincy disputes (A1, 24 cases), and resource seizures, theft, or destruction of agricultural products, livestock, and fisheries (A8, 23 cases) — reflect disputes rooted in long-term grievances, leadership legitimacy, and competition over vital resources. These forms of conflict escalate easily, particularly when governance structures are perceived as weak, biased, or unresponsive.

- **Land conflicts result in the fewest injuries and fatalities** (2 injuries and 1 fatality).
  The most common land conflict types — border disputes between neighbours (C1, 23 cases) and inheritance-related ownership disputes (C2, 10 cases) — typically revolve around claims to property and are often addressed through existing customary or formal adjudication mechanisms, reducing the likelihood of violent escalation.

- **Property damage is overwhelmingly driven by natural and man-made disasters** (35 cases), most likely associated with inundations (D1 and D2, 53 cases) followed by violence and armed violence (14 cases).
  Community conflicts (6 cases) and land conflicts (1 case) cause relatively minor material losses by comparison.

Key Takeaways

- **Climate shocks are the most destructive incidents overall**, causing the highest fatalities and property damage, most often related to flooding.
  This underscores the urgent need to strengthen climate resilience, early warning systems, and disaster preparedness across JASS intervention zones.

- **Violence and armed violence incidents are the most injurious**, highlighting the necessity of robust security interventions and community protection strategies, particularly in zones exposed to banditry and extremist groups.

- **Community conflicts represent a critical but often underestimated source of harm**, with frequent escalation into injuries and deaths.
  These conflicts — driven by historical grievances, disputes over leadership legitimacy, and competition for agricultural resources — illustrate how governance challenges at the community level can directly influence conflict dynamics and outcomes.

- **Land conflicts, while common, appear more containable**, likely due to the presence of recognised customary and formal mechanisms for dispute resolution around ownership. Strengthening these mechanisms further, while ensuring inclusivity and transparency, remains key to preventing escalation.

Understanding how different conflict and crisis dynamics translate into human and material harm is critical for designing targeted interventions — but preventing escalation also depends on how effectively communities and institutions respond when incidents occur.

2.6. Response Dynamics

As highlighted in early warning and early response systems (EWERS) across the Sahel, **information alone does not guarantee action**. The effectiveness of any EWERS — including SAP — depends fundamentally on the **capacity, legitimacy, and responsiveness of local actors** to translate alerts into timely interventions.

This section examines **who responds to incidents** reported through SAP in JASS intervention zones, **how response patterns vary by type of incident and geography**, and **what these trends reveal about the strengths and gaps in current community-based conflict prevention mechanisms**.

The analysis also highlights how SAP's model — by prioritising community ownership and reinforcing local response structures such CRCs and CCRs — addresses many of the challenges that undermined earlier, top-down regional early warning systems.

Mobilising Local Response: Actor Patterns Across JASS Zones

Effective early warning relies not only on accurate information but also on the rapid mobilisation of trusted local actors to respond to emerging risks. This subsection analyses **who responds to incidents reported through SAP** across different JASS intervention zones, exploring **how response patterns vary by incident type and geography**. By examining these patterns, we can assess the extent to which SAP has strengthened local capacity to turn alerts into action — addressing tensions before they escalate into larger-scale violence or displacement.

Incident Response by Incident Type and Cercle

Incident category	Cercle	Admin. authority response	COFO response	CRC response	Comm. Leader response	FDS response	Infra. Manage. Comm. Resp..	NGO response
Community conflict	Banamba	1	5	5				
	Bla		1	2				
	Koutiala	18	5	7	12			1
	San	5	4	7	12			
	Total	**24**	**15**	**21**	**24**			**1**
Land conflict	Banamba		1	1				
	Bla	1	2	1	1			
	Koutiala	3	6	7	3			1
	San	7	9	4	8			
	Total	**11**	**18**	**13**	**12**			**1**
Natural and man-made disasters	Banamba	1			2			
	Bla	6	11	11	3		2	2
	Koutiala	17	2	9	7	1		
	Niono							
	San				1			
	Total	**24**	**13**	**20**	**13**	**1**	**2**	**2**
Violence and armed violence	Banamba	4			5			
	Bla	3		1	2			
	Koutiala	6		1	10		1	
	Niono	6		3	2	8		1
	San	4	1	4	7			
	Total	**23**	**1**	**9**	**26**	**8**	**1**	**1**
Grand Total		**82**	**47**	**63**	**75**	**9**	**3**	**5**

The figure to the left illustrates the distribution of actors responding to different incident types across JASS intervention cercles. The data highlights both key responders and areas where additional support is needed to strengthen local conflict prevention and disaster response.

