USAID MALI
COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND STABILIZATION

The purpose of USAID’s Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Stabilization activities is to contribute to peace and reconciliation in Mali by supporting vulnerable communities as they build capacity at the local level to address and mitigate conflict, radicalization, and violent extremism.

USAID’S APPROACH AND RESPONSE
Mali’s protracted conflict and political crisis continues amid increased instability during the current political transition. USAID continues to support communities experiencing conflict at a time of significant increases in violent incidents against civilians and security forces, intercommunal conflict, and internally displaced populations. USAID efforts help to provide hope and alternatives by supporting local leaders and vulnerable populations to promote peace, reconciliation, and inclusive governance.

PEACEBUILDING, STABILIZATION AND RECONCILIATION
USAID Peacebuilding, Stabilization and Reconciliation (PSR) addresses northern Mali’s need for peacebuilding and central Mali’s deteriorating security situation, while protecting U.S. government development investments and national security interests. The activity’s goals are to increase the legitimacy of both local and central governments through meaningful civic engagement and to help at-risk groups become more resilient to violent extremism. PSR aims to improve prospects for long-term peace, security, and reconciliation by creating trust between conflict-affected communities and their government; strengthening the ability of communities to mitigate and manage conflict; prioritizing and implementing measures to address communities’ most pressing development needs; empowering marginalized youth as change agents; and responding flexibly to Mali’s shifting political landscape.

KEY ACTIVITIES: PSR engages youth through the development of peer coaches who train youth in targeted communities on ways to identify relevant local services and resources. Through community forums, PSR sensitizes youth and their families against violent extremism to discourage youth from joining extremist groups. The activity provides grants to community-based organizations that directly engage with local religious institutions - including Koranic schools and madrassas - to reinforce youth messaging and orientation against violent extremism. PSR organizes public debates between key citizen associations including youth and women, as well as traditional and religious leaders, to discuss pressing local conflicts and development priorities. The activity supports the revision of community development plans to be more inclusive and reflective of each community’s self-identified, prioritized needs.
VOICES FOR PEACE
Targeting youth, Voices for Peace is a regional communication and media strengthening effort leveraging both traditional and new media to counter violent extremism and promote peace, democracy, human rights, and good governance. The activity builds the capacity of locally influential voices by establishing interactive media platforms, and engaging at-risk youth, women, and communities with credible content. Voices for Peace seeks to strengthen positive local narratives, expand access to information, and increase dialogue and exchange on themes of CVE, good governance, and peace.

KEY ACTIVITIES: Voices for Peace supports and provides programming to five community radio stations. The activity broadcasts programs related to CVE in local languages and works with community radio stations to broadcast their own programs on similar themes. It also works with a nationwide network of youth bloggers to develop their capacity as community leaders and to support them as they develop peaceful messages in real time that counter misinformation and extremism.

LAFIA: “PEOPLE AT PEACE”
Through a people-to-people approach bringing together political and religious leaders, and young men and women from different ethnic groups, Lafia aims to increase local capacities to counter the drivers of conflict and extremism. This prevention activity targets urban communities in Bamako and in the Kayes region.

KEY ACTIVITIES: In Urban Bamako - Lafia conducted community diagnostics to identify drivers of insecurity. As an example, this work led to the installation of public lighting in Commune IV to reduce urban violence at night. In Kayes - a regional forum on social understanding to strengthen social cohesion was recently held under the chairmanship of the regional Governor and a representative of the Minister of National Reconciliation. The forum informed and sensitized participants on community and intercommunal misunderstandings and included members of the Diaspora in the prevention and peaceful resolution of inter- and intra-community conflicts. Speakers discussed issues of citizenship, civic-mindedness, and patriotism. The forum developed and shared recommendations for a charter and code of conduct to govern relations on the contentious issue of slavery in Kayes. Finally, the event established a multi-actor commission to disseminate and monitor implementation of the slavery charter among affected communities. The event concluded with the signing of the hereditary slavery charter for peaceful cohabitation. This agreement was approved by all the parties: local administrators, prefectural mayors, village chiefs, traditional authorities, religious leaders, the association against descent-based slavery, a representative of the Gambanna International Association, women and youth representatives, and presidents of the Cercle Councils.

NEW PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE: CONFLICT-PREVENTION AND RECOVERY PROGRAM (CPRP)
CPRP seeks to develop new and innovative alliances with Malian community-based organizations to better use local knowledge in combatting issues of radicalization and violent extremism. This activity is currently under development and will include three focus areas. First, CPRP will address local-level grievances and reconciliation to mitigate conflict. Second, the initiative will support efforts for increased social cohesion and trust building within and between communities and local government institutions. Finally, CPRP will promote learning about the intersection between conflict and community-level needs and perceptions during the democratic transition to inform future USAID programming.