

# MALI



Hello! I ni sògòma ! My name is Amadou Doumbia and I am Malian. I have the honour of presenting to you my country located in West Africa. I recently did a research in class and here's what I learned. Choose a heading and start exploring Mali!

The **Country Fact Sheets** series is presented to you by the Réseau In-Terre-Actif and produced with the support of the government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).



Canadian International  
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de  
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# COUNTRY DESCRIPTION

As you can see on the map, the *Republic of Mali* is situated in West Africa. Mali is surrounded by Algeria in the North, Niger and Burkina Faso in the East, the Ivory Coast and Guinea in the South, and Senegal and Mauritania in the West.

The capital and principal city of my country is called Bamako. Other important cities are Kayes, Ségou, Mopti and Sikasso.

The Sahara desert is the vastest hot desert of the world. It crosses a big part of the North of my country. These places are entirely arid and receive less than 130 mm of rainfall yearly. Nomads and their herds cross these regions, where it can sometimes reach more than 50 degrees Celsius!

South of the Sahara, the Sahel constitutes the second climatic zone, covering 30 % of the Malian territory. The Sahel is composed of semi-arid zones as well as **savannahs**. It is also characterized by long and frequent drought periods. This region is particularly affected by **desertification**, which causes a lot of damage there nowadays.

Finally, in the South, the Sahel region, composed of **savannahs**, has a raining season that lasts 5 to 6 months with rainfalls up to 1300 mm per year. What's the rain like in your country?






## Did you know that ?

Around 40% of my country's territory is affected by **desertification**.

**Desertification** is the turning of a region into a desert ? In Africa, the Sahel, south of the Sahara, where more than 40 million people live, is seriously threatened by desertification.



	<b>Surface Area</b>	1 200 000 km <sup>2</sup> . (Canada : 9 984 670 km <sup>2</sup> )
	<b>Climate</b>	Subtropical to arid. Dry season February to June; rainy season June to November; cool and dry November to February.
	<b>Temperature</b>	Between 30 and 40 °C. Can even reach 50°C.
	<b>Relief</b>	Plateaus, mountains, plains, and desert (Sahara to the north and Sahel to the center). Desert area covers 2/3 of the territory.
	<b>Natural Resources</b>	Millet, cotton, rice, peanuts, beef, sheep, gold mines, etc.

# COUNTRY DESCRIPTION

# Population

There are more than 13,5 million persons who live in my country. Among these inhabitants, almost one million reside in the capital, Bamako.

Many ethnic groups occupy the vast territory of Mali. We can enumerate around twenty groups, each with their own dialect. Although there were exchanges between these ethnic groups, they all have very a unique culture and coexist in a peaceful manner.

My country's population is very young. In fact, almost half of the Malians are less than 15 years old and barely 3 persons out of every hundred are older than 65. Therefore, there is a big difference between Mali and Canada. Indeed, less than one Canadian out of five is younger than 15 years of age and more than one out of ten is older than 65 years old!

How many brothers and sisters do you have? Perhaps you knew that in Mali, women have on average more than 7 children each! I read that in Quebec, women have on average less than 2 children!

Did you know that in my country, when two people meet, they ask each other for their surname. The surname is a significant part of one's ethnic group of origin, and two persons of the same ethnic group consider themselves to be cousins. The Malians like to joke about family names and the ethnic groups. It is what they call "cousinhood". That is why, when we meet, it is usual to exchange insults amicably according to the respective names of families. For example, the Doumbias are blacksmiths, the Diallos are shepherds, the Coulibalys are bean eaters, etc. If one day you visit Mali it is possible that we give you a new name...

## Did you know that?

Although the official language of Mali is French, several Malians speak Bambara. Here are some bambara words which will be useful if you visit my country. Practice pronouncing them!

