

Mali

Country Focus Report

2025



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A) An Introduction to the Enabling Environment

What we understand by an Enabling Environment is the combination of laws, rules and social attitudes that support and promote the work of civil society. Within such an environment, civil society can engage in political and public life without fear of reprisals, openly express its views, and actively participate in shaping its context. This includes a supportive legal and regulatory framework for civil society, ensuring access to information and resources that are sustainable and flexible to pursue their goals unhindered, in safe physical and digital spaces. In an enabling environment, the state demonstrates openness and responsiveness in governance, promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making. Positive values, norms, attitudes, and practices towards civil society from state and non-state actors further underscore the supportive environment.

To capture the state of the Enabling Environment, we use the following six principles:

SIX ENABLING PRINCIPLES

-  **Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms**
-  **Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework**
-  **Accessible and Sustainable Resources**
-  **Open and Responsive State**
-  **Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society**
-  **Access to a Secure Digital Environment**

In this Country Focus Report, each enabling principle is assessed with a quantitative score and complemented by an analysis and recommendations written by our Network Members. Rather than offering a singular index to rank countries, the report aims to measure the enabling environment for civil society across the six principles, discerning dimensions of strength and those requiring attention.

The findings presented in this report are grounded in the insights and diverse perspectives of civil society actors who came together in a dedicated panel with representatives from civil society to discuss and evaluate the state of the Enabling Environment. Their collective input enriches the report with a grounded, participatory assessment. This primary input is further supported by secondary sources of information, which provide additional context and strengthen the analysis.

Brief Overview of the Country Context

“Mali is undergoing a prolonged political transition and security tensions, which are weighing heavily on democratic governance and civic space.”

Mali continues to face a profound political, security, and institutional crisis, with the [military authorities tightening their grip](#) on power since the initial coup in 2020 and the subsequent coup in 2021. The transitional leadership has repeatedly postponed elections and prolonged the transition well beyond initial commitments, while introducing a new [Constitution in 2023](#) and revised [criminal legislation](#) that, although formally reaffirming certain fundamental rights and anti-corruption measures, has attracted [widespread criticism](#) for concentrating authority in the presidency and being enacted at a time when civic freedoms are increasingly constrained.

The security situation [remains deeply troubling](#). Jihadist attacks, intercommunal conflict, and recurrent abuses perpetrated by the Malian armed forces and foreign partners, particularly in central and northern regions, continue to drive widespread displacement and undermine social cohesion. Efforts to reform the security sector [have stalled](#), with civil society organisations largely excluded from meaningful participation in oversight and policymaking, despite their recognised role in promoting accountability and citizen engagement in security governance. This report covers the period of October 2024-October 2025.

Regionally, Mali’s [withdrawal from ECOWAS](#) in 2024–2025, alongside Burkina Faso and Niger, represents a fundamental reorientation of its international partnerships. Analysts [note that](#) this decision is likely to disrupt established trade flows, further restrict regional mobility, weaken multilateral security mechanisms, and limit opportunities for citizens to seek regional justice. In parallel, the three military-led states have [built up](#) the *Alliance of Sahel States (AES)*, which in 2025 [advanced rapidly](#) towards deeper political, economic, and security integration. Developments included the operationalisation of a unified 5,000-strong joint military force, the consolidation of new regional financial and media institutions, and the establishment of governance bodies designed to function as alternatives to ECOWAS structures.

Domestically, the transitional authorities [endorsed new legislation](#) enabling the junta leader to serve renewable five-year terms, potentially extending military rule until at least 2030. This move, along with the dissolution of political parties and ongoing repression of dissent, provoked [significant public mobilisations in 2025](#). These demonstrations represented the most

substantial challenge to the military authorities since their ascent, with citizens condemning the erosion of democratic institutions and the intention to entrench indefinite military rule.

Across this landscape, civil society operates in an increasingly hostile environment. By 2025, the environment for civil society had become markedly repressive. The authorities imposed far-reaching [restrictions](#) on political and civic activity, dissolving political parties, suspending associations, and employing cybercrime legislation to prosecute critics. Activists, journalists, and opposition figures were exposed to [arbitrary arrests](#), enforced disappearances, and systematic harassment. The [conviction and imprisonment](#) of former Prime Minister Moussa Mara for expressing solidarity with prisoners of conscience came to symbolise the broader [collapse](#) of judicial independence and the instrumentalisation of legal processes to silence dissent. Freedom House's [Freedom in the World 2025](#) report once again rated Mali as "Not Free," recording significant deterioration in political participation, media freedom, and civil liberties.

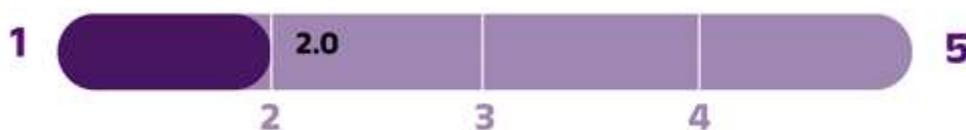
Despite the severity of these constraints, Malian civil society continues to play an indispensable role in humanitarian action, conflict mitigation, anti-corruption monitoring, and the promotion of social cohesion. However, without credible progress towards restoring democratic governance and safeguarding fundamental freedoms, the civic space required for effective engagement risks further erosion, placing at risk both national stability and the capacity for inclusive, rights-based development. The following report presents enabling-environment developments from January to December 2025, with occasional references to key events that occurred prior to January 2025 where relevant.

B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

PRINCIPLE SCORE

1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Score: ¹



“The legal recognition of freedoms in Mali contrasts sharply with their increasing restriction in practice.”

Mali’s civic space deteriorated markedly across 2025, as freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and expression—though formally guaranteed in the 2023 Constitution—were increasingly undermined by restrictive decrees, criminal prosecutions, and coercive enforcement. The CIVICUS Monitor [indicates](#) Mali’s civic space as “repressed”, with a score of 30/100. Freedom of association contracted sharply: political parties and civic organisations faced suspensions, dissolutions, and intimidation, with the junta’s April 2025 suspension of political activities and repeated targeting of activists and journalists illustrating the widening gap between constitutional guarantees and practice. Peaceful assembly was likewise curtailed, with authorities frequently banning demonstrations on broad “public order” grounds, dispersing protests through intimidation and arrests, and responding to the May 2025 anti-government mobilisations with heavy-handed tactics and threats of reprisals, leaving CS actors feeling unsafe and deterred from organising. Freedom of expression faced some of the most serious declines: the state intensified censorship, suspended media outlets, criminalised online criticism under cybercrime legislation, and prosecuted figures such as former Prime Minister Moussa Mara for non-violent dissent, reinforcing a climate of fear and self-censorship. Taken together, these developments reveal a systemic strategy to repress civic space,

¹This is a rebased score derived from the [CIVICUS Monitor rating](#) published in December 2025.

weaken accountability, and marginalise independent voices, with 2025 marking a clear further decline in the operational and democratic space available to civil society organisations in Mali.

1.1 | Freedom of Association

Mali's [Constitution of 22 July 2023](#) formally guarantees the protection of fundamental freedoms, including the right to associate; yet the gap between constitutional provisions and practice widened significantly in 2025. Although the constitutional framework affirms human rights guarantees, the transitional authorities have increasingly relied on criminal, administrative, and exceptional measures to restrict associative life, undermining the clarity, predictability, and enforceability of these protections. Evidence from multiple 2025 sources indicates a marked deterioration in the enabling environment. Freedom House again [classified Mali as Not Free](#), citing the systematic suspension of political parties and the junta's decree prohibiting political activities in April 2025, which directly curtailed the functioning of associations and civic organisations. Similarly, the [Enabling Environment Snapshot 2025 documents escalating constraints](#), including the dissolution or threatened dissolution of civil society organisations (CSOs), bans on foreign media, and widespread intimidation and harassment of civic actors. The authorities are also resorting to administrative measures such as revoking [licences](#), [repealing](#) statutes, and making legal threats, creating a climate of legal uncertainty and encouraging [self-censorship](#).

