

“hd

Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue



Agro-pastoral mediation in the Sahel

(Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad)




Trusted. Neutral. Independent. Connected. Effective.


The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) mediates between governments, non-state armed groups and opposition parties to reduce conflict, limit the human suffering caused by war and develop opportunities for peaceful settlements.

As a non-profit based in Switzerland, HD helps to build the path to stability and development for people, communities and countries through more than 50 peacemaking projects around the world.

Follow HD on Twitter and LinkedIn :

 <https://twitter.com/hdcentre>

 <https://www.linkedin.com/company/centreforhumanitariandialogue>

 www.hdcentre.org

© 2021 – Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Reproduction of all or part of this publication is subject to written permission and acknowledgement of its origin.

Agro-pastoral mediation in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad)

Preface

“African solutions to African problems” is a slogan used by many peace-makers confronted with the endemic conflict situation in this wide continent.

Unfortunately, this principle is often ignored in favour of conflict management models designed in Western capitals and funded by institutions whose agendas are rarely in line with those of the victims of these conflicts.

In placing its trust in the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) to carry out this project using a local team, Denmark entrusted a mediation project to African hands. Six years later, with additional support from the Netherlands and the European Union, the project’s nearly 2,000 agro-pastoral mediators remain exclusively Sahelian. They speak more than 40 local languages but many have not been to secondary school. They know every pasture and herd very well in their area but do not bother with geopolitical strategy. They master the habits and customs related to the exploitation of natural resources, transhumance and living together but have never opened a law book.

Whether pastoralist, fisherfolk or farmer, all are volunteers committed to their communities and endowed with a natural sense of justice. They have nothing in common with diplomatic special envoys but they are efficient. Having resolved some 260 agro-pastoral conflicts per year, these Sahelians can pride themselves on making a significant contribution to the reducing the volatility and violence of the Sahel region.

A good pastoralist, fisherfolk or farmer is usually modest and does not talk much, so it was up to HD to pay tribute to these Sahelian mediators through this publication. Beyond their efforts, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue also wishes to express its gratitude to Abdelkader Sidibé and Almoustapha Amadou, the leaders of the project, to the authorities of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad for their support, to the G5 Sahel communities for their trust and to Denmark, the Netherlands and the European Union for their material and political support.

Alexandre Liebeskind
Director Francophone Africa
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Pastoralism

An animal production system where the diet of livestock is mainly based on the exploitation of pasture. The distance pastoralists and their cattle have to cover determines the type of pastoralism:

Sedentary pastoralism



The pastoralist and their family are sedentary. The pastoralist and the animals make a daily round-trip to exploit pasture located close to where they live. In this case, the pastoral activity is complemented by other activities, mainly agro-pastoral.

Transhumant pastoralism



The pastoralist, their family and their animals travel to exploit pasture on a seasonal basis, according to a traditional timeframe and a widely-known itinerary. If pastoralism constitutes the principal activity, complementary activities may be developed.

Nomadic pastoralism



The pastoralist, their family and their animals travel according to the availability of resources and do not have a permanent place of residence. The pastoralist lives for, through and with the animals and does not develop any complementary activity.



Content

Agro-pastoral mediation in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad)

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction : Bringing peace in the agro-pastoral space, a permanent emergency | 2 |
| I. Nomadic pastoralists, forever outsiders | 4 |
| Pastoralism, caught in the middle | 4 |
| A struggle for survival | 5 |
| The need for a new social contract | 6 |
| II. A network of mediators rooted within communities | 7 |
| Who are the leaders in charge of the mediations? | 7 |
| Inclusion as a basis for networking | 14 |
| How are the networks organised? | 15 |
| What types of conflicts are they striving to resolve? | 15 |
| III. A traditional methodology for mediation | 18 |
| Mediation methodology | 18 |
| Agro-pastoral mediation and climate change | 20 |
| Some stories of conflicts and their resolution | 21 |
| What type of mediation should be used when conflicts over natural resources involve armed groups? | 23 |
| IV. The respect of customs and the promotion of law | 24 |
| Prior to departure on transhumance | 24 |
| During the mobility period | 25 |
| Habits and customs: potential sources of conflict | 25 |
| Use of local conventions | 28 |
| Towards the updating of the legislation governing rural lands | 30 |
| Conclusion : The impact and limits of HD's agro-pastoral mediation project | 32 |
| The impact of the project on the daily life of Sahelian populations | 32 |
| What factors limit the impact of signed conflict resolution agreements? | 34 |



Introduction : Bringing peace in the agro- pastoral space, a permanent emergency

In the Sahel region, pastoral and agricultural communities live from the natural resources they share. Their way of life is now threatened by the increasing scarcity of resources due to demographic pressure, climate change, desertification and insecurity.

