



# COUNTRY PROFILE

HIV/AIDS

U.S. Agency for International Development

Bureau for Global Health

## MALI

Mali continues to rank among the few sub-Saharan African countries with a low prevalence HIV/AIDS epidemic in the general population. At the end of 2001, UNAIDS estimated 110,000 adults and children in Mali were living with HIV/AIDS, with an adult prevalence of 1.7 percent. Higher prevalence in bridge populations, such as truck drivers and vendors, may foreshadow a wider epidemic, however.

Estimated Number of Adults and Children Living with HIV/AIDS (end 2001)	110,000
Total Population (2001)	11.7 million
Adult HIV Prevalence (end 2001)	1.7%
HIV-1 Seroprevalence in Urban Areas	
Population most at risk (i.e., sex workers and clients, patients seeking care for a sexually transmitted infection, or others with known risk factors)	21%
Population not at risk (i.e., pregnant women, blood donors, or others with no known risk factors)	5.8%

Sources: UNAIDS, U.S. Census Bureau

According to UNAIDS, 55 percent of adults, aged 15 to 49, living with HIV/AIDS in Mali are women. Sentinel surveillance data from 2002 reveal an estimated 3.3 percent of pregnant women are infected with HIV.

Female sex workers are especially vulnerable to HIV, but surveillance of this population has produced conflicting figures. Prevalence among commercial sex workers in Bamako, the capital city, dropped from 39 percent in 1987 to 23.1 percent in 2000, while prevalence among sex workers in other regions increased from 16 to 49 percent during the same time period.

Female genital cutting, a common practice in Mali, also increases young women's vulnerability to infection. Despite active campaigns to end the practice, the 2001 Demographic and Health Survey found that more than 90 percent of women aged 15 to 49 had undergone the ritual.



Map of Mali: PCL Map Collection, University of Texas

Malian adolescents are vulnerable to HIV due to multiple sex partnering and drug and alcohol use. Young women, in particular, are vulnerable as a result of early initiation of sexual activity and inability to negotiate or rebuff sexual advances. By age 16, 50 percent of women are either married or sexually active.

Additionally, 49 percent of rural women, aged 15 to 19, have had at least one child. While knowledge of HIV/AIDS among adolescents is high (more than 80 percent among females, greater than 90 percent among males), knowledge of sexually transmitted infections is considerably lower, and behavior related to condom use lags even further behind, especially among females (12 percent condom use among females, aged 15 to 19, versus 50 percent among males).

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20523-3600

www.usaid.gov

The May 2000 Integrated Sexually Transmitted Infection Prevalence and Behavior Survey identified additional populations at high risk of HIV infection and reported the following prevalence levels:

- Female sex workers: 28.9 percent;
- Ambulatory vendors: 6.8 percent;
- Long-distance truck drivers: 4.4 percent; and
- Ticket vendors: 5.4 percent.

The survey revealed that low levels of condom use, ineffective health-seeking behaviors for sexually transmitted infections, and multiple sexual partnering are common risk behaviors. The study also reported many vulnerable populations are clustered along major transportation routes, posing a risk for HIV transmission from urban to rural areas.

Significant seasonal migration of agricultural workers to Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and France during Mali's off-agricultural season could have a serious effect on the spread of HIV in Mali in coming years. Migration to and from Côte d'Ivoire, which has the highest HIV prevalence in West Africa, poses particular risks.

## National Response

The national response of Mali's government has been weak thus far, mainly due to poor management and leadership in the National AIDS Program, or *Programme National de Lutte Contre le SIDA* (PNLS). However, recent changes in Ministry of Health and PNLS leadership signal a stronger commitment to fighting the epidemic.

In December 1999, the PNLS developed its third HIV/AIDS Strategy (for 2001–2005). This strategy, referred to by its French acronym, PMT3, delineates the following new objectives:

- Promote a multisectoral response to HIV/AIDS through the active participation of political and civil society leaders at all levels (government institutions and community organizations);
- Promote behavior change among vulnerable populations and the general population to decrease the risk of HIV infection;
- Improve the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS;
- Decrease or minimize mother-to-child transmission of HIV;
- Ensure diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infection in all health facilities;
- Alleviate the burdens of the impact of HIV/AIDS on families and communities;
- Develop standards and laws that respect the dignity and rights of infected persons;
- Expand health coverage and develop local and community capacity;
- Ensure blood transfusion safety; and
- Collect and disseminate epidemiological data on the general population; vulnerable populations; and the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in urban and rural areas.