Several developments in 2025 had direct implications for the legal and operational space for associations. The [prosecution of former Prime Minister](#) Moussa Mara under the cybercrime legislation—upheld on appeal in February 2026 for acts of peaceful expression—exemplifies [the broadened use of penal tools to silence dissent](#), signalling increased risks for associations engaging in advocacy or critical commentary. This judicial environment fosters self-censorship and heightens the vulnerability of CSOs to criminalisation. Reports from [Amnesty International](#) further highlight enforced disappearances and the targeting of activists and journalists throughout 2025, illustrating the persistence of reprisals linked to associative and political engagement.

Evidence of dissolutions and suspensions remained prominent. Although the dissolution of the Association of Pupils and Students of Mali (AEEM) occurred in 2024, the trend intensified in 2025, with authorities extending [the suspension](#) of [political parties](#), [dissolving organisations en masse](#), and maintaining a de facto prohibition on political mobilisation. The [national dialogue held in May 2025](#)—boycotted by most opposition and civil society actors—recommended extending the transition until 2027, effectively neutralising independent associations and reinforcing a climate hostile to pluralism. The broader political context, marked by the junta's efforts to institutionalise long-term military rule and the [public protests of May 2025](#), further contributed to a precarious environment in which associations risk surveillance, arbitrary enforcement, and administrative sanction when critical of the authorities.

Across human rights reporting, testimonies, and media investigations, a consistent picture emerges: associations face intensified structural and coercive pressures, ranging from deregistration threats to criminal prosecution and harassment. Trends throughout 2025 point unequivocally to a further decline in freedom of association. This deterioration weakens civic oversight, reduces collective mobilisation, and undermines the resilience and sustainability of Mali's civil society sector at a critical moment of political uncertainty.

1.2 | Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

Although Mali's 2023 Constitution guarantees fundamental freedoms, including peaceful assembly, the legal framework governing public gatherings has increasingly been applied in a restrictive manner, particularly under the transitional military authorities. In 2025, no substantive legal amendments were introduced to strengthen this right; rather, the authorities relied on decrees and administrative measures [to further limit assemblies](#). The suspension of all political party activities by the junta in April 2025, justified on vague grounds of public order, amounted to a de facto ban on political gatherings and significantly narrowed the scope for lawful public assembly. This measure, alongside the wider crackdown [documented by Freedom House](#), illustrates an environment in which the right to assemble is far more theoretical than real.

The management of assemblies in 2025 was characterised by systematic prohibition and coercive policing. Major demonstrations were either denied permission or dispersed through intimidation, arrests, and, in some cases, [enforced disappearances](#). Authorities [frequently prohibit](#) demonstrations and have dissolved or threatened organisations that attempt to convene public gatherings, with intimidation, harassment, and illegal arrests becoming common consequences for those participating in or organising assemblies. Evidence of differential treatment is also striking: assemblies linked to political opposition, civil society critics, and human rights defenders were targeted far more aggressively, while pro-government mobilisation was tolerated or facilitated.

The handling of major assemblies in 2025 demonstrates the risks faced by protesters. The protests of May 2025—one of the rare moments of mass mobilisation against continued military rule—were met with aggressive crowd control and the threat of clashes with pro-regime youth groups, reflecting an increasingly hostile environment for dissent. Human rights monitors have further [documented](#) arrests and disappearances of activists and journalists linked to their participation in or coverage of assemblies, reinforcing the degree to which protest-related activity has become criminalised.

In practical terms, civil society actors report feeling unsafe when attempting to organise gatherings, noting that surveillance, threats, and arbitrary enforcement render notification processes meaningless and create a climate where authorisation is rarely granted for independent or opposition-aligned activities. The cumulative evidence from media reporting, human rights documentation, and eyewitness accounts confirms that freedom of peaceful assembly [continued to deteriorate](#) throughout 2025. This decline directly shrinks civic space by deterring public mobilisation, obstructing citizen participation, and constraining the ability of civil society to advocate collectively on governance, rights, and accountability.

1.3 | Freedom of Expression

Freedom of [expression](#) in Mali is seriously compromised. Mali's 2023 Constitution formally guarantees freedom of expression, media freedom, and access to information; however, these commitments remain largely nominal amid an intensifying pattern of state control and punitive enforcement. Throughout 2025, the authorities continued to rely on restrictive legislation—particularly the 2019 cybercrime law—to [criminalise speech](#) deemed critical of the government, significantly affecting civil society actors, journalists, and human rights defenders. The [conviction of former Prime Minister Moussa Mara](#) under cybercrime provisions for expressing solidarity with detained activists illustrates how political commentary has become legally perilous, with courts imposing custodial sentences for online expression and thereby generating a chilling effect across civic and media sectors.

Human rights reports in 2025 document a marked escalation in harassment, intimidation, and arbitrary detention of journalists and activists. Amnesty International [reported](#) enforced disappearances and the targeting of journalists linked to peaceful criticism, noting the abduction of journalist El Béchir Thiam in May 2025 after he publicly criticised the transitional parliament's decision to extend the military government's mandate. Freedom House likewise [observed severe restrictions](#) on media and political expression, highlighting a decree suspending all political party activities and ordering the media to cease reporting on political associations, effectively eliminating independent scrutiny. This environment sharply limits the ability of CS actors to access independent platforms or challenge governance failures without fear of reprisal.

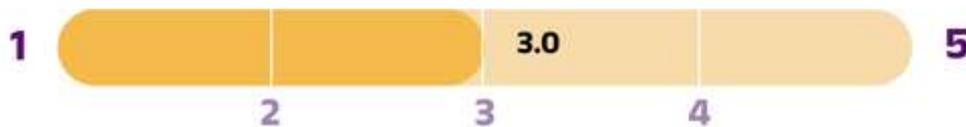
State pressure on the media intensified as authorities suspended broadcast licences, banned foreign outlets, and targeted investigative reporting. The banning of international media and the dissolution or intimidation of CSOs attempting to disseminate critical information, leading to widespread self-censorship and an erosion of pluralistic debate, were also [observed in 2025](#). Between April and July 2025, journalist [Alfousseini Togo](#) was arrested and convicted for criticising the Ministry of Justice. Local media outlets, such as [Joliba TV News](#), have had their licences suspended, while some international channels have been banned, reducing access to pluralistic information. The result is a landscape in which criticism of the military leadership, security operations, corruption, or the political transition is considered “sensitive” and highly likely to trigger state backlash, including judicial harassment and public threats. Human Rights Watch also [recorded](#) sustained crackdowns on dissent, confirming an entrenched suppression of expression under military rule.

Across the available evidence, freedom of expression in 2025 continued to decline sharply, with profound implications for the enabling environment for civil society. The criminalisation of speech, the intimidation of media workers, and the closure of independent outlets weaken public oversight, compromise CSOs' ability to advocate on governance and rights issues, and restrict citizens' access to reliable information. This systematically engineered climate of fear, censorship, and coercion undermines transparency, entrenches impunity, and contributes to the broader constriction of civic space in Mali.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

Score:



“Legal recognition of freedom of association cannot be assessed solely on the basis of legislation but must also take into account the actual conditions under which civil society organisations are registered, operate and are protected.”

The legal and institutional framework governing [civil society](#) in Mali formally recognises freedom of association and the right of organisations to register, operate and carry out their activities. However, the effectiveness of these rights is conditioned by administrative practices, procedural requirements and control dynamics that influence the registration, operating environment and level of protection of civil society organisations against interference. The following analysis assesses these dimensions in light of recent reforms and their practical implementation.