The survival of farmers relies on their increasingly difficult access to agricultural land. As for pastoralists, their ability to move around to feed their herds, whether seasonally or as natural resources become available, is paramount. However, the surge of armed conflicts in the region causes border closures, disrupts transhumance cycles and foments distrust among communities.

Forced to cope with agricultural and social development strategies not adapted to their way of life, pastoralist communities are left to their own devices. It is in this context that competition between farmers, fisherfolk and pastoralist communities for access to water points and pastures has been politicised by the interplay of alliances with rival armed groups throughout the Sahel region.

Meanwhile, military operations between jihadist groups, self-defence militias and security forces erode social cohesion, promote population displacement and stunt economic activity. Finally, the growing gap between governments and the governed, amid a lack of improvement in the socio-political and security crises in recent years, further limits the possibilities of resolving local conflicts.

In 2015, faced with the prospect of increasing militarisation of agro-pastoral conflicts, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) proposed a project to the states of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso to mediate between nomadic and sedentary communities in the tri-border area. Having been given a mandate by the three states, HD then leveraged community leaders and traditional mediation techniques to ensure local ownership and sustainability of its efforts.

This approach proved its relevance during the first phase of the project between 2016 and 2019. Through negotiated agreements, nearly half of the 759 conflicts identified by HD mediators in 2016 were

resolved and more than 1,500 stolen or lost cattle were returned to their owners.

The project has contributed to peace in the tri-border area by re-establishing trust between communities regardless of political hazards or conflicts. Based on the results in the tri-border areas, in 2019 the project was extended to the states of Chad and Mauritania and now covers the border areas of all five countries.

Through this publication, and without forgetting the limits of its activities, HD intends to share its experience of agro-pastoral mediation in the Sahel for the benefit of a wider audience.

Even if communities unanimously recognise the value of networks of mediators, the best agreements can be undermined by war, organised crime or simply the struggle for survival. Local mediation efforts cannot replace the need for a political solution to the conflicts affecting the Sahel region and an institutional solution to the marginalisation of nomads.

I. Nomadic pastoralists, forever outsiders

The Sahel region is a zone where borders, communities and relations – social, economic, political, cultural and religious – are defined by fluidity. This fluidity is the result of a transactional culture, demonstrated by the networks of alliances within and between families and also by the reciprocal exchange of products between ecologically complementary zones. Such interactions between communities are governed by a moral code of solidarity, which involves traditional norms and mechanisms to manage access to, and the protection and renewal of, natural resources, and to enforce the principle of free movement for people and cattle. State authorities exert little power or control over these wide-open spaces where communities traditionally ensure their own protection. In this Sahara-Sahel context, pastoral communities have historically been limited to the geographical and political periphery of the centres of power. Centralised governance mechanisms have favoured economic exploitation, social marginalisation and the exclusion of other administrative and political structures. In fact, notable people have developed, within the communities and among the traditional and religious authorities, networks of alliances which aimed to divide in order to rule, helping to create an environment of nearly permanent confrontation. From pre-colonial times to the present day, interactions between pastoral communities and administrative authorities have been characterised by a mixture of indifference and incomprehension.

Pastoralism, caught in the middle

In the Sahel region, the subsistence economy is structured around livestock, transhumance¹, trade, and agriculture. Since most of the Sahel area is arid and unsuitable for agriculture, pastoralism is an activity that boosts the economy and is essential for the survival of millions of people in the region.

Transhumance and nomadism² – both fundamental pastoralist mechanisms which have been adapted to the Sahel environment – are currently under threat. The pastoral area is constantly decreasing due to the combined effects of desertification and the expansion of agricultural land. With population growth enabled by authorities and fuelled by economic interests, agriculture is acquiring more and more fertile land traditionally allocated to livestock. Mining operations, land speculation, and urbanisation represent additional threats to pasture areas.