Key Findings

Most responsive actors across all incidents:

• Administrative authorities (82 cases) were the most active responders, followed closely by community leaders (75 cases) and CRCs (63 cases).

• NGOs (5 cases), Infrastructure Management Committees (3 cases), and FDS (9 cases) were the least involved overall.

Community Conflict Response:

- Administrative authorities (24 cases) and community leaders (24 cases) were the primary responders, supported by CRCs (21 cases) and COFOs (15 cases).
- By cercle:
  - **Koutiala:** Administrative authorities led responses (18 of 43 cases).
  - **San:** Community leaders were the main responders (12 of 28 cases).
  - **Bla:** CRCs responded most frequently (2 of 3 cases).
  - **Banamba:** COFO and CRCs were equally active (5 of 11 cases each).

Land Conflict Response:

- COFOs (18 cases), CRCs (13 cases), and community leaders (12 cases) were the main actors.
- By cercle:
  - **San:** COFOs responded most often (9 cases), followed by community leaders (8 cases).
  - **Other cercles:** Responses were dominated by COFO and CRC structures.

Natural and Man-Made Disaster Response:

- Administrative authorities (24 cases) and CRCs (20 cases) were the key responders across all cercles.

Violence and Armed Violence Response:

- Community leaders (26 cases) and administrative authorities (23 cases) were the most frequent responders.
- In **Niono**, FDS (8 of 20 cases) and administrative authorities (6 of 20 cases) led responses, reflecting the cercle's heightened security needs.

Key Takeaways: Strengthening Local Response Capacities

- **Prioritise support for CRCs and COFOs**, especially in land and community conflict mediation. These structures are consistently among the most active local responders and are critical for preventing escalation.
- **Strengthen the capacities of administrative authorities and community leaders**, who play central roles across all incident categories.
  Enhanced coordination mechanisms, targeted training, and logistical support could further improve their effectiveness.
- **Reinforce security coordination mechanisms in Niono**, where FDS play a key role in responding to violence and armed violence.
  Integrating security actors into broader conflict resolution and community engagement frameworks will be critical for long-term stability.
- **Expand CRC capacity for disaster response.**
  Building on JASS's existing efforts, CRCs should be further equipped with technical training, logistical resources, and rapid response tools to better manage natural and man-made disasters.

- **Invest in COFOs as frontline actors for land conflict resolution.**
  Providing additional legal training, dispute mediation tools, and land governance support will strengthen their ability to address land disputes before they escalate into broader conflicts.

While understanding who responds to incidents is essential, assessing the outcomes of these responses is equally critical to determine whether early action leads to effective conflict resolution and strengthened community resilience.

From Response to Resolution: Outcomes Across JASS Zones

The figure below categorises incident response outcomes by different actors, classifying responses as Resolved, Not Resolved, Referred, or Ongoing. Out of 284 recorded responses, 174 incidents (61%) were fully resolved, underscoring the effectiveness of local response mechanisms and SAP as a whole.

Response Actors and the Result of their Intervention

Result of response	Incident category	Admin. authority response	COFO response	CRC response	Comm. Leader response	FDS response	Infra. Manage. Comm. Response	NGO response
Being resolved	Community conflict	4	3	3	5			
	Land conflict	2	3	2	3			
	Natural and man-made di..	6	3	3	5		2	2
	Violence and armed violen..	4		3	6			
	Total	**16**	**9**	**11**	**19**		**2**	**2**
Not resolved	Community conflict	1	1	2	3			
	Land conflict	2	5	5	2			
	Natural and man-made di..	1	1	4	3			
	Violence and armed violen..	1			3			
	Total	**5**	**7**	**11**	**11**			
Referred	Community conflict	1						
	Land conflict	1	1		1			
	Natural and man-made di..	1					1	
	Violence and armed violen..	5		2	2		1	1
	Total	**8**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**1**	**1**
Resolved	Community conflict	18	11	16	16			1
	Land conflict	6	9	6	6			1
	Natural and man-made di..	16	9	13	5			
	Violence and armed violen..	13	1	4	15	8		
	Total	**53**	**30**	**39**	**42**	**8**		**2**

Key Findings

- **Community conflicts achieved the highest resolution rate (73%, 62 of 85 cases):**
  Administrative authorities (18 cases), CRCs (16 cases), and community leaders (16 cases) led most successful interventions.