2.1 | Registration

Mali’s legal framework [continues to recognise](#) the right of any person or entity, including marginalised groups, to establish an organisation, with Article 17 of the [Constitution](#) guaranteeing freedom of association, while [Law No. 04-038 of 5 August 2004](#) on associations, amended by Ordinance [No. 2024-008/ PT-RM](#) of 28 March 2024, defines the conditions and procedures for the creation, operation and dissolution of associations. However, reforms adopted through *Ordonnance n°2024-008/PT-RM* significantly altered the operational environment by introducing a mandatory administrative authorisation and prior declaration requirement for all associations—tightening state control and moving away from the previous system that allowed organisations to form freely without prior approval. This shift was widely reported in 2024 and continued to shape civic space throughout 2025, with national media noting that the decree was justified by the government as necessary for “public order” but also linked to repeated dissolutions of associations under the revised law. These changes created new legal and administrative barriers, particularly for smaller community-based organisations

and groups addressing politically sensitive issues, which faced heightened scrutiny and delays. [\[afrikinfos-mali.com\]](https://afrikinfos-mali.com), [\[maliexpress.net\]](https://maliexpress.net)

Evidence from 2025 indicates that registration procedures, although formally defined, were neither accessible nor efficient in practice. Significant administrative delays in [the issuance of receipts are common](#), often attributable to [logistical constraints](#), limited availability of competent authorities and [the lack of digitisation](#) of procedures. The complexity of documentation and the sometimes high costs associated with registration can discourage small community-based organisations or those located outside urban centres. Some associations dealing with politically sensitive issues, such as human rights, governance or minority issues, face additional obstacles and [increased scrutiny](#) when submitting their applications. Even when a notice of no objection (NNO) is issued, [some organisations encounter difficulties](#) in becoming fully operational due to a lack of consistent administrative follow-up or clarity in procedures.

Civil society actors in 2025 [highlighted](#) burdensome bureaucratic steps, inconsistency in administrative follow-up, and logistical bottlenecks that made registration costlier and less predictable, especially for organisations operating outside urban centres or those lacking financial and legal resources. The tightening of the regulatory environment was compounded by wider restrictions on civic space: documented cases of associations being dissolved bear witness to these constraints. The Observatory for Elections and Good Governance in Mali was [dissolved by decree in 2024](#), in accordance with the provisions of the law on associations, although doubts were expressed as to whether procedural guarantees had been respected.

While appeal mechanisms theoretically exist for associations whose registration is denied, the political and civic context in 2025 undermined their functionality. Judicial remedies were made more uncertain by [government decrees](#) dissolving [political parties](#) and suspending [political activities](#), which signalled executive dominance over legal safeguards and raised [serious doubts](#) about the neutrality of administrative review processes. In May 2025, a sweeping decree dissolved all political parties and organisations deemed political in nature, illustrating how the legal framework could be deployed to extinguish entire categories of organisational life without meaningful procedural guarantees or transparent avenues of recourse. Although a Malian court temporarily suspended this dissolution in August 2025, the episode underscored the fragility of appeal mechanisms and the extent to which registration and legal status had become contingent on political tolerance rather than rule-based protections.

Overall, the cumulative effect of the 2024–2025 reforms, administrative inefficiencies, and politically motivated dissolutions reveals a registration environment moving towards greater state control, reduced predictability, and heightened vulnerability for civil society—fundamentally constraining the ability of CSOs to form, sustain operations, and contribute to democratic governance in Mali.

2.2 | Operational Environment

Although Mali's [legal framework](#) nominally permits civil society organisations to define their internal governance, objectives, and programmes without direct state interference, developments in 2024–2025 have significantly expanded government oversight, reducing operational autonomy in practice. National media and legal analyses confirm that this reform was justified by the authorities on “public order” grounds and led to [heightened state scrutiny](#) of CSO activities. [Government technical services](#) closely monitor CSO programmes.

Administrative oversight intensified considerably in 2025. The *Enabling Environment Snapshot (2025)* reports that CSOs were subjected to growing layers of bureaucratic control nationwide, including pressures to submit programme documentation, delays in receiving

authorisations, and threats of dissolution or suspension. Operational activities—such as workshops involving local authorities, research in sensitive areas, or election-related observation—frequently required prior approval or a [Notice of No Objection](#), with processing times ranging from one week to one month, causing significant implementation delays. In addition, certain undeclared sensitive activities, such as holding public events without notification, publishing reports deemed sensitive without prior sharing, or unauthorised election observation, may result in sanctions ranging from temporary freezing of activities to administrative suspension. The increased regulatory burden disproportionately affected organisations working on governance, rights-based issues, or other sensitive themes, making operational decisions more dependent on political tolerance than legal entitlement.

Interviews with CSOs in early 2025 also highlight that reporting obligations, including repeated requests for financial documentation and programme justifications, imposed a heavy administrative burden that risked diverting resources away from service delivery and citizen engagement. These constraints collectively narrowed the operational space available to civil society and increased the risk of arbitrary administrative obstruction.

Access to funding—particularly from international donors—became increasingly regulated, with certain grants requiring prior validation by government authorities and mandatory transmission of financial reports to relevant ministries. In 2025, external funding had already become more fragile due to shifting political dynamics, and state-imposed requirements further reduced CSOs' flexibility and capacity to operate effectively. Although participation in donor calls remained possible, the cumulative effect of heightened scrutiny, administrative blockages, and political constraints significantly limited the ability of organisations to mobilise and utilise resources. Moreover, broader restrictions—including the suspension and dissolution of politically affiliated associations—signalled to donors and partners that regulatory conditions were volatile and could directly impede project continuity.

Taken together, the operational environment in 2025 became markedly more restrictive. While CSOs formally retained the right to organise and implement programmes, the tightening of authorisation requirements, increasing bureaucratic delays, and new constraints on funding created a climate of uncertainty and dependency that undermined their autonomy, weakened their capacity to respond to community needs, and significantly eroded the enabling environment for civil society in Mali.

2.3 | Protection from Interference

While Mali's [2023 Constitution](#) formally guarantees the freedom to create, manage, and dissolve associations, the events of 2024–2025 demonstrate a widening gap between legal protections and their practical enforcement. The legal framework sets out grounds for suspension or dissolution—such as threats to public order or violations of statutes—and provides avenues for [judicial challenge](#), yet the [sweeping dissolution](#) of all political parties and politically affiliated organisations by presidential decree on 13 May 2025 showed how these safeguards can be overridden through executive action. UN experts condemned the decree as a direct attack on freedom of association and warned that its vague and expansive wording enabled arbitrary enforcement and criminalisation of lawful civic activity. Although a Bamako court later suspended the decree in August 2025, pending constitutional review, the episode exposed the fragility of appeal mechanisms and the limited ability of CSOs to obtain timely protection when facing politically motivated interference.

Mali's legal framework does not contain explicit provisions prohibiting all forms of [unjustified administrative interference](#), creating a grey area that can be exploited in practice. Similarly, there are no specific guarantees protecting CSOs from interference from non-state actors, such as interest groups, political-military actors or community structures. Throughout 2025,

organisations—particularly those working on governance, accountability, elections, or human rights—[reported heightened administrative pressure](#), smear campaigns, and restrictions justified under the banner of national security or public order. Notable cases have involved organisations such as the Observatory for Elections and Good Governance and Amnesty International Mali, which have been the subject of smear campaigns or [restrictions on their activities](#). The broader civic environment, documented in the *Enabling Environment Snapshot (2025)*, confirmed systematic intimidation, harassment, and threats of dissolution affecting CSOs nationwide, illustrating how interference can be exercised through administrative tools rather than formal legal penalties. These conditions create an opaque regulatory environment in which protections exist on paper but can be selectively applied or circumvented.