### Salutations :

How's it going ?  
(everything good?) :  
*i ka kéné?*

Morning : *i ni sògòma*

Noon : *i ni tilé*

Afternoon : *i ni wula (bonsoir)*

Evening and night : *i ni su*

### Possible answers :

Only peace: *hèrè dòròn*

Not bad : *tòòrò tè*

Not bad at all : *tòòrò si tè*



## Facts at a Glance



**Number of Inhabitants**

13,5 millions (2005)



**Density (number of people per Km<sup>2</sup>)**

11 inhabitants /km<sup>2</sup> (2005)



**Life Expectancy**

48 (2005)



**Purchasing Power<sup>1</sup>**

980\$ US (2004)



**People Without a job**

64 % of the population (2003)



**People who can read and write**

19 % of the population (2004)



**Mortality rate under 5 years of age**

219 deaths per 1000 children (2004)



**Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>2</sup>**

174<sup>th</sup> among 177 countries (2003)



**Ecological Footprint<sup>3</sup>**

1,1 (2001)

# Population

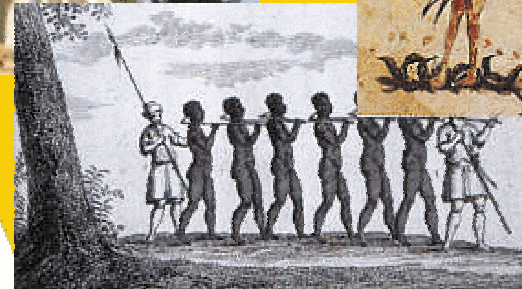
# History

Men have occupied Mali's territory for millennia. From the 4<sup>th</sup> century until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, three very prosperous kingdoms succeeded one another in Mali. These three empires drew their riches and power mainly from gold exploitation, which Mali possesses in grand quantities.

Later on, the Moroccan invasion marked the fall of the big empires. A long period of political crisis followed in which various leaders succeeded one another. It was during this period that Islam expanded and slavery spread.

This somewhat chaotic period ended with the French colonial conquest in 1893. Mali, then called French Sudan, as well as other territories, were integrated into **French Western Africa**. Up until the declaration of independence, on June 20, 1960, France exploited Mali's natural resources without concern for the local population.

Mali was a **socialist** state until 1968. The first lieutenant Moussa Traoré then took control and set up a dictatorship, which proved to be economically disastrous. His reign of terror ended in 1991 after several months of popular protests and rioting. Alpha Oumar Konaré was later elected. He was democratically reelected as president in 1992 and 1997. He was replaced by political ally Amadou Toumani Touré in the 2002 elections.



From 1970 till 1980, many private and international financial institutions lent money to Mali in order to contribute to its economic development, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). However, in 1978, American financial institutions augmented considerably their **interest rates**. The debts of the 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries, including Mali, thus exploded.

In order to get new loans, Mali consented to applying programs imposed by the IMF. Unfortunately, these programs contributed to tripling Mali's debt and plunging the population further into poverty.

# History





### Did you know that ?

The basis of Malian diet is rice. It is sometimes accompanied by sweet potatoes. Meat is not a part of our usual diet since it is expensive. The main meats consumed are that of goat and of sheep. Malians eat a lot of fruits like bananas, mangoes, watermelons, oranges, limes and papayas.

Most Malians eat together in the same plate using their right hand? If you want to, you can try this technique. But be sure to wash your hands before and after!

# Culture

Do you know about griots? They are storytellers who are always present at any big occasions in my country (weddings, christenings, and religious holidays). They transmit stories relating to families by oral tradition. When the griots praise, their words follow the rhythm of the percussions. For this reason, many consider them as ancestors of rap.

I don't know if you've ever heard about my country's music? In fact, some of the most beautiful music of Africa comes from Mali. The Kora is a 21 string instrument played by the griots. Among the other Malian traditional instruments, is the balafon (a sort of xylophone), the ngoni (a kind of 6 string guitar) and the djembe (tam-tam made from goat skin).

The main religion practiced by Malians is Islam. Nearly 9 persons out of 10 are Muslims. There are also traditional religions. A very low percentage of the population is Christian.

If you want to ear Mali's national anthem, check out the following link:

[www.david.national-anthems.net/ml.htm](http://www.david.national-anthems.net/ml.htm)

# Culture



# Challenges

The people of my country face many problems. Here are some of them:

**Desertification** is an alarming problem in my country. Since this phenomenon often occurs in arid regions bordering the deserts (in the Sahel in Mali), we have the impression that it is the desert that extends. This impression is false. It is actually the loss of productivity of the arable soils, pastures and wooden grounds. Various environmental factors as well as human activities such as monoculture (intensive culture of only one product) and deforestation worsen the desertification phenomenon.