- **Land conflicts had the lowest resolution rate (51%, 28 of 55 cases):**
  COFOs were the most effective responders in this category, responsible for 9 successful resolutions.

- **Natural and man-made disasters (57%, 43 of 75 cases) and violence and armed violence (59%, 41 of 69 cases)** achieved comparable resolution rates:
Administrative authorities (16 cases) and community leaders (15 cases) were the primary actors driving successful outcomes.

Effectiveness of Response Actors

- **Administrative authorities recorded the highest number of resolved cases (53),** followed by community leaders (42).

- **Community leaders and CRCs also recorded the highest number of unresolved cases (11 each),**
reflecting the **high volume of cases** they manage and the **complexity of certain disputes**.
Their strong resolution performance overall suggests that the challenge lies more in the nature and scale of incidents than in their capacity.

- **Community leaders recorded the highest number of ongoing cases (19),** followed by administrative authorities (16), indicating delays in resolution or prolonged engagement in complex disputes.

- **Administrative authorities referred the highest number of cases (8),** implying that some incidents exceeded local resolution capacities and required escalation to higher-level authorities or specialised actors.

Gaps in Response

- **FDS, Infrastructure Management Committees, and NGOs remained largely absent from direct incident resolution efforts,** reinforcing earlier findings that these actors play a minimal role in immediate conflict mediation at the community level.

- **The low percentage of unresolved cases (12%, 34 of 284 cases)** demonstrates a strong commitment among COFOs, CRCs, community leaders, and administrative authorities to following through on interventions, reinforcing the overall effectiveness of SAP structures.

Challenges and Data Considerations

- **Ambiguity in actor categorisation:**
Many administrative authorities and community leaders may simultaneously serve as members of COFOs or CRCs, complicating clear attribution of response roles.

- **Future SAP assessments should refine actor classification,** ensuring mutually exclusive categories to enhance data clarity and analytical reliability.

- **Understanding self-identification in reporting will be critical,** as monitors may classify actors based on their most visible or familiar roles, leading to potential overlaps in recorded response functions.

The effectiveness of SAP in turning early warnings into localised early responses highlights both the strengths and evolving challenges of community-based conflict prevention — demonstrating that sustained investment in local capacities, coordination, and adaptive learning remains critical for lasting impact.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications

Conclusions

The evolution of early warning and early response systems (EWERS) in the Sahel has demonstrated that information alone is not enough to prevent conflict escalation. As the experience of SAP under the JASS programme confirms, the effectiveness of early warning hinges on political will, the strength and legitimacy of local structures such as Conflict Resolution Committees (*Comités de Résolution des Conflits*, CRCs), and the ability of communities to act quickly and collectively when risks emerge.

SAP represents a significant step forward in localising conflict prevention systems in fragile environments. By embedding early warning within trusted community structures, SAP strengthens conflict management capacity at the grassroots level; supports resilience to climate shocks; and reinforces inclusive governance. Over an eight-month period, SAP recorded 291 incidents across JASS intervention zones, with an impressive 98% response rate and 61% resolution rate for incidents followed up by local actors.

Yet, critical challenges remain. Variations in the capacity and responsiveness of CRCs, the complexity of certain disputes — especially land and governance-related conflicts — and the realities of insecurity in certain areas, such as Niono, continue to limit SAP's effectiveness. Persistent barriers, including funding gaps, insufficient referral mechanisms, and underrepresentation of women, youth, and people living with disabilities, highlight the need for continued investment, adaptation, and strategic learning.

Part 1 of this report detailed the foundations and operationalisation of SAP, demonstrating the importance of community ownership and institutional support. **Part 2** analysed SAP's incident data to reveal patterns of conflict and disaster impacts, response dynamics, and the ongoing need to reinforce the linkage between early warning and early action. Together, the findings point to a simple but powerful lesson: local early warning systems can work — but they require sustained investment in trust, capability, and the political and social infrastructure of peace.