The available land is therefore no longer sufficient to guarantee food for cattle and the renewal of pastures. The mobility of pastoralists and their cattle is also being seriously hampered. The closure of interstate borders, as well as the presence of wars and criminality, jeopardise their movements.

Dangerous, unpredictable and sometimes blocked transhumance tracks that have existed for a thousand years nevertheless remain crucial for the survival of herds and people and for access to livestock markets. The decrease in pasture areas and in mobility are both sources of conflict between nomadic pastoralist communities and sedentary farmers, as well as between pastoralist communities competing for access to resources.

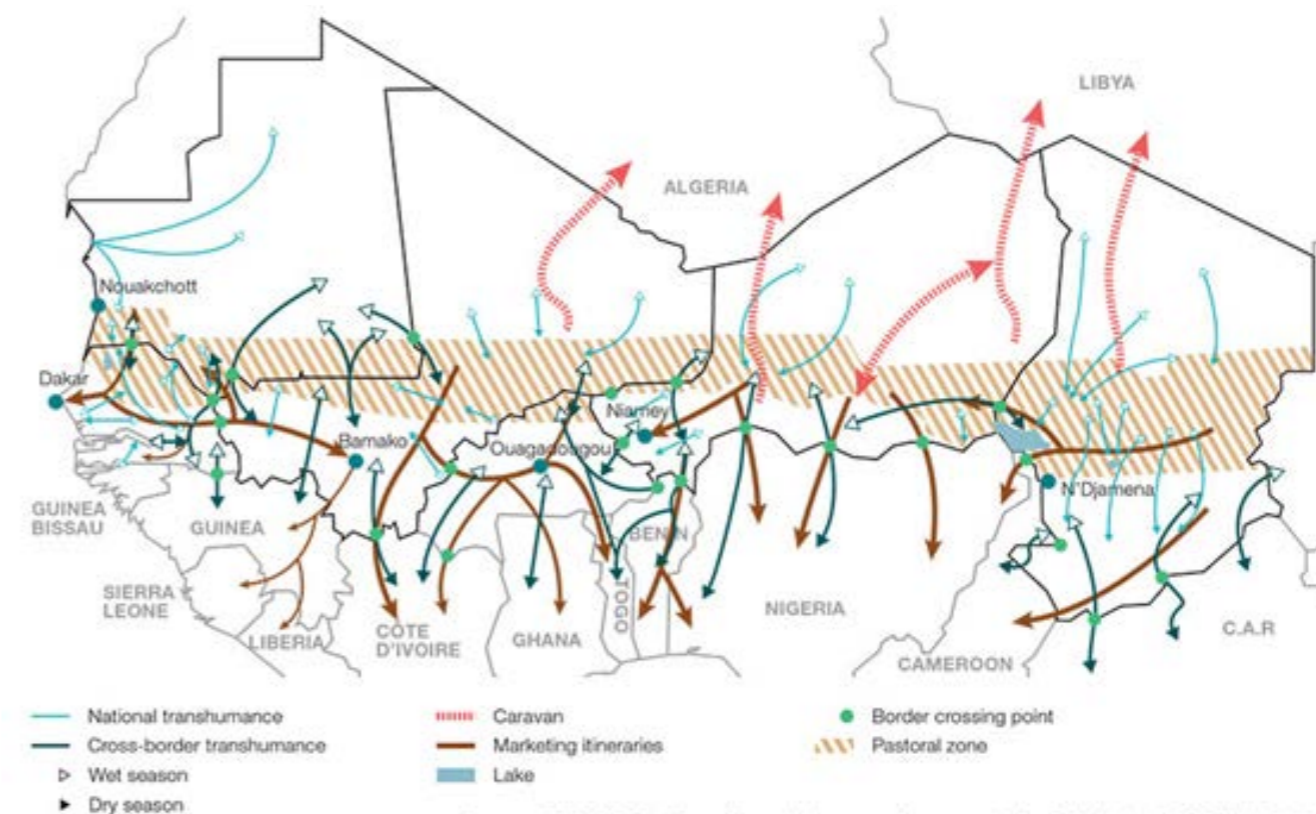
1 The mobility of the pastoralist, their family, and cattle according to an itinerary and timeframe known to everyone.

