# Post conflict in the Gourma of Mali: The future of elephants at the centre of debates!

This was the title of one of the press articles covering the latest initiative of the Mali Elephant Project. This was a workshop convened to address the question: of “How can essential and urgent humanitarian assistance be quickly deployed to reconcile social divisions and alleviate the present suffering, without posing a threat to a sustainable and peaceful future? “

Instead of posting the individual article translations I have posted:

* A link to the MEP blog describing the current situation in the elephant range and “why an organization concerned with elephant conservation is convening a national workshop on reconciliation, aid and reconstruction”. See <http://www.wild.org/blog/post-war-mali/>
* A summary of the content of these articles below, with weblinks to the originals at the bottom of the page.

The meeting was held at the International Conference Centre in Bamako, and the opening ceremony was co-chaired by the Minister in charge of Decentralization and Regional Planning, Abdourahmane Oumar Touré, and the Minister of the Environment and Sanitation, Ousmane Ag Rhissa, in the presence of representatives of 12 Ministries, regional governors, representatives of local councils, members of the national reconciliation commission, and representatives of embassies and international organizations.

At the opening, the Minister of Decentralization and Territorial Administration Abdourahmane Oumar Toure, said that the meeting takes place in a context of armed conflict having weakened the social fabric, exacerbated sectarian tensions and upset socio-political balances in the Gourma. He continued that the conflict led to massive displacements of populations within Malian borders and with many refugees in neighboring countries. It also threatens the survival of a species specific to the Gourma, the elephant whose protection alone was a national and international issue. The task of rebuilding what has been destroyed by the occupants is certainly not easy but it is exciting. "It is our responsibility to pursue to the very end the war against drug traffickers, terrorists and armed bandits of all kinds, who occupied the northern regions of Mali, to make every effort to restore the social fabric, and to reconcile the communities so that they might live together in the Gourma" he said.

In her introductory discourse, the Leader of the Mali Elephant Project, Dr Susan Canney, explained, “This is a subject that concerns all Malians, all friends of Mali, and environmentalists familiar with the affected areas. I speak of the armed conflict that has shaken the northern parts of Malian territory for over a year.

By creating social tensions and upsetting the economic environment the conflict has destabilized the socio-political balance. The resulting displacement of people, and tensions between and within communities, has disrupted the equilibrium that allowed rural populations to work together to regulate the use of the Gourma’s fragile natural resources for their livelihoods. An awareness of this social landscape, and the implication of local communities, is essential for the targeting of aid and reconstruction activities, and ensuring that these achieve the maximum benefit for the people and communities in most need.”

For the representative of The WILD Foundation, Dr Susan Canney, reconciling the communities immersed in a conflict that has been imposed upon them, is a pre-requisite for aid and reconstruction, and for the protection, restoration and sustainable use of the Gourma’s habitats and its elephant population. It requires working with them, motivating them to develop and implement natural resource management plans as a means to bring together the multitude of users, occupations and ethnic groups and unify them in a common cause of benefit to all. It also requires being a true promoter of strengthened local governance systems to create a new sense of citizenship.

This initiative will allow discussion over three days at the International Conference Centre addressing the three themes: sharing, structuring and learning from the information available; the roads to reconciliation; planning the way forward: who needs to do what and the elaboration of an action plan.

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Gourma : LE DEFI DE LA RECONSTRUCTION ET DE LA RECONSTRUCTION POST-CONFLIT

By S. Doumbia, L’essor, 22nd May 2013

<http://www.essor.ml/gourma-le-defi-de-le-reconciliation-et-de-la-reconstruction-post-conflit.html>

L’apres conflit dans le Gourma-malien: reflexions sur la reconciliation et la reconstruction

By Ben Dao, L’indicateur du Renouveau, 22nd May 2013 <https://www.maliweb.net/news/societe/2013/05/22/article.148411.html>

POST-CONFLIT DANS LA ZONE DU GOURMA-MALIEN: L’avenir des elephants au centre des debats!

By Salimata Fofana, Le Combat, 22nd May 2013