Recommendations

Building on the evidence presented, this report offers the following recommendations for JASS programme strengthening and broader donor and policy engagement:

1. Improving SAP Functionality

(JASS Programme Implementation and Learning)

- **Expand technical training and operational support for CRCs and COFOs**, with a particular focus on land dispute mediation and disaster response.
  → SAP data show that land conflicts have lower resolution rates (51%) compared to other incident types. Strengthening COFO capacity in land governance and CRC skills in complex dispute resolution will enhance SAP's ability to prevent conflict escalation early.
  → Continuing to champion self-financing mechanisms for SAP structures, building on what works

and applying lessons learned, would improve their capacities to hold regular meetings and coordination between SAP actors.

- **Refine SAP data collection and actor and incident categorisation protocols** to improve accuracy, support more robust analyses, and reinforce adaptive programming.
  ➔ Current overlaps in actor identification (with structures sharing membership) and similar ones in incident categorization (c.f., violent land-related theft or destruction being a community conflict outside the land-related conflict category; flooding being two different subcategories under natural and man-made disasters) obfuscates both reporting and analyses of SAP data. Addressing these issues could be pursued in a community-led forum, which empowers members and promotes local ownership and localization of the system.
  ➔ Limitations in incident recording (e.g., CommCare rigidity) hinder real-time analysis and strategic planning. Improving data quality will enhance SAP's predictive capacity and allow for more effective targeting of awareness-raising and response efforts.

2. Improving Early Warning Systems

(JASS Programme Implementation and Learning + FCDO and Broader Policy Stakeholders)

- **Reinforce community ownership and inclusion in SAP structures**, with a focus on increasing meaningful participation of women, youth, and people living with disabilities.
  ➔ Gender-disaggregated SAP data reveal that women are rarely sole actors in incidents yet are impacted by conflict dynamics. Expanding inclusive participation is essential to strengthening legitimacy and community trust in early warning systems, a precondition for effective early action.

- **Continue to invest in climate resilience programming** that explicitly addresses the intersection between environmental shocks and conflict.
  ➔ SAP findings highlight a strong correlation between natural disasters and spikes in community conflict, particularly in areas like Koutiala and Bla. Supporting local land governance, disaster preparedness, and climate-smart livelihoods will directly contribute to reducing conflict triggers over time.

- **Prioritise further research on geographic and temporal variations in conflict patterns** to deepen contextual understanding and better target interventions.
  ➔ Disaggregated data show major differences across cercles, suggesting that conflict drivers vary substantially by local context. Additional qualitative and quantitative research will be critical for tailoring early warning and resilience-building strategies.

3. Improving Early Response Mechanisms

(JASS Programme Implementation and Learning + FCDO and Broader Policy Stakeholders)

- **Strengthen local referral and escalation pathways** between CRCs, administrative authorities, and national security actors to manage complex cases more effectively.
  ➔ Incident response data show that community leaders and CRCs often carry the burden of mediating complex disputes beyond their mandate. Clearer escalation protocols and reinforced

collaboration with state actors will improve resolution rates and build trust in formal justice and governance structures.

- **Deepen partnerships with security forces in high-risk areas**, such as Niono, to better protect civilians and support early interventions.
➔ Niono's conflict profile, dominated by violent incidents with limited community or land conflict reporting, points to the need for integrated P/CVE (Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism) programming and stronger civilian-security cooperation to manage escalating risks and preserve space for community-led conflict resolution.

Implications

The SAP experience under JASS reinforces a broader lesson for conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts in fragile contexts: **Early warning is only as strong as the early action it enables.**

Investing in community trust, inclusive governance, and rapid, coordinated responses is essential to transforming alerts into effective interventions. Strengthening SAP's technical foundations; expanding inclusive participation; and reinforcing linkages between local, regional, and national actors will be critical to sustaining and scaling the gains achieved so far.

For JASS, this means continued adaptive programming, learning, and refinement. For donors and policy stakeholders, it underscores the importance of supporting decentralised, community-led early warning and conflict resolution systems — recognising that building resilience at the local level remains one of the most effective ways to foster sustainable stability in the Sahel.