When there is desertification, crops are spoiled and the yield decreases. Therefore, there is less income and food for the farmers' families. In my country, more than half of the population has already emigrated towards the cities after having lost its land to desertification. Unfortunately, the cities do not always have the capacity to take in these refugees and to offer them decent living conditions. Very often, they are condemned to becoming one of the many unemployed trying to survive in the city streets.

The exploitation of gold is a very important economic sector in Mali. Gold is the principal product **exported** by the country. In addition to soil contamination, deforestation and intoxications, one of the consequences of gold mining in Mali is the displacement of local populations. They do not receive financial compensations for their expulsion. Unfortunately, the Malian population benefits very little from the mining of gold. Indeed, the majority of the riches end up in the pockets of foreign investors.

Finally, remember that nearly 2 out of every 3 persons in Mali live in a situation of poverty or extreme poverty. The most vulnerable groups remain the women, children and the elderly. The challenges are enormous in order to improve this sad situation. However, the Malian population is able to raise itself.

Despite these difficulties my people are full of spirit, and are warm and welcoming. I hope you will visit us one day.

# Challenges

# Solutions



My country benefits from international co-operation projects. Here is a very interesting one!

The Canadian Crossroads International (CCI), in collaboration with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), cooperates with organizations from my country for the creation of concrete projects in the field of sustainable development. It is fascinating to see what they achieve together!

As for fair trade, the International Canadian Crossroads (CCI) and Malian Association for the Promotion of Youth (AMPJ) support an association of women that produce shea butter. The project "Association of Women and Shea Butter" aims to support the co-operative of a rural area of Mali in the elimination of illiteracy, organizational development and marketing.

The project's prime objective is to reinforce the capacities of management, production and marketing of the women's shea butter. It also aims to promote the establishment of fair trade bonds between the association and companies or organizations from Quebec.

I learned that the impact of this project on the community which benefits from it is not negligible. Thanks to the skills which they will have developed, women will be able to sell their shea butter on the fair trade market. Imagine! That means that they will receive a just income enabling them to live suitably! They will thus have the chance to leave poverty behind and take part in the economic and social development of our country.

If you wish to learn more about the Canadian Crossroads International (CCI) and its presence in numerous countries, visit the following link: [www.cciorg.ca/quebec/](http://www.cciorg.ca/quebec/)

Lastly, did you know that you could also take actions towards a better world? By buying fair-trade and organic products and by respecting the environment, you contribute to the well-being of the community!



# Solutions

# Glossary

## Western French Africa (WFA) :

Union of eight French territories in Africa from 1895 till 1958.

## Shea :

Tree from tropical Africa whose seeds provide a fat content. Shea butter is used in the kitchen and in cosmetics.

## Desertification

Process of degradation and impoverishment of cultivable soils.

## Dictatorship :

Political regime where all powers are exercised by an individual, a class, a party, without democratic control, without people being able to speak up.

## Export :

Transporting and selling products from the country abroad.

## Savanah :

Vast, tropical grassy plain where trees and flowers are rare, but where animals are abundant.

## Socialism :

Political system that is opposed to capitalism and in which the means of production are owned and controlled by the state. Aims to create a just society without social classes, where everyone has the same amount of wealth.

## Interest rates :

Percentage of the capital of a loan, used for determining the annual income.



Don't forget that you can do something to improve our world. You and your friends in school can get involved. Become aware of the important issues around the world. All together, we can change things for the better!

To learn more about Mali, check out the following web sites:

- ✓ [www.in-terre-actif.com/english](http://www.in-terre-actif.com/english)
- ✓ [www.ethiquette.ca](http://www.ethiquette.ca)
- ✓ [www.equiterre.org/en](http://www.equiterre.org/en)
- ✓ [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)
- ✓ [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/youthzone](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/youthzone)

## Purchasing Power<sup>1</sup>:

Purchasing power is the capacity to buy goods and services with a given income.

## Human Development Index <sup>2</sup> :

The Human Development Report issued by the UN, which classifies 177 countries according to life-expectancy, education, literacy, and income.

## Ecological Footprint<sup>3</sup> :

It measures how much land and water area is necessary to provide one person's sustenance.

# Glossary



# Desertification

The United Nations proclaimed the year 2006 as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. This problem touches 110 countries worldwide and seriously affects the quality of life for the people who live there. The most serious degradation occurs in Africa, while the most extensive is in Asia.