State [inspections and administrative controls](#), while legally authorised, also function as mechanisms of oversight that risk veering into surveillance or obstruction. These inspections are not governed by a standardised procedure, and the bodies responsible vary (MATD departments, prefectures, governorates), leading to a lack of consistency in practices. CSOs [reported](#) inconsistent and repetitive inspection demands from various administrative bodies in 2025, with organisations working on politically sensitive issues [subjected to more frequent](#) and intrusive checks. The lack of clarity in the interpretation of the texts and the low level of independence of certain control bodies increase the [risk of arbitrary application](#), particularly for organisations that criticise public policies. These practices can have a [deterrent effect](#) on freedom of expression and CSOs' access to international funding, as some donors perceive an increased political or legal risk. Nevertheless, the basic legal framework [remains solid](#), and several CSOs continue to operate freely, including on sensitive issues, without direct intervention by the state. Recent improvements have been noted in [consultation](#) between the authorities and civil society umbrella organisations, such as FONGIM, which is calling for a review of the legal framework to strengthen procedural guarantees and legal protection for civic actors.

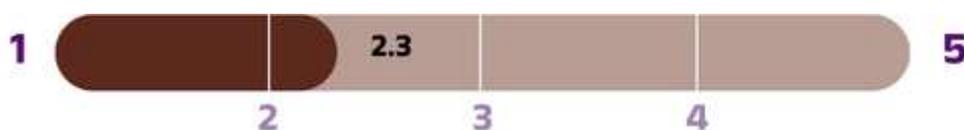
Overall, Mali's protections against interference weakened significantly in 2025. While the legal framework theoretically aligns with international standards, its selective and politically influenced application—exemplified by mass dissolutions, administrative pressure, and burdensome oversight—has narrowed civic space and undermined the security and autonomy of civil society actors.



PRINCIPLE SCORE

3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Score:



"The sustainability of civil society depends on transparent, accessible funding mechanisms that are adapted to local realities."

The ability of civil society organisations to fully exercise their role depends largely on their access to sufficient, diversified and predictable financial resources. This principle assesses the extent to which CSOs in Mali can mobilise accessible funding, use resources effectively and ensure the sustainability of their actions in an environment marked by administrative, political and security constraints.

3.1 | Accessibility of resources

Access to resources for civil society organisations in Mali remains [highly limited](#), both in terms of volume and diversity of available sources. Public funding for CSOs is marginal and irregular, and there is no structured [national mechanism](#) to ensure the sustainability of local organisations' actions. The majority of CSOs are therefore dependent on external aid, whose [criteria and priorities](#) are defined by international donors. Organisations working on sensitive issues such as governance, anti-corruption, accountability, human rights, security or gender [face increased difficulties](#) in obtaining funding due to the political sensitivity of their areas of intervention and a climate of institutional mistrust. On the other hand, CSOs working in sectors considered [less sensitive](#), such as education, health or entrepreneurship, have easier access to resources, often through calls for projects launched by technical and financial partners. To date, [no quantitative data](#) is available to estimate the percentage of CSOs affected by these restrictions or the proportion of projects rejected in sensitive sectors.

The monitoring and control of the activities of associations and foundations constitutes an additional limitation. A working committee created by [Decision No. 2022-000805/MATD-SG of 14 November 2022](#) has been tasked with supervising these activities, and the measure now requires a [notice of no objection](#) for any financial support or subsidy granted to a foreign association or foundation. Furthermore, the deterioration of relations between the Malian

transitional authorities and the French authorities in 2022 has tightened control over the funding and activities of NGOs operating in Mali, formalised by [communiqué No. 042 of 21 November 2022](#) and [decree No. 2022-0738/PT-RM](#) of 29 November 2022, prohibiting all activities carried out with funding or material support from France.

Administrative procedures, in particular the [notices of non-objection](#) required for any receipt of foreign funds, constitute a [major obstacle](#) for CSOs. These processes are often perceived as slow, opaque and arbitrary, leading to significant delays in project implementation and financial insecurity. There is no [official data](#) documenting the average time it takes to obtain notices, rejection rates, or the proportion of CSOs affected, although some organisations estimate these delays to be between two and eight weeks. Competition for access to available funds is also intense, particularly between national and international CSOs, which exacerbates inequalities in [access to funding](#). Community-based or emerging organisations, which are often poorly structured and located outside major urban centres, find it difficult to meet the technical, linguistic and accounting requirements of [donors](#), which effectively excludes them from calls for proposals.

Information on funding opportunities is [not centralised](#) or easily accessible, as there is no one-stop shop or national database listing available projects and grants. Many organisations also [lack the](#) skills needed for [project design](#), financial management and resource mobilisation, which limits their ability to compete effectively in international calls for proposals. Existing training programmes, provided by certain technical and financial partners such as the EU or USAID, benefit only a minority of CSOs and remain [insufficiently documented](#).

In terms of taxation, the [legal framework](#) offers few incentives for philanthropy and donations to CSOs. Local private contributions remain marginal, in a fragile economic context and with a poorly developed culture of crowdfunding. The government does not provide specific [tax deductions](#) for donations to CSOs, and the rates applied to income-generating activities do not include [any exemptions](#) for non-profit actors.

Finally, relations with financial institutions represent another obstacle for CSOs. They [encounter difficulties](#) in opening or managing bank accounts, particularly for international transfers, which increases operational costs and risks. Some [banks require](#) detailed documentation, including statutes, activity reports, lists of donors or work plans, sometimes leading to delays or temporary freezing of accounts. There is no [official data](#) on the frequency of these situations or the number of CSOs affected, but several organisations have reported delays ranging from a few days to several weeks, particularly in northern regions.

All of these factors, including [low public funding](#), dependence on [external aid](#), [bureaucratic red tape](#), increased competition and lack of technical capacity, considerably [limit the](#) scope of action of CSOs. Several organisations have documented specific cases where these obstacles have led to the cancellation or suspension of projects, although no systematic study has been published at the national level.

3.2 | Effectiveness of Resource

Funding from technical and financial partners (TFPs) in Mali is generally aligned with their strategic frameworks while respecting the principle of institutional autonomy of civil society organisations. The majority of donors, such as [the European Union](#), [Swiss Cooperation](#), [Danida](#), [UNDP](#) and [Global Affairs Canada](#), adopt partnership and contractual approaches, considering CSOs as actors of implementation and social innovation rather than mere executors. This dynamic reflects a gradual strengthening of mutual trust and increased recognition of the role of civil society in governance, peace, human rights and local development.

Relations between donors and CSOs are generally collaborative, with [mechanisms for consultation](#) and [co-construction](#) of projects. Aid localisation programmes and direct financing mechanisms also encourage more active participation by non-state actors. [Several recent initiatives](#) now integrate contextual risks such as security, governance, gender and [climate change](#) into their support strategies, thereby enhancing the relevance and quality of partnerships. However, these mechanisms are not always accompanied by truly adaptive financial mechanisms, such as emergency envelopes, [flexible funds](#) or streamlined budget reallocation procedures, thus limiting the capacity of CSOs to quickly adjust their actions in response to emerging needs.

This alignment remains partial and has several limitations. Donors' priorities are often determined by their own institutional agendas, which can lead to support being disproportionate to the real needs of CSOs. Funding is mainly granted on a [short-term basis](#), generally for 12 to 24 months, reducing the possibility for organisations to develop multi-year strategies or consolidate their achievements. In addition, administrative procedures and reporting requirements remain [cumbersome and rigid](#), absorbing a significant portion of human resources. Small local CSOs continue to face [barriers to](#) accessing direct funding due to limited administrative, financial or linguistic capacities.

Furthermore, certain [constraints imposed](#) by the Malian government influence the use of resources. Restrictions include [prior authorisations](#) for sensitive activities, notices of non-objection required for certain projects, and increased control over the nature of [external funding](#). These requirements can slow down interventions and [limit the](#) CSOs' room for manoeuvre. With regard to security issues, PTFs take contextual risks into account, but few details are available on the specific protocols or mitigation measures implemented. Nevertheless, observed practices include [travel restrictions](#), prior security assessments, alert systems, and clauses for suspending or adapting activities, without a clearly documented harmonised framework.