2 The mobility of the pastorlist, his family and cattle depending on the availability of resources.

A struggle for survival

Multiple transhumance routes pass through all the theatres of armed conflict from the Sahel to the coastal countries of West Africa and the forests of Central Africa, as shown in the map.³

TRANSHUMANCE AND NOMADISM



Extract: OECD (2014), An Atlas of the Sahara-Sahel: Geography, Economics and Security, OECD Publishing, Paris.

© 2014, Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD)

Since the 1990s, nomadic pastoralist communities have been paying the price for the civil wars that have devastated the region. The political and military crises which have affected Chad, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic (CAR) in recent years have turned transhumance routes between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria, and Cameroon and Chad into zones plagued by war and organised crime. Often exploited by both rebels and the military in areas of weak state control, nomadic

communities have increasingly turned to the growing black market for small arms to protect themselves.

Vulnerable and frustrated, young nomads have been rapidly joining the ranks of rebel organisations to fight more effectively against neighbouring communities with whom they have been in conflict. The Daoussahaq from Mali, for example, have sided with the CMA (Coordination of Armed Movements of Azawad), while large numbers of young Fulanis

3 Source: Touré, I., Ikwowicz, A., Wane, A., Garba, I., Gerber, P. (2012). Information system on pastoralism in the Sahel. Rome: FAO/CI-RAD. Edigraphie, 04/2014

from Niger have joined the ISGS (Islamic State of the Greater Sahara).

The arming of nomads, the creation of self-defence militias and the politicisation of communities have quickly impaired traditional networks and peaceful co-existence. The militarisation of conflicts around access to resources has added to weakening traditional mechanisms and rules for resolving disputes. It has dealt a blow to the Sahelian culture of solidarity.

Even though Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger⁴ have attempted to reinforce traditional dispute settlement mechanisms through national laws on pastoralism and transhumance, this legislation is obsolete, unknown or under revision and therefore not applicable. In Niger, for instance, the legal framework (the 1960 Rural Code revised in 2013 and the 1961 Pastoral Law) recognises pastoral systems and guarantees mobility but remains widely inoperative. In the absence of effective pastoralist and property governance, tensions between pastoralists and farmers often lead to armed conflicts.

The need for a new social contract

The continuous and irreversible degradation of the environment and increasing demographic pressures are both trends which are slowly destroying the nomadic pastoral way of life – a way of life which now exists against a background of violence and exile.

This complex socio-economic transition has not been addressed and important mediation work on conflicts around access to resources cannot, by itself, provide a long-term solution to the question of pastoralism. All states in the Sahel strip need to work together to develop a regional management policy for the nomadic process and the sedentarisation of pastoralists. Pastoral communities, who themselves have the best understanding of their vulnerabilities and history, must be involved in the creation of a governance model which protects their way of life while favouring social and professional mobility for the young.

In fact, only a new social contract that provides an adapted citizenship model for nomads – whose only frontier is the horizon – can sustainably prevent conflict, impoverishment and migration.



II. A network of mediators rooted within communities

Historically, traditional chieftains resolved disputes amicably around the exploitation of common resources. Together, they had the power to decide on passageways for cattle and communities and to penalise cattle thieves. Religious authorities – along with tribal or village chiefs, customary chiefs, land masters, griots and caste men such as blacksmiths or jesters – are also regularly called on to resolve conflicts over access to natural resources. As a result of the weakening social fabric, including the emergence of new elites resulting from armed conflict and of many sometimes competing religious currents, this part of the role of traditional and religious authorities has been weakened. Nevertheless, community leaders have the necessary competence and legitimacy to negotiate the resolution of community conflicts. In addition, the use of an influential third party or a community by alliance (through marriage, cousin relationship or unofficial kinship) is another mechanism for resolving pre-existing conflicts. This is why HD has relied on them to create its network of mediators.

In order for traditional mediators to address conflicts and contribute to the restoration of social ties between communities weakened by the crises, HD carefully selected leaders who were recognised by their respective communities. A list of leaders pre-identified by HD was validated during community exchanges. Most of the leaders chosen were already active in conflict resolution but their efforts were confined within state borders. It was, for example, impossible for them to recover stolen cattle from across a border. This problem was solved by developing a network of community leaders that crosses state borders. As a result, 63 networks of 1,982 community leaders and supporters were established in 129 border municipalities to support efforts to mediate and reduce violence.

Who are the leaders in charge of the mediations?