References

Fété Impact Cabinet de Conseil et de Formation. 'Evaluation Qualitative et Apprentissage Du Projet "Building Resilience in Kayes and Sikasso (BRiKS)" Ou "Ben Ni Bassigui"'. Bamako: Mercy Corps, March 2023.

'Internal Mercy Corps Mali BRiKS Document B', January 2023.

'Internal Mercy Corps Mali JASS Document C', November 2023.

'Internal Mercy Corps Mali PASERREL Document E', 2019.

'Internal Mercy Corps Mali PASERREL II Document D', September 2021.

JASS Staff 2. KII EWERS Koutiala, 4 September 2024.

JASS Staff 3. KII EWERS Ségou, 4 October 2024.

JASS Staff 5. KII EWERS Bamako, 10 September 2024.

Mercy Corps. 'Building Evidence for CLimate Adaptation and Peacebuilding: Insights from Mali'. Mercy Corps, January 2025.

Mercy Corps Mali. 'LAFIA, l'atout Par Excellence Face Aux Conflits Dans Le Sud Du Mali'. Mercy Corps, 2025. https://mali.mercycorps.org/fr/research-resources/lafia-excellence-conflict-southern-mali.

———. 'Résultats Du Programme "Position Refine and Operate for Peace in Mali" (PROP)'. Mercy Corps, 2025. https://mali.mercycorps.org/fr/blog/position-refine-and-operate-for-peace.

Ndinga-Muvumba, Angela, and Abdul Lamin. 'West Africa's Evolving Security Architecture: Looking Back to the Future'. The ECOWAS Early Warning System. Centre for Conflict Resolution, 2006. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep05185.9.pdf.

ReliefWeb. 'ECOWAS Early Warning Directorate Exchange and Assessment Mission to Liberia National Early Warning Center - Liberia', 26 July 2024. https://reliefweb.int/report/liberia/ecowas-early-warning-directorate-exchange-and-assessment-mission-liberia-national-early-warning-center.

WANEP. 'Alerte Précoce et Prévention Des Conflits – WANEP-TOGO', ND. https://waneptogo.org/site/warn-warning-response-network/.

———. 'West Africa Early Warning Outlook 2024'. WANEP, February 2024. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://wanep.org/wanep/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/WANEP-Annual-Peace-and-Security-Outlook-2024.pdf.

Appendix A. SAP Incidents Disaggregated by Cercle and Date

Cercle	Incident category	May 2024	June 2024	July 2024	August 2024	September 2024	October 2024	November 2024	December 2024	Grand Total
Banamba	Community conflict		1	5	2					8
	Land conflict			1	2	1		1		5
	Natural and man-made di..	1			2	2	1	2		8
	Violence and armed violen..	1	2			4			3	10
	Total	2	3	6	6	7	1	3	3	31
Bla	Community conflict	1	3	1				1		6
	Land conflict		3		1			1		5
	Natural and man-made di..		1	12	2	5	1			21
	Violence and armed violen..	1	3	1	1		1		1	8
	Total	2	10	14	4	5	2	2	1	40
Koutiala	Community conflict	2	7	12	5	6	10	5	4	51
	Land conflict	2	7	3		2	1	1	2	18
	Natural and man-made di..		5	9	4	6	9	3	1	37
	Violence and armed violen..	3	5	2	4	1	5		1	21
	Total	7	24	26	13	15	25	9	8	127
Niono	Natural and man-made di..					1				1
	Violence and armed violen..	6	5	2	2	3	1	2		21
	Total	6	5	2	2	4	1	2		22
San	Community conflict	1	2	3	1	4	3	4		18
	Land conflict	1	9	6	4	3		3	1	27
	Natural and man-made di..		1	1		1	3	2	2	10
	Violence and armed violen..		3		2	4	4	2	1	16
	Total	2	15	10	7	12	10	11	4	71