Despite these limitations, notable progress has been made since 2022. Aid localisation has strengthened [the involvement of CSOs](#) in project [design](#), implementation and evaluation, allowing for more precise adaptation to local realities. Some donors have also set up cascading [grant](#) mechanisms, managed by national platforms such as the Fonds d'appui aux moteurs du changement ([FAMOC](#)) or the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives ([FCIL](#)). These mechanisms [promote the redistribution](#) of resources, strengthen the capacities of local organisations and offer a more accessible alternative for emerging CSOs.

Overall, donors [contribute to the consolidation](#) of civic space and largely respect the principles of partnership and autonomy. Nevertheless, the alignment of funding with CSO priorities, the flexibility of financial mechanisms and the robustness of security measures remain insufficiently developed. The relevance and sustainability of interventions [remain limited](#) by technical requirements, short funding cycles and still only partial alignment with community needs. However, progress in localisation, [co-construction](#) and the gradual adaptation of procedures warrants a partially favourable assessment, while highlighting the need to [strengthen flexibility](#), security and strategic alignment of funding.

3.3 | Sustainability of resources

Funding for civil society organisations in Mali remains insufficient and is mainly directed towards [short-term projects](#), limiting their ability to ensure [operational continuity](#), plan for the long term and maintain [programme results](#). According to observations by technical and financial partners, more than 70% of the funding received by CSOs is allocated to specific

projects of [limited duration](#), while less than 30% is devoted to [institutional](#) or core funding, including operations and organisational strengthening.

Dependence on short-term funding is a major constraint. Most CSOs operate on ad hoc projects [with no guarantee of renewal](#), which complicates strategic planning and organisational stability. [Short funding](#) cycles, typically six to twelve months, affect the continuity of activities and job security within organisations, limiting their ability to [achieve long-term programmatic objectives](#). Some national CSOs active in promoting human rights or providing humanitarian assistance were thus [forced to suspend](#) activities or [reduce their staff](#) in 2023 and 2024, despite satisfactory results observed by donors.

The lack of diversification in funding sources is another aggravating factor. CSOs depend mainly on a few [international donors](#), one or two of which may account for more than 60% of an organisation's annual resources. Opportunities to mobilise local resources, such as donations, volunteers or income-generating activities, [remain limited](#), reinforcing the vulnerability of CSOs to fluctuations in the financial environment. Volunteer networks exist but [remain poorly](#) structured and short-lived, while initiatives to generate their own income, such as service provision, paid training or consultancy, [remain marginal and insufficient](#) to cover operating costs.

CSO projects also suffer from a lack of local ownership, which reduces their [sustainability and impact](#). Interventions are often designed and implemented without real community involvement and do not always take into account local needs, culture or realities. This situation [is reinforced](#) by the rigidity of funding frameworks, which offer CSOs little leeway to adjust initiatives to [local dynamics](#).

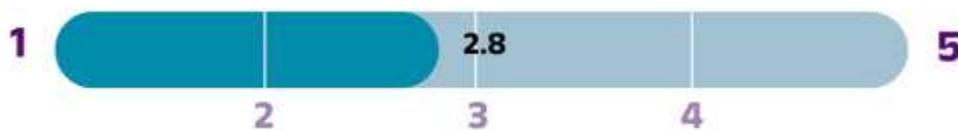
Other factors further aggravate the situation. The [general decline](#) in available funding, the difficulty of accessing certain areas of intervention and [security constraints](#) accentuate the fragility of CSOs and limit their autonomy. This trend, which has been observed for several years, is the result of the [gradual reduction](#) of certain international funding, the reorientation of donor priorities and the suspension or slowdown of certain programmes since the beginning of the political transition. Even when aid is made available to strengthen autonomy, it remains ad hoc and does not cover all [needs](#) in terms of structural sustainability. Initiatives to promote sustainability, such as institutional support funds or professionalisation programmes, remain limited and insufficiently widespread.

All of these constraints, including [limited access](#) to diversified and sustainable funding, heavy dependence on short-term projects and low local ownership of initiatives, make [strategic planning](#) and sustainability of results very difficult for CSOs in Mali. These structural limitations, combined with a [downward trend](#) in medium- and long-term funding, justify an unfavourable rating for this aspect of funding.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

4. Open and Responsive State

Score:



"Without effective transparency and accountability mechanisms, citizen participation remains formal and without real impact."

Despite constitutional guarantees of access to information and participation, transparency and accountability practices in Mali remain only partially effective, limiting civil society's ability to influence governance. Access to public information is hampered by inconsistent implementation, inaccessible formats, and the systematic withholding of sensitive data—particularly in defence and public finance—while legal procedures for obtaining information are slow, opaque, and rarely enforced. Participation mechanisms exist through forums and consultations, yet these are unevenly applied, highly selective, and often occur too late in the decision-making cycle to allow meaningful input, with rural CSOs especially disadvantaged due to weak digital infrastructure. Feedback from authorities is irregular, informal, and rarely documented, and no formal accountability mechanisms ensure that civil society's contributions are considered or that refusals can be challenged. As a result, civil society engagement is constrained by limited transparency, restricted participation, and weak state responsiveness, yielding a civic environment that remains only partially favourable to effective oversight and democratic governance.

4.1. | Transparency

The Malian [Constitution](#) formally recognises the right of access to public information, but its implementation remains inconsistent and partially effective. While the legal framework establishes this right, its [effectiveness varies](#) depending on the sector, institutional level and nature of the information concerned.

Some data is published on digital platforms, but the formats used are not [accessible to all](#), particularly [deaf or mute](#) people and those facing [language barriers](#). The majority of content

is published in French, with virtually no versions in national languages or adapted formats, such as sign language, audio, simplified documents or versions compatible with screen readers. Furthermore, [certain sensitive information](#), particularly in the [areas of defence](#), financial transfers or military equipment, remains opaque or deliberately concealed, [limiting access to data](#) that is essential for civil society. [Detailed budgets](#), implementation reports or audits relating to these sectors are not generally published proactively.

Legal procedures for accessing information exist, but they [are complex](#), slow and sometimes incomplete. The justifications for [restrictions](#) are not always [transparent](#), and mechanisms for appeal or sanctions in the event of refusal are not systematically applied. Although administrative and judicial remedies are provided for in theory, there are no documented examples of effective sanctions or widely publicised favourable decisions, [which limits](#) their deterrent effect.

Access to information remains [particularly difficult](#) for actors working on sensitive issues such as disinformation, governance or public finances. These difficulties are compounded at the local level, where local authorities and decentralised services publish [very little information](#) on a systematic basis. Proactive publication remains partial, and dissemination deadlines do not [guarantee](#) full or immediate transparency. Few concrete examples can be identified, whether in terms of draft legislation, budgets, [audit reports](#) or major administrative decisions.

Thus, despite the existence of legal requirements guaranteeing access to information, the absence of quantitative data, the lack of concrete examples, shortcomings in terms of accessibility, weak appeal mechanisms and transparency practices that are still limited at the local level [partially hinder](#) the effective exercise of this right by CSOs and civil society. This situation justifies maintaining a partially favourable assessment.

4.2 | Participation

The participation of civil society actors in decision-making processes in Mali [remains partial and uneven](#). In several areas, particularly those related to the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), public authorities [seek the](#) contribution of specialised organisations through forums, thematic workshops or [sectoral consultations](#). Some CSOs are thus involved in the development or monitoring of public policies, particularly in the areas of education, health, governance and the environment.