HD made sure that all socio-economic groups (farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, market managers, traders, etc) were represented in the networks in proportional numbers. HD took the same approach with people from the various communities, ethnic groups and sub-groups⁵, women, young people and elders. The different languages spoken in the sub-region are also represented.

To avoid politicisation of the networks, they do not include an elected authority or an authority designated by the capitals of the Sahel countries.

⁴ In Chad, the text governing pastoralism and transhumance dates back to 1959 and has not been the subject of any recent review.

⁵ For example, Daoussahaqs and Tamasheqs are sub-groups of the Touareg ethnic group.

Agropastoral mediation in the Sahel : overview of the 129 municipalities of intervention



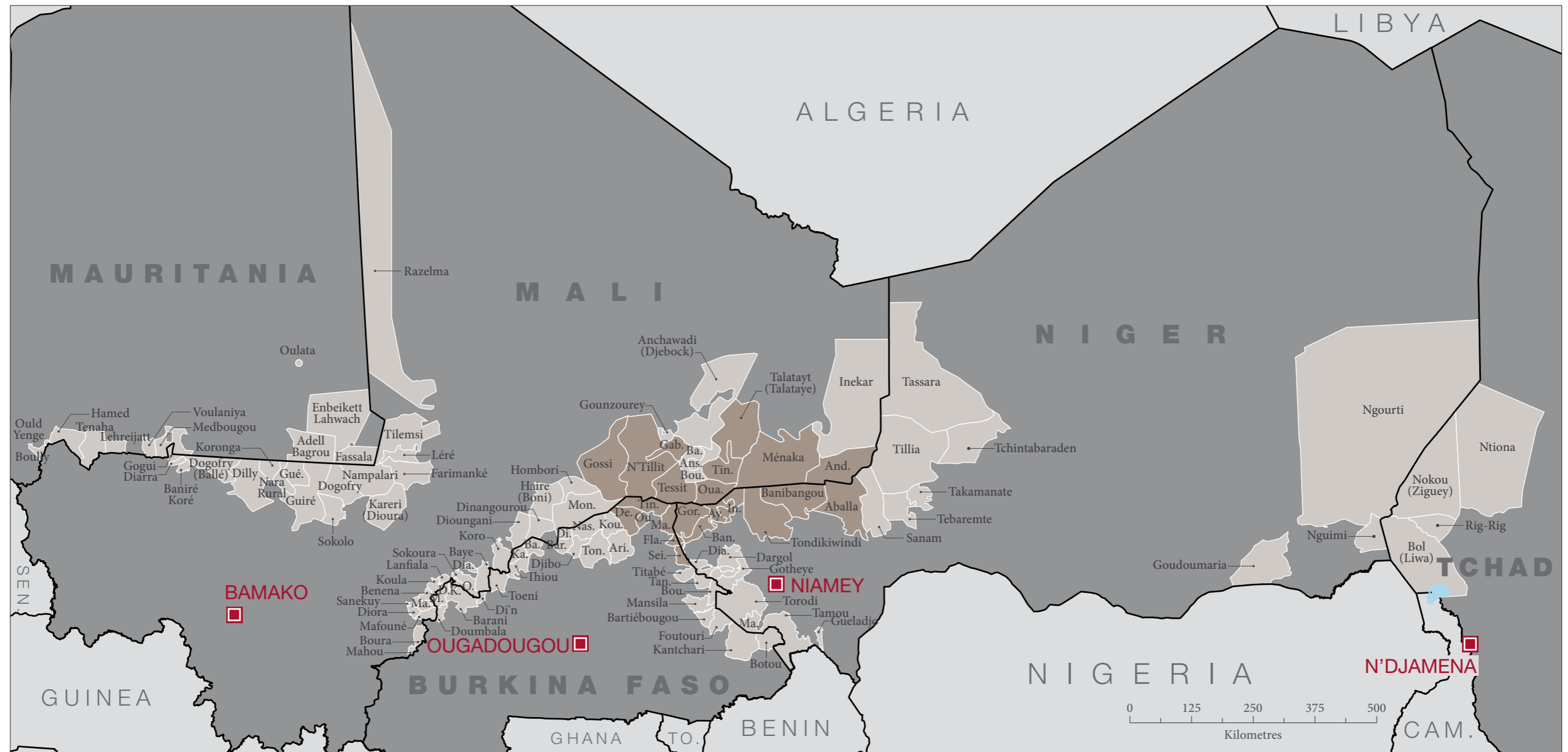
Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue



Municipalities of intervention since 2015 / 2016



Municipalities of intervention since end of 2019 / beginning of 2020



MALI

And. : Andéram-boukane Dia. : Diallassagou Mon. : Mondoro
 Ans. : Ansongo rural Gab. : Gabéro O. : Ouonkoro
 Ba. : Bara Gué. : Guéniébé Oua. : Ouattagouna
 Bou. : Bourra Ma : Mandiakuy Tin. : Tinhama

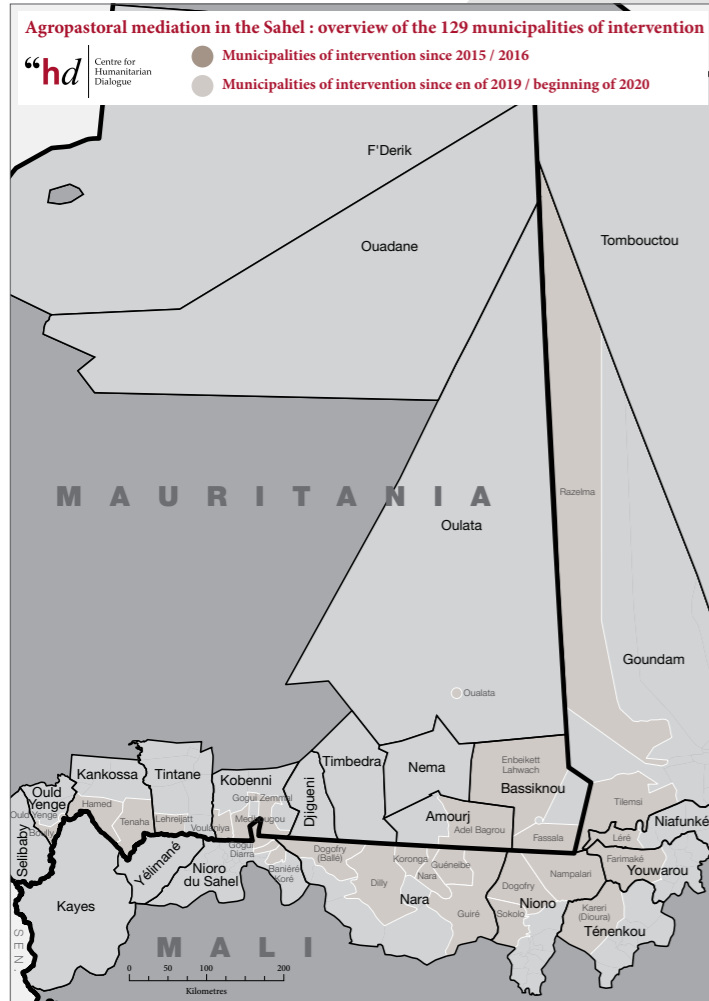
BURKINA FASO

Ari. : Aribinda D. : Djibasso K. : Kombori Ma. : Markoye Tan. : Tankougounadié
 Ba. : Banh De. : Deou Ka. : Kaïn Nas. : Nassoumbou Tin. : Tin Akoff
 Bar. : Baraboule Di. : Diguel Kou. : Koutougou Ou. : Oursi Ton : Tongomayel
 Bou. : Boundoré Fla. : Flagountou M. : Madouba Sei. : Seitanga

