



## Program Point Sud 2016

# Making a Better Life: Training, Work and Mobility of Youth in Western and Central Africa

2-8 March 2016

Bamako  
Report



## **1. Conveners**

Prof Augustin Emame, Law, University of Nantes

Apl. Prof Ute Roeschenthaler, Cultural and Social Anthropology, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

Dr Moussa Sissoko, Research Director, Geography, Point Sud and Institut supérieur pour la formation et la recherche appliquée, Bamako

Prof Ibrahima Thioub, History, Centre africain de recherche sur les traites et les esclavages (CARTE), University Cheick Antar Diop, Dakar

## **2. Themes and Objectives**

A widely accepted norm in Europe and North America suggests that it is best for children to grow up with their parents until they have come of age. In many African countries, however, it is not unusual for teenagers to spend many years in another family and place. Some of them are sent by their parents to stay with relatives or families of friends, some decide to travel on their own in the hope to find work and/or the means for education and others are lured into travelling by smugglers. When NGOs discover minors on the streets, in plantations and mining areas in Africa, or enslaved in families, they raise alarm and seek to liberate them, often with good reason.

These observations do not only point to divergent concepts that African societies and international organizations have of childhood and youth, but also to differing norms of education and concepts of coming of age and responsibility, which in turn define ideas of how childhood and youth are understood. These divergent norms and concepts are interrelated with the specific social and historical contexts in which they have emerged. The findings outlined above also raise a number of questions: Which dynamics and hopes are connected with the mobility of these youths? Would these youths prefer to return home when they are picked up by NGOs? What are their experiences? Is it indeed poverty, conflict, or lack of opportunities that drives them from their homes? Are the perspectives of the youths, their parents and international organizations or NGOs congruent or do they differ totally or in degree, and if yes, in which way?

The objective of this interdisciplinary workshop was to find answers to some of these questions by using an integrated approach that includes the perspective of local people and discusses the interplay of factors that are related to the growing-up of youth in African societies such as education, training, work and life-experience and the degree of mobility these people consider normal. It chose Mali as the setting in which to explore these issues as this country forms part of a region that has a particularly long and intricate migration history. An important part of the workshop consisted in field excursions to local institutions and NGOs that work with youth in Mali.

### 3. Methodology and Results

The workshop was opened with speeches by Moussa Sissoko on the security situation in Bamako; the Dean of the Université des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines on the scholarly cooperation of the University with Point Sud; Mamadou Diawara on the objectives of the workshop; and Ute Roeschenthaler on the workshop's order of events.

On the first three mornings (Wednesday, Thursday, Friday) roundtables of 90 or 120 minutes were held with 15 minute statements of the participants and several rounds of lively discussion among all the participants. The roundtables also included post-doc scholars. These roundtables provided theoretical and field overviews to three aspects related to the workshop topic:

Roundtable 1: "Historical and cultural context of youth mobility in West and Central Africa" with the Participants: Ute Roeschenthaler, Mamadou Diawara, Marie Rodet and was chaired by Peter Geschiere.

Roundtable 2: "Relationships of dependency in families, youth mobility, and legal implications" with the participants: Augustin Emame, Daouda Gary Tounkara, David Imbua. It was chaired by Zubairu Wai.

Roundtable 3: "Discourse, art and literature: trust in family, work, and migration" with the participants: Peter Geschiere, Justin Bisanswa, Abdoulaye Niang, and chaired by Augustin Emame.

The roundtables were followed by 20 minute presentations of recent research projects by junior scholars (doctoral students and post-doc researchers), with 40 minutes of discussion, which provided the opportunity for the presenters to explain further details and the plenary to discuss the topic, give advice to the presenters and refer the topic back to the round table issues. The presenters are listed in the order of presentation:

Zubairu Wai: Making the Neoliberal Consumer Subject: Precarity, Unemployed Youth and Development Intervention in Sierra Leone

Youssef Karambé: Les parcours constructifs de l'emploi et la fin d'un imaginaire

Hassana Abdou: Les mobilités des jeunes enfants des zones rurales vers la ville de Ngaoundéré et le problème de l'esclavage domestiques

Wendpanga Eric Segueda: Fostering: seeking to grasp an endogenous mobility system in Mali

Moris Samen: La corrélation entre les relations de dépendances et les différentes catégories de personnes dans le grasfield Camerounais actuel, en particulier chez les populations dites Bamiléké