The legal framework also provides for [consultation](#) and monitoring mechanisms through regular meetings between CSOs and public authorities. These exchanges promote dialogue and coordination, while providing an indirect means of monitoring programmes, funding and operational activities. However, this participation [remains limited](#) and often selective. For issues considered politically sensitive or strategic, the selection of participants is generally controlled, excluding certain [CSOs critical](#) of the authorities. This practice creates discrimination between actors based on their type, their position vis-à-vis the government or their degree of alignment with official policy. Online participation mechanisms, where they exist, [are underdeveloped](#) and do not provide effective access to CSOs based in rural or remote areas, which face constraints in terms of connectivity, costs and technical capacity.

Furthermore, consultations are often held at an [advanced stage](#) of the decision-making process, limiting the time available to CSOs to formulate substantive proposals. No precise information is available on the [deadlines](#) for submitting written or oral contributions, nor on the official consultation schedules, which limits the quality and depth of civil society input. Participation thus appears to be more of a [consultative formality](#) than a genuine integration into the decision-making process.

Discussion of the legal and institutional frameworks guaranteeing civil society participation [also remains limited](#). While certain texts or consultation mechanisms do exist, their scope, binding nature and effective application are not clearly established, undermining the predictability and regularity of CSO participation.

In summary, although civil society is officially consulted and invited to certain dialogue forums, the lack of concrete examples of impact, the weakness of inclusive mechanisms, the lack of clarity on consultation deadlines and the inadequacy of legal guarantees mean that its real influence [remains low](#). The involvement of CSOs depends largely on the nature of the subject and the political will of the authorities.

4.3 | Accountability

Feedback from the government to civil society actors on how their contributions are taken into account remains irregular and [insufficiently documented](#). In most cases, public administrations [do not systematically](#) communicate on the integration of civil society organisations' proposals into public policies. When feedback does exist, it is most often verbal, general and informal, with no standardised procedure or clear institutional obligation.

Accountability and monitoring mechanisms [remain weak or informal](#), and public reports detailing the impact of civil society contributions on final decisions are rare. There is no clearly established appeal or [legal recourse](#) mechanism allowing CSOs to challenge the failure to take their proposals into account. In specific cases, particularly when sectoral advocacy is successful or when an institutionalised partnership exists, administrative or ministerial officials provide direct feedback to the CSOs concerned. However, these initiatives remain isolated and depend more on the individual will of the authorities than on a structured accountability framework.

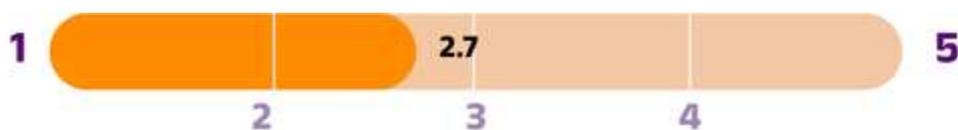
Furthermore, the lack of unity and coordination within civil society [limits its ability](#) to formulate a collective voice and demand consistent feedback from the government. Certain internal differences, linked in particular to the perceived neutrality or political alignment of certain actors, [weaken the collective impact](#) of CSOs in monitoring public commitments. However, this internal weakness is secondary to the [lack of formalised institutional mechanisms](#) for feedback and accountability on the part of the state.

Thus, although there have been isolated efforts to improve accountability and transparency, these [remain partial](#), inconsistent and unsystematic. [The absence of institutionalised frameworks](#), regular public documentation, digital platforms dedicated to monitoring contributions and formal accountability mechanisms means that these efforts cannot be described as truly favourable. The state's duty of accountability to CSOs should be strengthened in order to ensure regular and effective monitoring of contributions [resulting from consultations](#).

PRINCIPLE SCORE

5. Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society

Score:



"A democratic society is measured not only by the freedom of its institutions, but also by the consideration and respect accorded to those who accompany and question them."

Public perception and discourse regarding civil society organisations play a decisive role in their legitimacy, influence and ability to mobilise citizen engagement. In Mali, while some CSOs are recognised for their contribution to development and governance, this recognition often remains selective and fragile. Public statements, media coverage and institutional dialogue reveal tensions between the valorisation of actors considered to be aligned with the authorities and the stigmatisation of those perceived as critical. This ambivalence is also reflected in citizen participation, the inclusion of marginalised groups and the dissemination of a civic culture conducive to engagement, which remain partial and unevenly distributed across the country.

5.1 | Public discourse and constructive dialogue on civil society

The perception and public recognition of civil society organisations by the government and political leaders remain ambivalent and [often marked by mistrust](#). While some authorities consider CSOs as development partners and recognise their contribution to governance, particularly through their participation in public forums, CNT listening sessions or other consultation frameworks, this recognition remains selective and inconsistent. In practice, the authorities value above all those CSOs perceived as [close to the government](#), while those expressing critical opinions are [often marginalised](#), discredited or portrayed as being manipulated by foreign interests. This differential treatment creates a climate of mistrust and limits constructive dialogue between state actors and civil society. Certain public statements by leaders or influential figures contribute to the stigmatisation of specific organisations, portraying them as harmful to national unity or as ['foreign agents'](#), which weakens their legitimacy in the eyes of the general public.

Furthermore, [internal divisions](#) within civil society exacerbate this situation. [The lack of a unified position](#) and competition between actors reduce the collective capacity of CSOs to defend their positions and establish a balanced dialogue with the state. These internal weaknesses also limit the [capacity of organisations](#) to respond in a coordinated manner to stigmatising discourse and to promote a credible collective image to the public.

Media coverage, meanwhile, [remains mixed](#). While some media outlets report positively on citizen initiatives, others disseminate sceptical or polarised discourse, often influenced by official rhetoric. This trend reinforces the perception that CSOs are instrumentalised or dependent on external funding, which reduces public trust. Furthermore, the growing role of social media in spreading [polarising discourse](#), sometimes hostile to CSOs, remains insufficiently documented, even though it plays a decisive role in shaping public opinion.

Thus, despite the existence of a few spaces for exchange, the culture of public dialogue [remains conflictual](#) and ideological, with little emphasis on evidence-based analysis. Formal mechanisms for dialogue [remain limited](#) to ad hoc forums, with no sustainable institutionalised mechanisms to promote respectful and balanced exchange. The role of CSOs in public debate therefore remains [limited](#) and is often called into question, which justifies the allocation of an unfavourable rating.

5.2 | Perception of civil society and civic engagement

The population generally recognises the [positive role of civil society](#) in promoting democratic governance, local development and citizen oversight of public action. Civil society organisations play a [leading role](#) in raising public awareness, civic education and participation in debates of national interest. However, perceptions and civic engagement [remain variable](#) depending on the geographical context and social category of citizens.

In rural areas, communities often actively participate in [local initiatives](#) and collective actions led by CSOs, particularly in the areas of [community development](#), [social cohesion](#) and local resource management. These forms of engagement are mainly based on traditional community dynamics, although [there are no reliable statistics](#) to measure participation rates or the regularity of citizen involvement. In urban areas, on the other hand, participation [remains more irregular](#) and often politicised, limited to election periods or certain thematic campaigns.

The tense political climate and polarisation of public discourse [exacerbate](#) divisions between groups of citizens. Certain actors or organisations are valued and listened to, while others are marginalised, which weakens [collective trust and hinders](#) inclusive participation. This context also influences perceptions of CSOs, which are sometimes seen as [too close](#) to the government or foreign donors, or as being exploited for political purposes. [The growing role of social media](#) and digital spaces in spreading polarised discourse, particularly among young people, remains poorly documented, even though these channels play a decisive role in shaping public opinion and civic behaviour.

Furthermore, civic education, although included in school curricula and supported by [certain community initiatives](#), remains unevenly accessible across regions, schools and social groups. Many citizens, particularly young people and women, do not receive [adequate training](#) on their political rights, civic responsibilities and mechanisms for democratic participation. The potential of [digital civic engagement](#) and youth-led initiatives, such as online campaigns or social media mobilisations, has not yet been sufficiently documented despite its growing importance.