Appendix B. SAP Incident Categorization Scheme

A	INTRA- AND INTER-COMMUNITY CONFLICT/COMMUNITY CONFLICT	Codes
1	Conflict of chieftaincy (succession crisis) and contestation of customary and/or religious authority	A1
2	Denigration of a religion, desecration of a symbol or sacred site	A2
3	Spreading identity-based and hate messages	A3
4	Spreading persistent rumours	A4
5	Latent ethnic or community confrontation	A5
6	Latent interpersonal confrontation	A6
7	Tension over shared natural resources	A7
8	Seizure, theft or destruction of crops, agricultural products, livestock or fisheries	A8
9	Obstructing the free movement of people and goods	A9
10	Reduced interaction between communities, ethnic groups or groups, observed	A10
11	Tensions linked to opinions and/or political affiliations	A11
12	Exclusion or marginalisation of a group, community or ethnic group / Reduction in interactions between communities, ethnic groups or groups, observed	A12
13	Tensions linked to political/religious opinions and/or affiliations or to aspects of local governance	A13
14	Inter/intra-community tension over the management of public areas and spaces	A14
15	Inter/intra-community tension over wastewater and waste/sanitation management	A15
B	ARMED VIOLENCE AND OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE/VIOLENCE AND ARMED VIOLENCE	Codes
1	Ethnic or community confrontation involving the use of firearms or edged weapons	B1
2	Intra- and inter-professional confrontation involving the use of firearms or edged weapons	B2
3	Robberies/stabbings with firearms or edged/bladed weapons	B3
4	Assaults/threats with firearms or edged/bladed weapons	B4
5	Murders with firearms or edged/bladed weapons	B5
6	Incursion or attack by armed gangs/groups	B6
7	Seizure or abduction with or without firearms	B7
8	Rape/sexual assault/harassment with or without firearms or edged/bladed weapons	B8
9	Domestic violence with or without weapons	B9
10	Incitement to violence	B10
11	Acts of revenge or reprisal	B11
12	Interpersonal and professional defamation	B12
13	Destruction of community property and public, religious, and cultural buildings/sites	B13
14	Other unspecified cases of violence	B14
C	LAND LAW DISPUTES/LAND CONFLICT	Codes
1	Border disputes between neighbours	C1
2	Conflicts of ownership due to inheritance disputes	C2
3	Occasional multiple/duplicate sales of the same private property	C3
4	Individual occupation of private land	C4
5	Building extensions on someone else's private land	C5
6	Illegal rental/sale of someone else's private land	C6
7	Border conflicts between ethic groups or villages	C7
8	Illegal sale/lease of communal/tribal land	C8
9	Illegal allocation of state-owned land by a private individual	C9
10	Collective occupation of private land	C10
11	Land use conflicts between farmers and livestock breeders (e.g. animal corridors due to transhumance)	C11
12	Occasional illegal use of state land	C12
13	Property-related violent attacks	C13
14	Ownership disputes due to legal pluralism	C14
15	Illegal sale/lease of state-owned land	C15
16	Evictions (by force) by government authorities	C16
17	Wrongful land privatisation	C17
18	Land use conflicts between private and public use due to a general disregard for land use regulations by a majority of people	C18
19	Expropriation without compensation	C19
20	Illegal acquisition and sale of someone else's private property by private individuals, supported by corrupt public agencies or courts	C20
21	Multiple allocation of specific parcels by land registry agents	C21
D	NATURAL OR MAN-MADE DISASTERS	Codes
1	Large-scale flooding	D1
2	Flooding with loss of life and major material damage	D2
3	Locust invasion	D3
4	Avian invasion	D4
5	Large-scale fire	D5
6	Fire with loss of life and material damage	D6
7	Epizootic (major animal disease)	D7
8	Drought	D8

CONTACT

Patrycja Stys
Research Manager – Justice and Stability in the Sahel
(JASS) Programme | Mercy Corps Mali and Niger
pstys@mercycorps.org

Daniel Okeiyi
Research, Evaluation, and Learning Consultant
cokeiyi96@gmail.com

Alliou Traoré
Peacebuilding and Governance Specialist | Counterpart
International Mauritania, formerly Mercy Corps Mali
allioutraore@gmail.com

Paterne Aime Petipe
Programme Director – Justice and Stability in the Sahel
(JASS) Programme | Mercy Corps Mali and Niger
papetipe@mercycorps.org

About Mercy Corps
Mercy Corps is a leading global organization
powered by the belief that a better world is possible.
In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries
around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into
action — helping people triumph over adversity and
build stronger communities from within.
Now, and for the future.

MERCY CORPS

45 SW Ankeny Street
Portland, Oregon 97204
888.842.0842
mercycorps.org