Fodié Tandjigora: Le non-retour des étudiants boursiers maliens de France: Les diplômés face au spectre du chômage au Mali

Isaiah Afu: Boko Haram insurgency and youth mobility in the far north region of Cameroon

Adam Mahamat: Luttés de survie sur le pont de Ngueli (Tchad-Cameroun): opportunités, illusions et désespoirs d'une jeunesse en quête de repères

Médard Bouazi: Les migrations africaines entre ambitions et nouveaux impératifs sécuritaires

Ty-Juana Taylor: The Story of the "Petit Nouchi": Understanding the (Music) Culture that Informs Ivorian Street Youth's Resilience

Henrietta Nyamnjoh: Migrants' Informal Economy and the changing dynamics amongst Cameroonian youth in Cape Town

Susanne Schulz: Unfulfilled expectations of searching a better life: Young Malians on adventure to support their families?

Field excursions to NGOs: On day 5, Saturday, the participants formed two groups who went to an NGO each. The larger group went to *Mali Enjeu* in the Sotuba quarter at the outskirts of Bamako, and smaller group visited the *Forum Democratique de la Jeunesse du Mali* in the quarter Baco-Djicoroni Golf. In the initial programme visits to four NGOs were planned, but UNICEF no longer has an office in Bamako and the director with most employees of *Swiss Contact* were on mission during the time period of the workshop.

Group 1: excursion to NGO *Mali Enjeu*: *Mali Enjeu* was founded in 1992 and helps street children find a place for education and training and later a work place. The NGO is active in 5 regions of Mali. The group visited the main building for a long discussion with three representatives of the NGO, and subsequently visited three of the workshops which train youth. The group visited a metal processing workshop, a tailor workshop and a street restaurant, in which some of the group had lunch.

Group 2: *Forum democratique de la jeunesse du Mali*: The *Forum Democratique de la Jeunesse* has been founded only recently, in December 2015. The NGO closely works together with the *Société Malienne de Carrelage* (SOMACA) in training youth in their twenties. The group divided itself into small groups of three to discuss with some of the roughly twenty youth who on the spot for training and then had an in depth discussion with the directors of both organizations.

The groups spent the major part of the day, longer than initially expected, with the NGOs. Two junior scholars in each group were asked to take notes and prepare a short presentation with the help of the group in the late afternoon. The results of the excursions to the NGOs were presented and discussed on Monday morning in the plenary. One very impressive result was the enthusiasm with which the NGOs welcomes the workshop and expressed their readiness to cooperate with the project in the future. This opens up a promising perspective for further cooperation on a topic that was perceived to have substantial relevance for people on the ground.

Public lectures: Two public lectures were planned at the Université des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines. On Monday afternoon, the workshop participants moved to the University and listened to the lecture of Mamadou Diawara who spoke about "Jeunesse, migration et

cosmopolitanisme: Vues du Sahel”. The lecture was chaired by the dean and took place in the large university lecture hall, which was fully packed. It was followed by a lively discussion. The second public lecture by Justin Bisanswa on “De la (non) légitimité des lettres et sciences sociales aujourd'hui” had to take place at Point Sud due to an unexpected strike at the university. This lecture was very much appreciated as well and followed by an exciting discussion.

Side programme: In addition to two dinner evenings, one at Santoro restaurant and one at Bamako Plage, which enabled the participants to get to know each other in an informal environment and do further networking and discuss cooperation, the participants took part in three more events.

On Thursday evening, the German Embassy in Mali, in the person of Joseph Hinterseher, organized a get together with reception at the roof terrace of Point Sud. It assembled the workshop participants, Malian DAAD alumnis and scholarship holders, to which also other interested individuals and NGO workers were invited. Joseph Hinterseher presented the various opportunities for studying and research in Germany and encouraged the group of more than 80 persons to freely exchange information and experiences.

On Sunday morning Oumar Diallo, a retired archeology professor at the École normale supérieure de Bamako who also had worked long years in the National Museum, offered the workshop participants a guided tour through the museum exhibitions, which the participants greatly enjoyed.

On Sunday evening, after dinner in Point Sud, the participants watched on the roof terrace two films on the workshop topic: The documentary “The dark side of chocolate” (46 min.) by Miki Mistrati and Roberto Romano (2010) about human trafficking and child labour in the plantations in Côte d’Ivoire; and “The land in between” (57 min.) by Melanie Gärtner (2012) which follows the stories of three youth in Melilla who have traversed the Sahara and now hope to find a way to get on to Europe. Impressions on these films were discussed on the last workshop day, together with short statements of postdoc scholars which summarized the results of each workshop day.