Desertification is the degradation and impoverishment of fertile soils by a combination of environmental and human factors. When the soil is overexploited by humans and poorly maintained, it no longer contains enough nutrients to grow vegetables and almost nothing grows there!

## TO PLAY, YOU WILL NEED:

- one pawn per player;
- one dice;
- the game board (next page);
- this page for the questions

To start, each player must roll the dice. The player with the highest number starts the game. Roll the dice to advance. When you land on a **Question** space, you must answer a question from the List of Questions here. Correct answer: you move ahead two spaces. Wrong answer: you move back one space.

When you land on a **Drought** space or a **Rain** space, follow the instructions that appear there.

## Game Questions:

### 1. African country seriously affected by desertification.

- a) Ghana
- b) Tanzania
- c) Mali

### 2. To remain productive, breeders often sacrifice their lands to nourish their herds. One cause of desertification is:

- a) over grazing
- b) lack of water
- c) lack of experience of the breeders

### 3. A direct consequence of desertification on the Malian population.

- a) The disappearance of various animal species.
- b) Viral diseases
- c) Poverty

### 4. They are particularly affected by desertification.

- a) Women
- b) Giraffes
- c) Multinationals

### 5. Essential economic activities that exhaust fertile soils:

- a) Animal husbandry (Rearing/breeding)
- b) Agriculture
- c) Over fishing



Photo : PNUE

### 6. Canadian region affected by desertification.

- a) The Maritimes
- b) The Prairies
- c) The Rockies

### 7. A wide-spread method that uses trees to stabilize dunes.

- a) Reforestation
- b) Arborescence
- c) Agronomy

### 8. A North African semiarid region

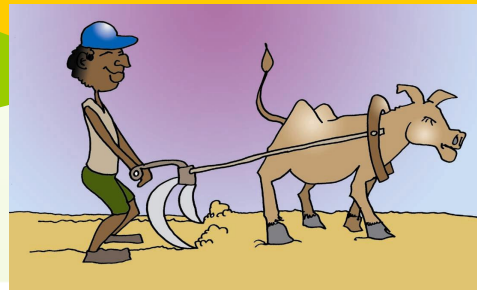
- a) Grand Canyon
- b) The Prairies
- c) The Sahel

### 9. Phenomenon caused by desertification that forces people to lose their lands and head for the cities.

- a) Shanty towns
- b) Urban exodus (drift)
- c) Rural exodus (drift)

### 10. Canadian organism that supports and defends the fight against desertification.

- a) "Solidarité Canada-Sahel"
- b) "Au point d'eau"
- c) "Kilabo"



1-c; 2-a; 3-c; 4-a; 5-b; 6-b; 7-a; 8-c; 9-c; 10-a.

# Game



# FINISH

**INTERRE  
ACTIF**



## QUESTION 10



IT IS RAINING!

MOVE AHEAD  
TWO SPACES.

## QUESTION 9



THE DROUGHT HAS  
DESTROYED EVERY CROP  
IN THE REGION.

GO BACK TO SPACE 4.

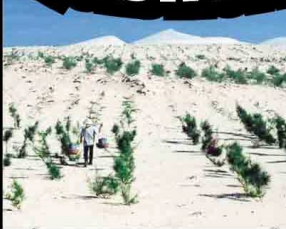
## QUESTION 6



THE DROUGHT HAS  
LASTED SEVERAL DAYS  
NOW.

GO BACK 4 SPACES.

## QUESTION 7



IT IS RAINING!

MOVE AHEAD  
TWO SPACES.

## QUESTION 8



## QUESTION 5



IT IS RAINING!

MOVE AHEAD  
TWO SPACES.

THE DROUGHT IS  
STILL CAUSING DAMAGE.  
YOU LOSE YOUR TURN.

## QUESTION 14



## QUESTION 3



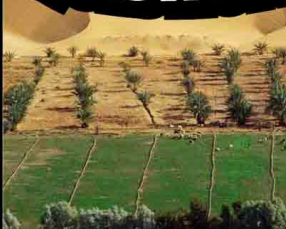
# START



THE DROUGHT IS  
AFFECTING CROPS  
IN YOUR VILLAGE.

YOU LOSE YOUR TURN.

## QUESTION 1



IT IS RAINING!

MOVE AHEAD  
TWO SPACES.

## QUESTION 2