Thus, despite general recognition of the role of CSOs and some progress in civic education, the lack of empirical data, [reliable statistics](#) and documented examples of successful citizen initiatives shows that [effective participation](#) by citizens and a culture of civic engagement remain [partial and unevenly](#) rooted in society. This situation justifies maintaining a partially favourable rating for this area.

5.3 | Civic equality and inclusion

The Malian legal framework enshrines the principle of equality and non-discrimination, both in the preamble and Article 1 of the [Constitution](#) and in specific texts such as [Law No. 052](#) on gender promotion and the National Gender Policy (PNG). These instruments demonstrate an institutional commitment to guaranteeing all citizens, including marginalised groups, equal rights and opportunities to participate in civic, social and economic life.

However, the implementation of these provisions [remains uneven](#) and faces persistent socio-economic and cultural constraints. In the education and health sectors, structural and financial barriers continue to limit equitable access to basic services, particularly for women, persons with disabilities and rural populations. Although the law on the recruitment of persons with disabilities provides for quotas, its [implementation remains partial](#), and [discrimination persists](#) in competitive examinations and actual recruitment. Access for persons with disabilities to public institutions, guidance centres and educational establishments [is not systematically](#) guaranteed due to a lack of adapted facilities. The absence of specialised establishments, illustrated by the presence of only one school dedicated to deaf and mute persons in Bamako, exacerbates these inequalities.

On the social front, community tolerance of diversity is [moderate](#), but certain cultural resistances and stereotypes continue to hinder the full [inclusion of women](#), persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. [The lack of public statistics](#) on the representation of these groups, particularly within CSOs or governance bodies, makes these realities largely invisible in public policy. [Intersectional barriers](#), such as the combination of gender and disability or poverty, are not specifically analysed, even though they increase the risk of exclusion.

Despite these limitations, [significant progress](#) has been made in terms of the representation of marginalised groups within civil society and certain consultative bodies, giving them growing influence in public debates. However, [regional disparities](#) in civic inclusion are not analysed, even though access to opportunities for participation varies greatly between urban and rural areas.

Thus, although the legal framework is [generally favourable to equality](#), the lack of empirical data, disaggregated statistics and in-depth analysis of social, economic and intersectional barriers reveals significant gaps between the norm and practice.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment

Score:



"Digital security is not a luxury, but a fundamental condition for freedom and citizen participation to flourish in the connected world."

Access to a secure digital environment is now a key issue for the functioning of civil society organisations and citizen participation in Mali. Although the country has legal frameworks in place to protect digital rights and data privacy, the operational reality remains marked by internet outages, technical constraints, the risk of cyberattacks and low levels of digital literacy. These obstacles limit equitable access to digital tools and restrict the ability of CSOs to communicate, collaborate and effectively mobilise citizens through digital platforms.

6.1 | Digital rights and freedoms

Mali has a national legal framework on cybercrime, notably [Law No. 2019-056 of 5 December 2019](#), which extends the punishment of offences committed via information technology. This law has been regularly [criticised by the press](#) and digital rights advocates for its ambiguity and its potential for use against freedom of expression. In practice, [cutoffs and restrictions](#) targeting social media and Internet access have been observed during episodes of unrest, particularly in July 2020, severely disrupting the operational capacity of civil society organisations to communicate, mobilise and cooperate. However, these interruptions remain sporadic and do not follow a systematic pattern.

The authorities exercise selective censorship and [surveillance of political](#) content online and take measures to limit coverage of political activities. Nevertheless, no specific examples of websites, pages or publications that have been blocked, deleted or restricted are documented in the text. There have been cases of arrests and [legal proceedings](#) against individuals who have posted critical messages online, illustrating the repressive nature of the application of certain provisions.

Private platforms [moderate their content](#) in accordance with their internal policies, but transparency and accountability mechanisms appear to be insufficient in the face of state pressure and technical restrictions imposed on operators. The exact nature of the [collaboration or injunctions of the authorities](#) on these platforms is not clearly documented, and there are no specific cases illustrating an explicit alignment between government decisions and private moderation actions. Furthermore, the text does not mention the existence of [appeal mechanisms available to citizens](#), journalists or CSOs to challenge possible violations of their digital rights or censorship decisions.

As a result, access to and use of digital tools often remains free, but the ambiguous legal framework, surveillance practices and occasional interruptions constitute significant obstacles to fully guaranteeing internet freedom. The situation is therefore described as partially favourable.

6.2 | Digital security and privacy

Mali has a national legal framework that recognises the protection of personal data as a fundamental right. [Law No. 2013-015 of 21 May 2013](#) on the protection of personal data establishes a regulatory mechanism entrusted to the Personal Data Protection Authority (APDP), which is responsible for ensuring compliance with the principles of confidentiality, consent and data security. This framework is reinforced by the [Constitution of 22 July 2023](#), which enshrines the right to privacy and freedom of expression, as well as by [Law No. 2018-003](#) on the protection of human rights defenders, which provides for the protection of activists and civil society actors, including against digital attacks.

In practice, the effectiveness of these safeguards remains limited. The APDP suffers from a lack of human and material resources to fully exercise its prerogatives, and redress mechanisms for victims of digital violations are [inaccessible or ineffective](#). Civil society organisations report [the absence of a genuine culture of cybersecurity](#) and adequate digital protection mechanisms. The majority of them [do not have](#) advanced technical tools, formalised security protocols or staff specifically trained in cybersecurity, making them vulnerable to digital risks. International support and technical partnerships in the area of digital security [remain limited and ad hoc](#), often dependent on short-term projects, with no sustainable national coordination mechanism.

Some media outlets and digital rights NGOs have [reported isolated cases](#) of cyberattacks and online surveillance targeting civil society actors, journalists, or critical figures. These incidents include [attempts to hack email](#) accounts or social media accounts, sometimes attributed to state or non-state actors. Although these attacks are rare and difficult to attribute with certainty, they create [a climate of digital insecurity](#), prompting some CSOs and journalists to self-censor or restrict their online communications. [The lack of national](#) mechanisms for reporting, documenting and responding to cyber incidents in a coordinated manner also limits the ability of authorities and civil society to prevent and mitigate these threats.

The Malian digital space is also marked by [disinformation campaigns](#) and online intimidation, often disseminated by anonymous accounts, bots or coordinated networks. Some content aims to [discredit CSOs](#), independent media or human rights defenders, particularly on platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter) and TikTok. However, there is no conclusive evidence to establish the direct involvement of the state in these campaigns in the [absence of independent investigations](#) or verifiable technical evidence. These practices contribute to polarising public debate and reducing digital civic space. Coordination between public

authorities, digital platforms and civil society actors [remains limited](#), fragmented and essentially reactive, without a [clear national strategy](#) or formalised cooperation framework.

Thus, despite the existence of a protective legal and institutional framework, the lack of quantitative data, enhanced technical capacities, effective redress mechanisms and structured partnerships in the area of digital security limits the full protection of CSOs and justifies maintaining an intermediate assessment.

6.3 | Digital accessibility

Internet access in Mali [remains low](#), uneven and structurally restrictive for civil society actors, despite marginal progress in connectivity. According to the [report *Digital 2025 – Mali* \(DataReportal, January 2025\)](#), the country had 8.72 million internet users, or about 35.1% of the total population. This rate is well below the 50% threshold generally considered to be moderate access, as well as the global (67%) and African (43%) averages. This level of penetration severely limits the ability of CSOs to operate effectively at the national level and reach their target audiences.

