

# **General Report**

## **Socio-economic analysis of the presentation of masks and puppets in the municipality of Markala**

## Summary

This report was prepared as part of the Local and Accountable Governance Programme (PGLR+). Its objective is to conduct a socio-economic analysis of the presentation of masks and puppets in Markala. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

To carry out this study, a survey was conducted among 143 participants using a structured questionnaire, as well as an interview guide for in-depth interviews with 10 people from the sample.

The results helped us understand the role of the presentation of masks and puppets in the development of Markala. The event contributes to the social and economic development of Markala. It not only strengthens peace and social cohesion, but also promotes traditions and customs and creates a space for cultural exchange and conflict resolution. The presentation of masks and puppets also enables economic actors to make profits and increase their visibility during the event.

# I. Introduction

## Context

Mali is a vast country characterized by its cultural diversity. Culture is one of Mali's main assets (Laurent Héau et al., 2006). In Mali, each community has its own culture and traditions that shape its identity. Some cultural practices and traditions are shared by several communities.

Mask and puppet dancing is one such tradition in Mali. Several communities in Mali organize this tradition every year to showcase their culture. It plays an important role in the societies that practice it. It is a means of transmitting art and knowledge within the community. Mask and puppet dances also strengthen social ties, as many villages attend these events. Puppets serve not only as a form of entertainment, but also as a way of conveying messages about moral values and appropriate behaviour.

Furthermore, the presentation of masks and puppets plays an important socio-economic role. It is also an event that attracts many people, including business operators, tourists, etc. As a result, it contributes to economic development.

The presentation of masks and puppets is an ancient cultural tradition in Markala. It is considered a ritual celebration practiced by the Bambara, Bozo, Marka and Somono communities of Markala. It is characterized by dances involving masks, drums and songs performed by mask and puppet dancers. During the celebration, many neighbouring villages come together in Markala. The festival could also provide an opportunity for many traders to sell their goods and promote their products and brands.

This cultural event has existed in Markala for a very long time, but what contribution does it make to the socio-economic development of Markala? It is in this context that the topic entitled **"Socio-economic analysis of masks and puppets in Markala"** was chosen. The study aims to assess the social and economic contribution of masks and puppets to the living conditions of the population of Markala and, consequently, to the development of the municipality.

## Overall objective

To conduct a socio-economic analysis of the presentation of masks and puppets in Markala.

## Specific objectives

- To understand the social role of the presentation of masks and puppets in Markala.
- To analyse the economic contribution of the presentation of masks and puppets to the development of Markala.

## Sampling

In the absence of an existing database, 143 people were selected and surveyed using purposive sampling. The target groups included organizers, traders, local authorities, young people and members of CAFO.

## Methodology

The methodology consisted of collecting data in the field. Two approaches were used: quantitative and qualitative. The data collected were therefore both quantitative and qualitative.

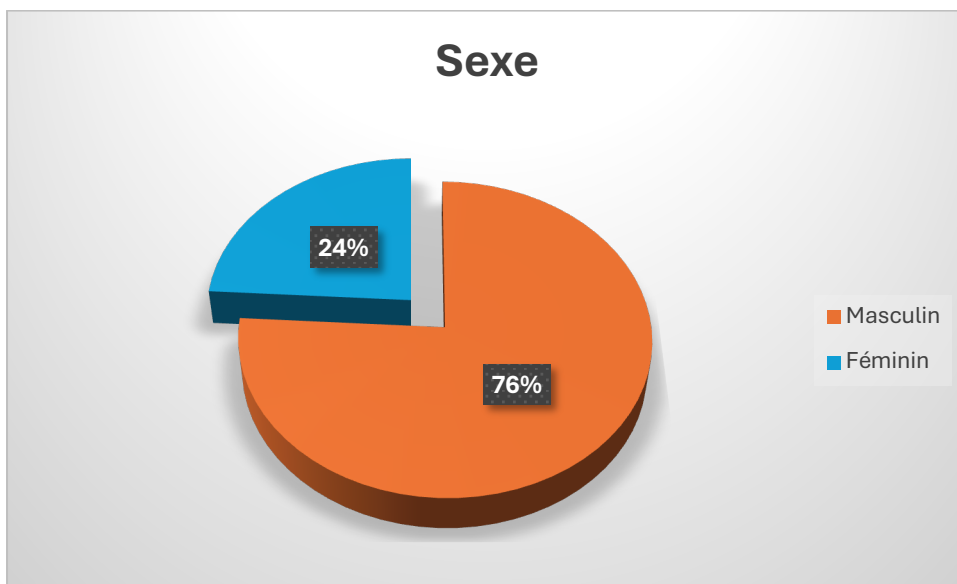
Individual interviews were conducted using a questionnaire created with Google Forms, as well as an interview guide for the qualitative component. Descriptive statistical analysis was carried out on the quantitative data collected during the field research. In addition, the interviews conducted as part of the qualitative research were recorded, transcribed and then analysed.