The workshop enabled a differentiated understanding of the hopes and activities of youths. It discussed the advantages and disadvantages of growing up in the parents’ homes, of formal education and training on the job, the economic situation of families and the decisions that youth (or sometimes their parents) make which lead youth to migrate and travel. It is important to distinguish between salaried employment and self-organized work, and that there are many forms of work that youth carry out when they grow up and acquire capacities that enable them to make a living later on. The interdisciplinary approach of the workshop enabled the participants to understand the concepts of youth, young people’s concerns and their mobility from different perspectives. The different contributions emphasized the active and creative role of youth to influence and shape their futures in contrast to seeing them merely as victims. The presentations also showed that those youth who migrate to other countries are not necessarily the poorest but youth from middle class families who can afford to move across larger distances. Further results pointed at the contrast between the imaginaries of a

better life through migration and the realities of experiences that in the end often do not meet the expectations.

#### **4. Sustainability of the Event**

The workshop topic has great potential for further elaboration. The NGOs that actively participated in the workshop welcomed further collaboration and expressed their readiness to cooperate in future projects. *Mali Enjeu* has an archive, which contains important information of its work during the past years and which needs to be systematized and digitalized to preserve the documents.

There are plans to create a research project on the topic of the workshop.

As a first workshop output we plan to produce a special issue from those paper presentations which are most promising. Seven articles are presently under revision. The special issue will combine work in French and English in a bi-lingual peer reviewed academic journal. As the articles are written by non-native speakers, they will require copyediting once revision is complete.

## 5. Participants

1. Prof Augustin Emame Law, University of Nantes
2. Dr Moussa Sissoko Geography, Point Sud and ISFRA, Bamako
3. Apl. Prof Ute Roesenthaler Anthropology, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz
4. Hassana Abdou M.A. History, Université de Ngaoundere
5. Prof Justin K. Bisanswa Literature, Université de Laval
6. Dr Médard K. Bouazi Literature, Université de Laval
7. Prof Mamadou Diawara Anthropology, Goethe University Frankfurt
8. Prof Peter Geschiere Anthropology, University of Amsterdam
9. Seydou Lobé Kamaté NGO Forum Démocratique de la jeunesse du Mali
10. Tamba Kané NGO Forum Démocratique de la jeunesse du Mali
11. Youssouf Karambé M.A. Institut National de la Jeunesse et des Sports, Bamako
12. Dr Afu Isaiah Kunock Anthropology, Université de Yaounde I
13. Dr. David L. Imbua History, University of Calabar
14. Dr. Adam Mahamat Migration Studies, Université de Maroua
15. Prof Abdoulaye Niang Literature, Université Gaston Berger, Saint Louis
16. Dr Henrietta M. Nyamnjoh Environmental Science, University of Cape Town
17. Prof Marie Rodet History, University of London/Yale University
18. Dr des. Moris Samen Sociology, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz
19. Ousmane Sanogo NGO Save the Children
20. Susanne Schulz M.A. Sociology, University of Bielefeld
21. Wendpanga Eric Segueda M.A. History, Goethe University Frankfurt
22. Fodié Tandjigora M.A. Sociology, Université de Bamako
23. Ty-Juana Taylor M.A. Ethnomusicology, University of California
24. Dr Daouda Gary Tounkara Political Sciences, CNRS/LAM Bordeaux
25. Adama Traoré NGO Mali Enjeu
26. Prof Zubairu Wai Political Sciences, Lakehead University

### Additional participants:

14 young researchers from local scholarly institutions in Bamako: Afou Dembélé (FLSL, Bamako), Bakary Traoré (Point Sud), Drissa Tangara (Point Sud), Ibrahima Traoré (Point Sud), Issa Fofana (Point Sud), Issa Togola (Point Sud), Kouloougna Dembélé (ISFRA, Bamako), Mbaye Bathe (Point Sud), N'gna Traoré (ISH, Bamako), Oumar Dembélé (Point Sud), Oumar Yamadou Diallo (ENSup, Bamako), Souleymane Traoré (CNRST, Bamako), Yacouba Dogoni (Point Sud), Yacouba Koné (Faculté de Droit Public, Bamako)