Internet access is heavily [concentrated in urban areas](#) such as Bamako, Koulikoro and Sikasso, while rural areas, which are home to more than half of the population (52.7%), remain largely underconnected. The disparities between urban and rural areas are [considerable](#) and can be explained by several factors. These include inadequate telecommunications infrastructure, low electricity coverage (national electrification rate of around 55%, but less than 20% in some rural areas according to [the World Bank, 2023](#)), and the impact of security crises that hamper network deployment and maintenance. The cost of connectivity remains high, with an average price of one gigabyte of mobile data at around US\$1.8 ([Alliance for Affordable Internet, 2023](#)), which is disproportionate to average income. These structural constraints are major obstacles to the digital functioning of CSOs, justifying an unfavourable assessment (grade 2) on this point.

[Financial and technical challenges](#) add to these constraints. Power cuts, low bandwidth and the high cost of IT equipment limit the holding of virtual meetings, participation in online consultations, the use of collaborative tools and the regular dissemination of digital content, particularly for CSOs in rural and peri-urban areas. [The lack of structured public investment](#) in digital infrastructure and targeted support programmes exacerbates these difficulties, confirming the persistence of significant limitations.

The level of digital skills and mastery of information and communication technologies (ICT) remains [generally low to moderate](#), with significant disparities between urban and rural areas. In large cities and within CSOs supported by international partners, digital literacy is generally satisfactory, while community or regional organisations have [limited capacities](#). The need to recruit qualified ICT staff to manage digital communication and secure data is an [additional constraint](#) for many CSOs. These shortcomings also [reduce the](#) public's ability to interact effectively with the digital content produced by organisations.

The use of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), data analysis and automated tools, is still in its infancy. There is currently no [national strategy dedicated](#) to AI, nor are there any significant pilot projects involving CSOs in the integration of these technologies. Technical training [remains limited](#) to a few universities, technology incubators and private urban initiatives, effectively excluding the majority of CSOs outside Bamako. This low adoption of emerging technologies confirms that Mali's digital environment does not yet allow for innovative or inclusive use of digital tools.

C) Recommendations

"The strength of a society lies in its ability to protect the freedoms of its citizens, guarantee access to information, and enable inclusive and sustainable participation. An organised and autonomous civil society is the driving force behind this democratic strengthening."

These recommendations are in line with observations made about the enabling environment for civil society in Mali, which is marked by restrictions on fundamental freedoms, obstacles to transparency and participation, and financial and digital constraints for civil society organisations. They aim to propose concrete and coordinated measures for the attention of the Government, donors and civic actors themselves, in order to strengthen the protection of freedoms, institutional resilience, inclusive participation and the sustainability of citizen initiatives.

I. Recommendations to the Government

These recommendations stem from persistent restrictions on civil liberties, the discretionary application of the legal framework, a lack of transparency and participation, and obstacles to the digital and financial environment of civic actors.

1. Protection of civic freedoms

- Guarantee the effective exercise of freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression by ending general and preventive bans on demonstrations and ensuring that any restrictions strictly comply with the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality.
- Establish independent and transparent mechanisms to investigate allegations of arbitrary arrests, intimidation, enforced disappearances and excessive use of force against civic actors and journalists.
- Ensure specific protection for human rights defenders and journalists, particularly when covering sensitive events or public demonstrations.

2. Legal and administrative reforms

- Revise the legal framework governing associations in order to preserve the declaratory nature of registration, clarify the grounds for suspension or dissolution, and guarantee effective remedies.

- Simplify and digitise administrative procedures applicable to CSOs (registration, activity authorisations, access to funding), reducing delays and discretionary practices.
- Strictly regulate the administration's powers of control and inspection in order to prevent any unjustified interference in the internal governance of CSOs.

3. Open governance, transparency and participation

- Implement a policy of proactive publication of public information, including budgets, administrative decisions, draft legislation and implementation reports.
- Enforce the right of access to information by establishing appeal mechanisms and sanctions in cases of abusive refusal.
- Institutionalise the structured and inclusive participation of CSOs in the development, implementation and evaluation of public policies, with formal feedback mechanisms.

4. Digital environment and inclusion

- Revise provisions relating to cybercrime and digital technology to prevent their misuse against freedom of expression online.
- Ensure transparency and legality of any restrictions on internet access.
- Strengthen personal data protection and digital accessibility, particularly in rural areas and for marginalised groups.

II. Recommendations to the donor community and international partners

These recommendations address the constraints of access to resources, financial dependence, lack of funding flexibility, and security and digital risks affecting CSOs.

1. Equitable and flexible access to funding

- Increase the share of flexible, multi-year, and unearmarked funding to strengthen the institutional resilience of CSOs in an unstable political and security context.
- Simplify administrative and compliance procedures, particularly for local and community CSOs with limited capacity.
- Adapt management and reporting requirements to the actual operational context in Mali, particularly in areas affected by insecurity.

2. Protection and security of civic actors

- Systematically integrate physical, legal and digital protection measures into support programmes for CSOs, journalists and human rights defenders.
- Support the establishment of emergency assistance mechanisms (protection funds, legal support, temporary relocation).
- Support training initiatives in digital security and risk management.

3. Policy dialogue and international advocacy

- Use bilateral and multilateral dialogue frameworks to encourage reforms that promote civic space, in line with regional and international standards.
- Support collective advocacy by CSOs at the national, regional and international levels.
- Promote greater coordination among donors to reduce aid fragmentation and align interventions with priorities identified by local actors.

III. Recommendations for civil society actors

These recommendations consider internal challenges related to coordination, financial sustainability, protection and credibility of civil society.

1. Organisational strengthening and coordination

- Strengthen coordination, networking and common platforms in order to promote collective and credible positions on civic space issues.
- Invest in internal governance, transparency and accountability in order to strengthen the trust of the public and partners.
- Develop common strategies for documenting and monitoring violations of civic space, based on reliable data.

2. Strategic advocacy and citizen engagement

- Strengthen capacities for evidence-based advocacy, strategic communication and media engagement.
- Develop inclusive approaches targeting young people, women, persons with disabilities and rural communities.
- Promote local good practices and strengthen the social legitimacy of civil society among communities.

3. Sustainability and security

- Diversify funding sources, including through local philanthropy and income-generating activities compatible with non-profit status.
- Integrate physical, legal and digital security into strategic planning and day-to-day operations.
- Strengthen financial management, compliance and data protection skills to reduce institutional risks.



D) Research Process

Each principle encompasses various dimensions which are assessed and aggregated to provide quantitative scores per principle. These scores reflect the degree to which the environment within the country enables or disables the work of civil society. Scores are on a five-category scale defined as: fully disabling (1), disabling (2), partially enabling (3), enabling (4), and fully enabling (5). To complement the scores, this report provides a narrative analysis of the enabling or disabling environment for civil society, identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as offering recommendations. The process of drafting the analysis is led by Network Members; the consortium provides quality control and editorial oversight before publication.

For Principle 1 - which evaluates respect for and protection of freedom of association and peaceful assembly - the score integrates data from the [CIVICUS Monitor](#). However, for Principles 2–6, the availability of yearly updated external quantitative indicators for the 86 countries part of the EUSEE programme are either limited or non-existent. To address this, Network Members convene a panel of representatives of civil society and experts once a year. This panel uses a set of guiding questions to assess the status of each principle and its dimensions within the country. **The panel for this report was convened in October 2025.** The discussions are supported by secondary sources, such as [V-Dem](#), the [Bertelsmann Stiftung Governance Index](#), the [RTI Rating from the Centre for Law and Democracy](#), and other trusted resources. These sources provide benchmarks for measuring similar dimensions and are complemented by primary data collection and other secondary sources of information available for the country. Guided by these deliberations, the panel assigns scores for each dimension, which the Network Members submit to the Consortium, accompanied by detailed justifications that reflect the country's specific context. To determine a single score per principle, the scores assigned to each dimension are aggregated using a weighted average, reflecting the relative importance of each dimension within the principle. This approach balances diverse perspectives while maintaining a structured and objective evaluation framework.

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