## II. Results obtained

### 2.1. Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

#### Gender

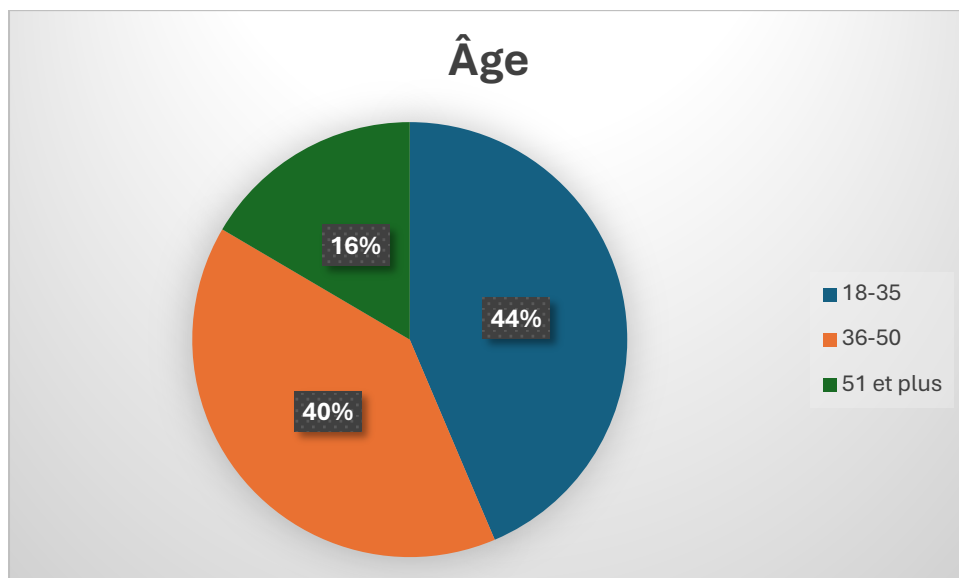
The study was conducted with 101 people, including 32 women, representing 24% of the sample. The low representation of women in the study can be explained by their reluctance to discuss this topic. Women perceive the subject as a matter traditionally kept secret by men. The results are presented in the graph below.



**Source:** Survey data

#### Age

Different age groups participated in the study, ranging from 18 to 51 years and above. The most represented age group was young people aged 18 to 35, accounting for 44% of the sample. This was followed by the 36–50 age group, representing 40% of respondents. These age groups are the ones who participate most actively in the mask and puppet events in Markala. People aged 51 and above represented only 16% of the sample. The figure below illustrates these results.

