



Mali: Capacity Statement

January 2021

Search for Common Ground (Search) is an international organization committed to conflict transformation. Since 1982, we have led programs around the world to help societies channel their differences away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative solutions. Our long-term programming in 43 countries with 839 local partner organizations and a network of over 1,200 partners around the world enabled Search to reach 309,430 participants from artists and media professionals, to political and religious leaders in order to deliver strong peace messages. Through our large collaboration with 313 radio stations and 26 TV stations world-wide, we estimate the number of people we have reached to 39.3 millions through media programs, in many of the world's most challenging conflicts. We have built a toolbox of tactics to tailor to each conflict's specific dynamics and history. While our programs may vary, they are based on the same foundation.

Our approach is based on The **Common Ground Approach** which is a methodology to transform how we respond to conflict, away from confrontation and violence and toward collaboration. Guiding principles inform the design and application of peacebuilding programs, which generate tangible, positive outcomes. We shift the everyday interactions between hostile groups of people, so they can work together to build up their community, choosing joint problem-solving over violent means; and a unified **Theory of Change** to align people's aspiration systematizing the process through which we achieve transformations that last well beyond our intervention and maps the thresholds we need to cross to catalyze change at the highest order.

All of Search's actions integrate a combination of 5 strategies targeting the different stakeholders at all levels:

- *Taking the intervention to scale*
- *Committing for the long-term*
- *Engaging all sides with equal respect and compassion*
- *Grounding our work in the local culture*
- *Being social entrepreneurs.*

Search's Expertise in Mali

- Rebuilding the social contract in conflict-affected areas to improve social cohesion
- Implementation of Stabilization and security projects to build peace, resilience and Trust among actors
- Youth-led actions to ensure sustained peace efforts
- Media, Communication and information through Radio programming
- Supporting Democracy and peaceful election
- Advocating for the integration of a conflict-sensitive approach across the humanitarian and development sectors
- Preventing Violent Extremism
- Inclusion of women and youth in a gender and intergenerational dynamic
- Conflict sensitive approach

Search's Work in Mali

Search for Common Ground (Search) has been working in Mali since 2014, as part of its Sahel-wide strategy of promoting constructive youth leadership, supporting ef-

fective media for peacebuilding and empowering government and civil society to jointly address challenges and promote social cohesion. In a region where young people constitute two-thirds of the population, we are leveraging our networks of over 100 “peace ambassadors,” including young people, women, religious leaders, and other local influencers, to disseminate strong peace messages public health informations, through our in-house radio production studios and partnerships with over 50 community radio stations over the region. We produce interactive radio roundtables between youth and other marginalized groups, local authorities, and security forces. We have started a *CoronArt* Challenge in partnership with a local rap production studio, Zack Prod, inviting artists to express themselves on a one-minute freestyle beat to popularize public health messages, and we use Media as an important vector for Inclusive Democracy and sustainable Peace.

Our offices are located in Bamako, Mopti and Gao, and our projects target the Kidal, Bnakass, Ménaka, Gao, Mopti, Ségou and Timbuktu, District of Bamako, the Liptako-Gourma regions.

Encouraging Dialogue and Mutual Accountability and Collaboration between the Civilian Population and the Security/Defense Forces

“Trust building and cooperation for stability and security in border regions” (November 2019 - December 2021). Through this cross-border [DANIDA](#) Program, Search has been working in improving communication and collaboration between security providers and community stakeholders for enhanced border management and security across the Liptako Gourma region. Search’s experience in building mutual trust between communities and security/defence forces and to promote community security contribute to improve response to local security issues and enable greater violence prevention, contributing to addressing the root causes of instability and violent extremism in the region. Through activities like training in nonviolent communication for security providers, joint capacity building and planning sessions, dialogues, social communication tools, joint peace initiatives and radio programming, the program works towards accountability in a way that emphasizes the mutual benefits to civilians and security providers. It will contribute to helping security forces better fulfill their protection mandate and support community-led stabilization efforts in areas affected by conflicts and military operations. In Mali, the project will go on until the end of 2021 and target the regions of Mopti and Gao.