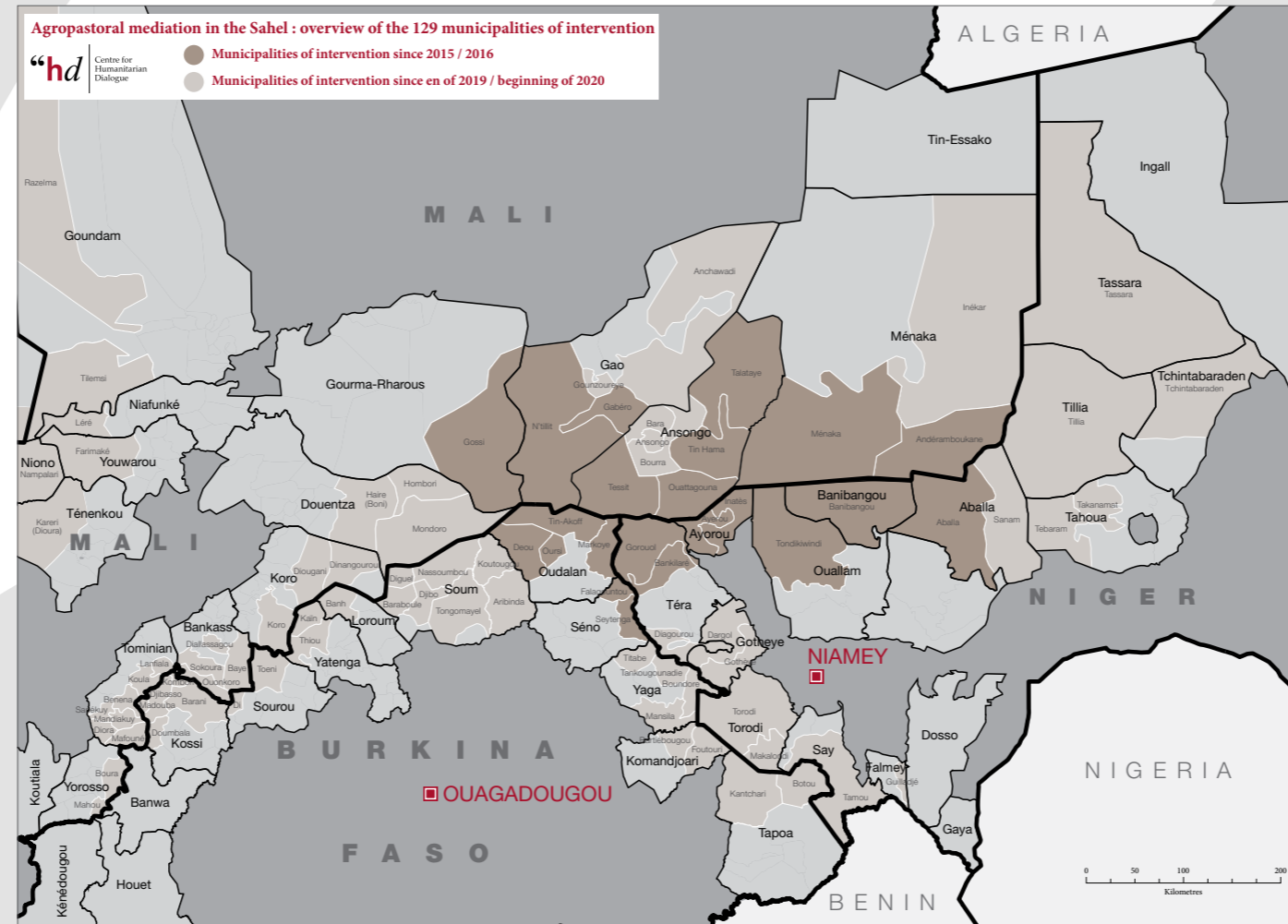
NIGER

Ay. : Ayorou In. : Inates
 Ban. : Bankilaré Ma. : Makolondi
 Dia. : Diagourou
 Gor. : Gorouol

March 2020



Mauritania
Mali



Burkina Faso
Mali
Niger



Niger
Chad



Hadji Bocari Bah

Hadji Bocari Bah is a pastoralist and president of the Nampalary municipality network in the Ségou region of Mali. His peers chose him as a leader because his family is in charge of the traditional chieftainship and he is a community councillor in the local government. From this position, he has supported the interests of those involved in transhumance, which has allowed him to gain their trust and mobilise other leaders who are not members of the network around mediation actions. Since its creation, the communities have preferred to appeal to the network rather than to armed groups with influence in the area or to the administrative authorities.

“The network of leaders has had a very positive impact on our lives and has allowed us to value our traditional conflict management mechanisms. Today, virtually all leaders have become mediators and resolve their conflicts at their level without the involvement of outsiders.”

Hadje Alidou

Hadje Alidou is a former trader turned sheep and goat pastoralist. She is part of the network of the Rig municipality in the province of Kanem, Chad. In addition to being a member of the network, she is president of an association of local women preachers. Hadje was appointed leader by her peers because she is a dynamic person who speaks several dialects of the region and who, in the past, was trained in community-based conflict resolution. She is a highly valued leader in the local Gorane and Kanembu communities for her flexibility and commitment to the communities. Her knowledge of the Muslim religion complements her widely known influence with women in the municipality and made it easier for her to mediate conflicts.