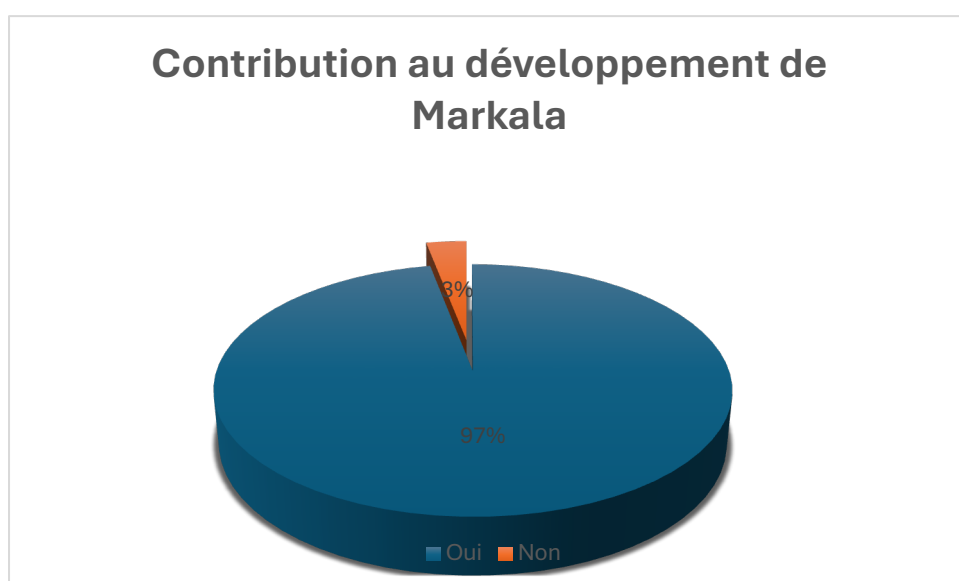


**Source:** Survey data

## 2.2. The role of the presentation of masks and puppets in the development of Markala

The presentation of masks and puppets is considered a cultural event that has an important place in society. It is an event that attracts many people for a period of time. This has both social and economic benefits.

Among the 133 people surveyed as part of the quantitative research, the vast majority (97%) confirmed that the presentation of masks and puppets contributes to the development of Markala. The figure below presents the quantitative results.



**Source:** Survey data

The interview responses also supported the idea that masks and puppets contribute to the development of Markala. Some of the responses included the following:

According to an elderly man, D. Diarra:

“Culture contributes to the development of Markala and Mali. Culture is one of the greatest resources for a country’s development. The creation of the association that organizes the mask and puppet performances has made it possible to tour the country and travel abroad. Thanks to the mask and puppet performances, the organizers have been able to visit countries such as the Netherlands and France, etc. The presentation of masks and puppets promotes tourism.”

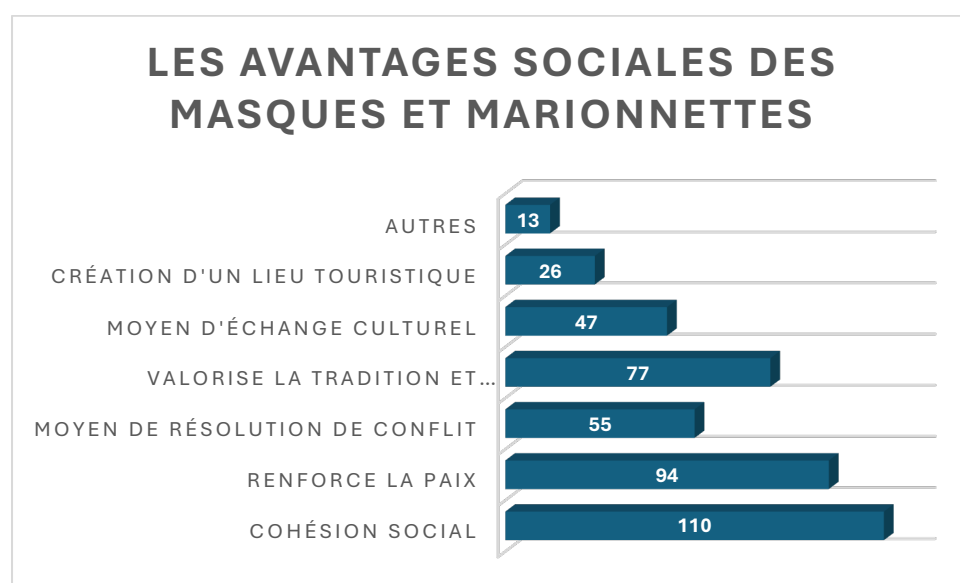
Similarly, another interviewee stated:

“The presentation of masks and puppets contributes to the development of Markala because during the event, the vendors who are present all earn money, and even the people who make the masks’ clothing earn money. This reduces unemployment in Markala, even if only temporarily. Furthermore, during the event everyone is happy and no one has negative thoughts, such as going to steal from someone close to them. All of this contributes to security and stability and to the development of society.”

### Social importance of the presentation of masks and puppets

According to the respondents, the presentation of masks and puppets occupies an important place in Markala from a social perspective. It helps strengthen social ties and peace and creates a tourist attraction for visitors. It also provides a space for cultural exchange and for promoting traditions and customs.

The bar chart below illustrates these results. Social cohesion was the most frequently mentioned benefit, with 110 respondents, followed by the strengthening of peace and the promotion of traditions and customs, mentioned by 94 and 77 respondents respectively. The creation of a tourist attraction was mentioned less frequently, by only 26 respondents.



**Source:** Survey data

According to D. Traoré:

“The main reasons for the presentation of masks and puppets in Markala are to show children the animals of the bush and what they are capable of, so that the children will be careful when they encounter these animals. The presentation of masks and puppets creates joy and a festive atmosphere among people. It also signifies that the rainy season has gone well, with the appearance of the grass mask.”