“Nedew Ashika ! Demain ensemble - Together for peace in Kidal ”. Funded with \$1 773 340 by the [European Instrument for the consolidation of Stability and Peace \(IcSP\)](#), Search will conduct actions for 18 months to contribute to the stability of the Kidal circle region. Through its activities, the project will encourage dialogue between groups, reinforce trust and collaboration between populations, authorities and BAFAR, and work with BAFAR to support them to better protect civilians and human rights.

Promoting Civilian Engagement in the democratic process

Just future (January 2021 - December 2025). In collaboration with the [Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs \(MFA\)](#), this \$2 062 184 program will address Mali chronic insecurities in conflict-affected areas and provide protection to populations. The program will focus on addressing the lack of trust and communication between state security institutions and the population, as well as the lack of accountability mechanisms in front of injustices committed by security actors in the region. Within five years, the capacities of community representatives and CSOs engaging with security actors and policymakers will be strengthened.

Engaging Children and Youth as Actors of Peace and Non-violence across Mali

“Youth Talk” (Parlons Jeunesse). Funded with \$824 543 by the [Bezos Family Foundation](#) this project aims to empower youth in their communities and respond to the need for leadership development and the inclusion of youth in peace processes, in three of the countries most affected by conflict and violence in sub-Saharan Africa. In Mali, Search collaborates with professional journalists to amplify the voice and action of 180 young people aged 14 to 17 (with at least 50% girls) around crucial social and political issues. We do this by producing programs and strengthening young people's access to local media, such as local radio stations.

“Supporting youth-led dialogue for peace and stability in the Sahel” (January 2020 - December 2021). Search is conducting this \$427 933,80 project in Collaboration with the [PATRIP Foundation](#) using its extensive experience in the implementation of youth-led peace and security initiatives in the Sahel. From 2016 to 2017, Search, in partnership with the Association of Youth Against Enlistment in Terrorism (AJCET), supported dozens of young people in the Mopti region to conduct conflict research.

These young leaders were trained in research and survey techniques on youth perceptions of the security crisis in central Mali.

"Anw Be Gnokon Bolo" (United youth for a stable Mali) (February 2020-January 2023). The intervention is funded by the [United Nations Secretary-General's Peace and Stability Fund](#) (PeaceBuilding Fund - PBF) with \$1 092 470 for 3 years (from 2020 to 2022)aims at strengthening resilience and the inclusion of youth as key actors in peacebuilding processes in the face of conflicts and speeches leading to hatred. It aims to build the capacity of 1,500 adolescents from 12 to 17 years old and 1,500 young people aged 18-35 years old and equip them with methods and tools to prevent and manage conflict, while changing the perceptions of adults, community leaders and community members.

"Conducting conflict scans and Piloting SCORE in Mali: Evidence-based Resource Allocation for Increasing Access to Education in Conflict-affected Regions of Mali" (UNICEF). This Conflict analysis contributes to strengthening the Malian education sector in targeted areas by conducting training on Conflict and Disaster Risk Reduction. This intervention builds the skills to help education actors in analyzing risks and developing a local response which contributes to prevent, mitigate and reduce conflict and disaster risk within and around schools

At a global level and in a will to **Transform Violent Extremism**, Search plays a key leadership role and was invited to be a part of the Countering Violent Extremism Summit, held by The White House, and co-organized the Global Youth Summit against Violent Extremism, resulting in the development of a Youth Action Agenda to Prevent Violent Extremism and Promote Peace. As **co-chair of the Inter-agency Working Group on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding at the United Nations**, Search has been influential in ensuring youth priorities for peace are reflected in international bodies and norms, including in UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security.

Reinforcing community resilience and Supporting local conflict resolution mechanisms and community-based approach

"Mon voisin, Mon frère" (Janvier 2019 - Janvier 2022). In collaboration with [MINUSMA](#), the project takes place in the Bankass region. It aims to support a crisis exit process through community rapprochement and capacity building of stakeholders in terms of peaceful conflict transformation. Search specifically works on Inter-community dialogue and comprehension as well as

trust building between populations and Security and defences forces (FDS).