## USAID Support

The U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) 2001–2005 HIV/AIDS strategy for Mali targets vulnerable populations, youth, community leaders, and the general population through behavior change approaches, voluntary counseling and testing services, and qualitative research. The Mission is currently developing a new HIV/AIDS strategy for 2003–2012, which will emphasize strengthening national capacity and scaling up the second generation of HIV/AIDS responses. In 2002, USAID provided \$3.2 million for HIV/AIDS activities in Mali.

USAID supports the following country programs:

### Advocacy

In a concerted effort to develop an enabling political environment for an effective, multisectoral program response to HIV/AIDS, USAID activities in Mali target national level and community leaders and decision-makers. USAID provides direct support to the PNLS for capacity building, training, and advocacy activities.

In 2002, the Mission supported HIV/AIDS training for radio producers and development of an AIDS impact advocacy tool. USAID also supports ongoing HIV/AIDS sensitization workshops with Malian religious leaders.

### ***Behavior change communication***

Sexually transmitted infection and HIV/AIDS information, education, and communication activities are aimed at the general population as well as vulnerable populations. The Mission's objective is to reach the general population with effective prevention strategies; reach vulnerable groups with information on effective prevention strategies; and promote the use of HIV/AIDS counseling, referral, and treatment services. USAID supports a program to provide radio producers with health and education training, including HIV/AIDS.

### ***Capacity building***

USAID/Mali is working with the PNLS to strengthen its capacity to assume greater leadership and coordination in HIV/AIDS prevention and control. Major activities include:

- Promoting management reorganization of the PNLS;
- Assisting the Ministry of Health in the organization of a national committee for HIV/AIDS;
- Assisting with the revitalization of decentralized/regional PNLS groups;
- Providing short-term training, ongoing technical assistance, and visits to other successful national AIDS programs in the region;
- Establishing and institutionalizing HIV/AIDS sentinel surveillance;
- Increasing surveillance of tuberculosis and other AIDS-related diseases; and
- Bolstering testing capabilities related to surveillance, and voluntary counseling and testing, including infrastructure and laboratory equipment.

### ***Care and support***

To improve access to and quality of care and support for persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families, USAID/Mali supports activities that will:

- Increase psychosocial support;
- Address issues of denial, stigmatization, and discrimination;
- Promote positive health-seeking behaviors;
- Prevent or decrease opportunistic infections; and
- Enable treatment of HIV-positive pregnant women.

### ***Condom social marketing***

The Mission supports community-based condom social marketing programs. Socially marketed condoms are distributed via the private sector and through private distributors, including peer educators. Approximately 12,000 condom sales points have been established and private outlets are being expanded. Information and education campaigns target youth and vulnerable populations along major transportation routes.

### ***Sexually transmitted infections***

In Mali, where prevalence of sexually transmitted infections is relatively low, USAID emphasizes targeted (as opposed to generalized) syndromic approach interventions—complemented by diagnostic methods and capabilities, including counseling and referrals—in all primary and secondary health centers. Through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USAID is working closely with the PNLS to implement sexually transmitted infection syndromic training and supervision, referral services, surveillance, operational research, and other activities designed to improve health-seeking behaviors and clinical care.

In 2002, USAID supported the establishment of a sexually transmitted infection diagnostic testing laboratory.

## **Surveillance**

USAID has supported integrated sexually transmitted infection and behavioral surveillance, antenatal sentinel surveillance, and a population-based HIV survey. Thanks to these surveys, Mali currently has the most comprehensive HIV/AIDS database in sub-Saharan Africa.

## **Voluntary counseling and testing**

USAID/Mali's interventions to improve voluntary counseling and testing build on existing services and include:

- Training of trainers in pre- and post-test counseling procedures;
- Provision of HIV testing kits (with an emphasis on rapid testing); and
- Training of counselors to refer patients to community support centers and/or health centers for HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infection services or treatment of opportunistic infections.

Two socially marketed, voluntary counseling and testing centers recently opened in Mali, making rapid HIV testing available to clients.

## **For More Information**

USAID/Mali

Immeuble Dotembougou

Rue Raymond Poincarre & Rue 319

Quartier du Fleuve/BP 34

Bamako 34, Mali

Tel: (223) 222-36-02

Fax: (223) 222-39-33

Web site: [www.usaid.gov/ml](http://www.usaid.gov/ml).

USAID HIV/AIDS Web site, Mali:

[http://www.usaid.gov/pop\\_health/aids/Countries/africa/mali.html](http://www.usaid.gov/pop_health/aids/Countries/africa/mali.html)

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*For more information, see [www.usaid.gov/pop\\_health/aids/](http://www.usaid.gov/pop_health/aids/) or [www.synergyaids.com](http://www.synergyaids.com).*

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