M. Diarra stated:

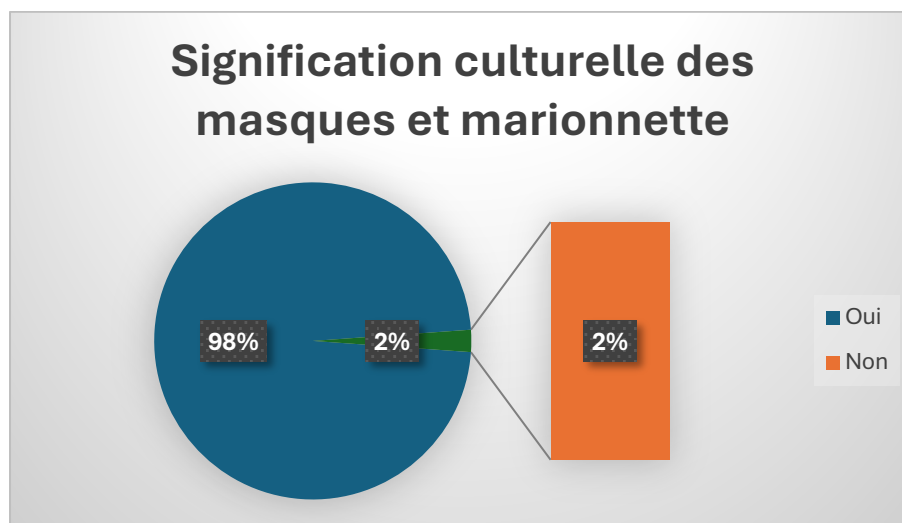
“The presentation of masks and puppets strengthens peace and social cohesion. From the beginning of the event until the end, all minor disagreements are put aside and people focus only on enjoying themselves.”

Similarly, S. Diarra stated:

“The presentation of masks and puppets is very important in society. It allows people to work, learn and educate others. Its importance also lies in the different songs sung by women, which convey messages. For example, there are masks that represent peace, but we understand this through the songs—songs that remind us that peace is the most important thing. For example, the lion is the hunter of the forest; it is a predator that hunts its prey. These are messages that do not come from men, but rather through the songs sung by women during the presentation of masks and puppets. Furthermore, during the mask and puppet events, people who have been living elsewhere for years return whenever possible. This strengthens social cohesion and is even a factor in preventing conflict and war within society.”

### Cultural meanings of masks and puppets

In many cases, the presentation of masks and puppets also conveys messages and cultural values. This is also the case in Markala. Of the 133 people surveyed, 130 (98%) confirmed that the masks and puppets have meanings, while only a few respondents stated that they have no particular meaning.



**Source:** Survey data

The following testimonies support these figures:

According to D. Traoré:

“The presentation of masks and puppets is a practice that conveys messages and advice through songs. Each mask and puppet has a meaning. There are Ciwara masks, as well as masks representing the police and gendarmerie, called ‘Gonfarma’, which means ‘evil chimpanzee’. All the masks have a meaning, and even the clothes worn during the event have a meaning. They are classified according to age group: those of young people, adults and older people. The events begin with the appearance of the Gonfarma mask, followed by the masks of loyal women and then the ‘Doualen’, a bird that marks the beginning and the end of the rainy season. All of these are accompanied by music that honours them. The masks have meanings and are presented in different stages, and it is the songs that explain these meanings.”

Another interviewee, A. Siby, stated:

“Of course, the masks and puppets have cultural meanings because some masks are only passed down from one generation to another. There are masks used for sacrifices and masks used for traditional celebrations, and this has a meaning for the population. They have meaning and are part of the cultural identity of the area.”