"Anw Ko Hère" (Peace now!) (September 2019 - September 2021). Funded with \$869 135 by the [US Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights & Labor](#), Search works to strengthen the resilience of communities in central Mali (Mopti region). The project targets 5 main groups that are likely to influence the dynamic of conflict : authorities, Defense and Security Forces, community leaders, civil society and media professionals. Search uses its expertise in communication and information sharing, supported by 160 peace ambassadors to share awareness and cohesion messages on local media.

"Strengthening community resilience to misinformation in the northern and central regions of Mali" (September 2020- August 2022). In collaboration with the [Canadian Peace and Stabilization Operations Program \(PSOP\)](#), Search aims to strengthen multi-stakeholder coordination and collaboration. Through its activities focus on capacity building, communication, engagement and strategic support to the State, we work at communicate verified, impartial and conflict-sensitive messages and information that encourage dialogue and contribute to the prevention of violent conflicts in Bamako and in the North and Central regions of the Mali (Gao, Mopti, Segou).

A Regional Approach to Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation

Search has worked in West Africa for two decades and in the Sahel since 2005. In West Africa, we have activities across Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, and Chad.

We are currently implementing **PROGRESS** (Programme de résilience et de cohésion Sociale au Sahel), *started in May 2020 and going on until May 2024*. As part of the **"Emergency program for the stabilization of the cross-border spaces of the G5 Sahel"** and conducted by the European Union Trust Fund (EUTF), PROGRESS is funded with \$6,800,000 and holds a consortium of several NGOs, including Search, ACTED, and "Action contre la Faim France". Through this cross-border project in the most fragile border regions between Mali, Burkina-Faso and Niger, Search works with humanitarian and development partners, both local and international organizations, to strengthen horizontal (inter-community) and vertical (state-populations) cohesion and improve the conditions of life in a context of conflicts and vulnerability. In Mali, the project targets Mopti, Gao and Menaka regions and aims to strengthen access to health

services, resilience to food and nutrition insecurity as well as social cohesion between communities and local institutions. Advocacies as well as information sessions and strengthened access to health services will target families (and especially mothers). Search conducts negotiations with all the stakeholders (users, management committees, municipalities, local authorities, etc.) to set up a memorandum of understanding on-site identification, resource management or exploitation, and put in place endogenous prevention and resource management and exploitation mechanisms. To Develop participatory, inclusive and responsive local governance frameworks conflict, Search train Community mobilizers to facilitate dialogue frameworks in conjunction with local partners to ensure the active participation of communities in the process. An important part of the program's success lies in its Mass Media Awareness Campaign, fighting misinformation and transforming attitudes by deconstructing stereotypes and prejudices.

Include Religious actors and communities to contribute to strengthening social cohesion

JISRA (Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Actors) (2021 - 2025). Following Search Common Ground Approach to Religious Engagement and in collaboration with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Search aims to strengthen freedom of religion and belief in Mali through inter-, intra- and extra religious activities. The programme builds capacity to address conflict, radicalisation, and violent extremism related to religion and to help bring peace and reconciliation in the country; it will offer a space where influential religious leaders (Muslim, Catholic, Protestant and Traditionalist) can engage in a dialogue and can join forces with human rights organisations to advocate for tolerance and peace among religious groups. Also, social media campaigning will be used to raise awareness on the importance of tolerance and respect for religious diversity and freedom.

Supporting Peace, Democracy and Reconciliation Process through Media Programming

Search has empowered a diverse group of Malian media professionals, with the aim to leverage the power of media to highlight positive messages fostering inter-community cohesion and tolerance. Through our past projects, trained dozens of women media professionals from 26 community radios stations in Gao and Timbuktu and helped them create a network of women journalists supporting women's participation in the promotion of social cohesion and the implementation of the Peace Agreement in northern Mali. In the same dynamic, Search has engaged dozens of media professionals from the northern regions of the country as well as Bamako, encouraging them to take an active role in promoting the peace process by using Common Ground journalism techniques. Our Broadcasted Radio magazines play a key role in spreading Peace messages, across our network of partner community radio stations in the North of the country, and in the capital city.

Search Approach

Search's transformative dialogue and engagement approach is particularly relevant and useful in active conflict, post-conflict, and closing (or closed) environments. Our expert facilitators are trained to effectively engage diverse groups that range from community and traditional leaders to local, state, and federal government and security personnel. Search also purposefully involves divided and/or adversarial stakeholders and groups, supporting them to foster understanding by focusing on commonalities and humanisation of the "other." This ultimately promotes collaboration and engagement based on shared interests aimed at bridging divides and building relationships that support joint win-win solutions to critical issues and grievances

Capacity Building. While our capacity building is always tailored to the needs and concerns of specific target groups, all of our sessions are underpinned by our **conflict transformation and peacebuilding modules**. Our training typically includes modules on conflict analysis and transformation, community-based mediation, human security, interest-based advocacy, and strategic communication. They provide the skills, tools, and knowledge essential for project participants to understand and act on conflict in a way that is non-adversarial, inclusive, and collaborative. Additionally, our **capacity-building workshops allow participants to jointly identify issues related to security and stability**. Together, they define locally rooted community safety plans and design a joint set of dialogue and community activities to advance peace, social cohesion, and security. To support local ownership, we also provide capacity building to partner CSOs and CBOs to build their core organisational capacities to operate effectively.

Evidence-based Approach to Address Root Causes. Our **interventions are bolstered by rigorous research methods.** Our dedicated global Institutional Learning Team supports in-country monitoring and evaluation (M&E) teams with research design and implementation, and quality learning and adaptation. Given the fluidity of conflict settings, we house a set of core research tools designed to analyze the context; assess and reassess assumptions and conflict dynamics; rapidly and regularly scan target zones for changes in context; and identify barriers, entry points, and stakeholders to address and leverage for a successful intervention. Moreover, M&E is tailored to the needs and contexts of all interventions, including tools for ongoing monitoring of activity implementation as well as rigorous baseline, midterm, and final evaluation processes to assess overall project impact. All of our evaluations are made public to support wider learning across the sector through our public website and our dedicated platform www.DMEforPeace.org. Finally, we also use participatory research.

Track II mediation. Search has a long history of working behind the scenes to support governments in transforming conflict. The tool of Track II mediation has been at the heart of the organisation for 35 years. Through unofficial shuttle diplomacy, back-channel talks, facilitated dialogue, and people-to-people projects, Search helped develop and implement confidence-building measures that support official agreements and understandings between the US and Iran, Israel and Jordan, and between opposition groups in Burundi and Sierra Leone. The Track II Mediation Unit is dedicated to conducting dynamic, multi-level processes to restore trust between conflicting parties, uncover areas of common interest, and support official processes. Search programmes complement official negotiations by dealing with issues on both the substantive and the human levels, and provide a venue for influential, non-official participants to discuss informally, advancing possible solutions collaboratively. The organisation's Track II strategy allows parties to establish personal connections, overcome stereotypes, nurture commitment to working constructively toward mutually agreeable solutions, build bridges of communication and trust, and discuss issues as collaborators rather than adversaries.

Gender and youth empowerment. Informed by our methodologies for gender inclusion and our Children and Youth Department experts, toolkits, and methodologies, SFCG ensures that gender and youth is mainstreamed throughout all components of all projects. Some projects place a specific focus on ensuring that women are strongly represented and actively involved in leading local mediation initiatives and crafting and disseminating radio messages.

A Unique Access and Trust

Over the last six years of committed support in Mali, Search has earned a unique level of trust and access at all levels of government leadership: at the national, regional and departmental level.

Search also works with various partner civil society organizations and nongovernmental organizations. At the local and community level, we have strong bonds with a variety of Communities Radios, and have successfully engaged youth, religious and traditional leaders and local authorities, who have all welcomed our activities. Through our interventions, we aim to establish and/or strengthen locally-based structures and key individuals within the structures that will last beyond our programs and allow for the sustainability of our activities.

Our work in Mali is made possible by the support of our generous donors:

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