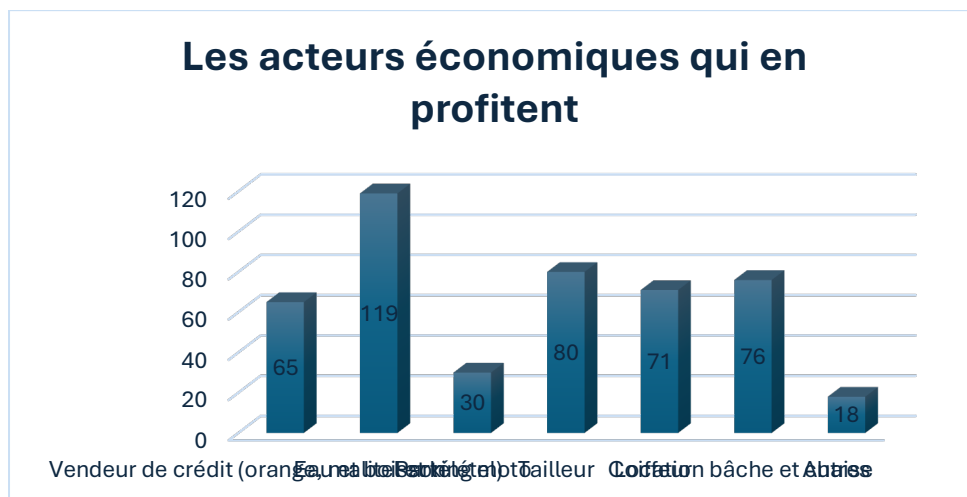
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## **Economic importance of the presentation of masks and puppets**

The event brings together many people, including economic actors who take advantage of the occasion to advertise their products and sell their goods.

Sellers of essential goods, such as drinking water and beverages, are particularly in demand during the event, as mentioned by 119 respondents. Hairdressing and tailoring are traditional activities associated with the organizers, meaning that during the preparation of the festival, tailors and hairdressers also benefit financially. These activities were mentioned by 71 and 80 respondents respectively.

People renting out tents and chairs, parking attendants, telecommunications credit vendors and other small traders all make profits during the days when the masks and puppets are presented in Markala.

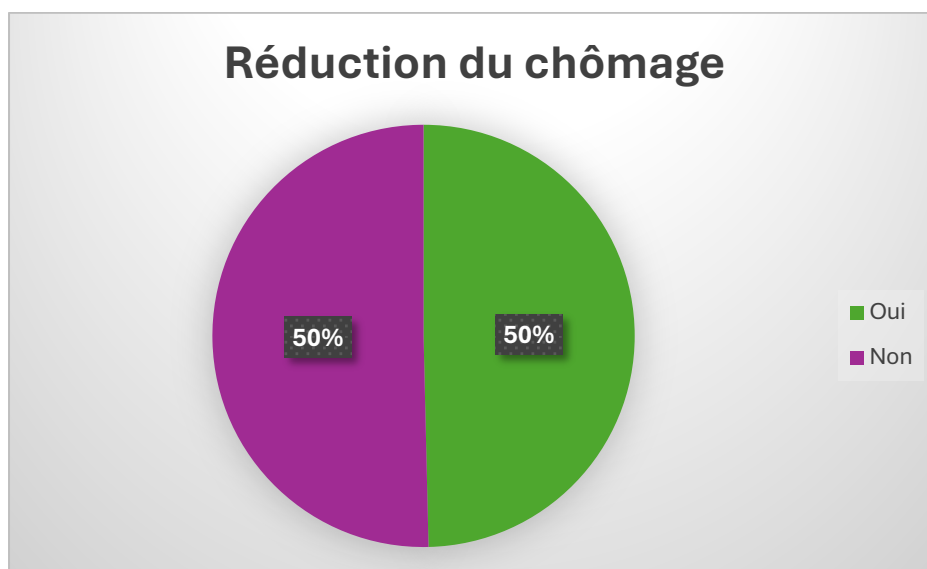


**Source:** Survey data

## The presentation of masks and puppets and the reduction of unemployment

This question was widely discussed with respondents. Half of the interviewees (50%) agreed that the presentation of masks and puppets helps reduce unemployment. They argued that it allows many people to start small businesses during the mask and puppet event.

The other 50% of respondents did not agree that the presentation of masks and puppets contributes to reducing poverty. According to them, the event is periodic and therefore does not create sufficient employment opportunities.



**Source:** Survey data

D. Traoré stated:

“The presentation of masks and puppets contributes to the development of Markala because during the event, the vendors who are present all earn money, and even the people who make the masks’ clothing earn money. This reduces unemployment in Markala, even if only temporarily.”

### **III. Conclusion**

The study on the socio-economic analysis of the presentation of masks and puppets in Markala has enabled us to understand the role that this cultural event plays in the development of the municipality.

It contributes to the social and economic development of Markala. It not only strengthens peace and social cohesion, but also promotes traditions and customs and creates a space for cultural exchange and conflict resolution.

The presentation of masks and puppets also enables economic actors to make profits and increase their visibility during the event.