“Communities and authorities ask the network on a daily basis to reconcile two parties or two communities in conflict, and I am pleased to put my experience and expertise at their disposal to achieve solutions accepted by all.”

Aissata Housseini

Aissata Housseini belongs to HD’s network in Bankilaré municipality in the Tillabéry region of Niger. She was chosen as a leader by her peers due to her engagement in conflict resolution in her municipality and her role in presiding over a women’s association. She was also training women, in particular in gardening, to allow them to generate income. In her network, she is now in charge of information and promoting the role of women. In addition to several family conflicts, she resolved a problem arising from women collecting hay and preventing animals from getting fodder during the “hunger gap”.

“Ancient conflicts are often the hardest to resolve. For example, 10 years ago, development workers built houses in my village without any prior agreement. Ever since they left, villagers have been fighting with the village chief, unable to determine who should use these houses and how they should be used.”

Deh Ould Babah

Deh Ould Babah is part of the HD network of Oualata and Nbeiket Lahwach in the Hodh Chargui region of Mauritania. He was chosen by his peers because he is a remarkable person from the village of Ulata, the son of the family of tribal chief Ehel Sheikh Ould Khelifa, a descendant of the prophet Mohammed and a retired professor of Islamic history and education. His position makes him a recognised and highly influential leader in conflict resolution.

“The fact that the project relies on notable leaders and community leaders, in addition to relying on traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, makes the project more effective and sustainable over time. Both the leaders and the whole community looked forward to this initiative because it has restored the traditional mechanisms, which are very efficient in terms of time and money.”

Dakio Ourouba

Dakio Ourouba is the leader in the municipality of Doumbala, in the province of Kossi, in the region of Boucle du Mouhoun, Burkina Faso. He is president of the network of the municipalities of Djibasso, Doumbala, and Madouba. Dakio is a painter and, like all the inhabitants of Kossi, he is also a farmer. Since 2017, Dakio has also served as chairman of the Doumbala village development committee, where he was already involved in community conflict resolution before joining the agro-pastoral mediator network in 2019. Most of these conflicts were land disputes, which are traditionally settled by traditional leaders (traditional chiefs, territorial chiefs, etc.). Since the establishment of networks in Boucle du Mouhoun, community leaders have been able to resolve conflicts that had not been resolved by traditional leaders.

“This new way of resolving conflicts contributes to peace and social cohesion because it values the protagonists without being forceful or threatening.”

“The network of leaders has had a very positive impact on our lives and enabled us to enhance our traditional conflict management mechanisms.”

Inclusion as a basis for networking

The various crises in the Sahel have led to mistrust between communities and between certain communities and the authorities. Conflicts that communities were able to previously resolve at the local level now remain and fester due to the lack of opportunities for dialogue.

To improve this situation, the spaces for dialogue established by the HD project guarantee the inclusion of the entire society in order to restore trust among all stakeholders. From the baseline study to the establishment of the agro-pastoral mediator networks, four inclusion criteria have been taken into account:

- **Geographic inclusion:** The populations of all localities in the municipality are represented when collecting information and establishing networks.
- **Socio-professional inclusion:** All socio-professional categories are represented (farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, market managers, brokers, forestry operators, etc) and their viewpoints are taken into account.
- **Sociolinguistic and ethnic inclusion:** All ethnic and linguistic minorities are represented, both indigenous and non-indigenous.
- **Generational and gender inclusion:** Women and young people are essential layers of Sahelian societies and cannot be excluded from collective dispute management processes.

Women are central to HD's inclusion policy. There are now 344 women in the 63 agro-pastoral mediator networks, accounting for 17% of the mediators.

The mediators proposed the idea of organising spaces for dialogue dedicated to women with the existing members of the networks. In this way, existing mediators are able to share their experiences with other women and gradually increase their participation in the agro-pastoral mediator networks. This progressive inclusion methodology, related to the socio-cultural context, has meant the first 10 networks reached 30.11% of women members by the end of the first phase of the project in 2019.



How are the networks organised?

A local network involves an average of 30 leaders who come from two or three municipalities. Every network has a president, a treasurer and two or three people acting as relays. The latter are in charge of keeping the minutes of meetings and signed agreements and they constitute the network's memory. Otherwise, the networks are organised in a free and flexible manner, adapted to local needs.

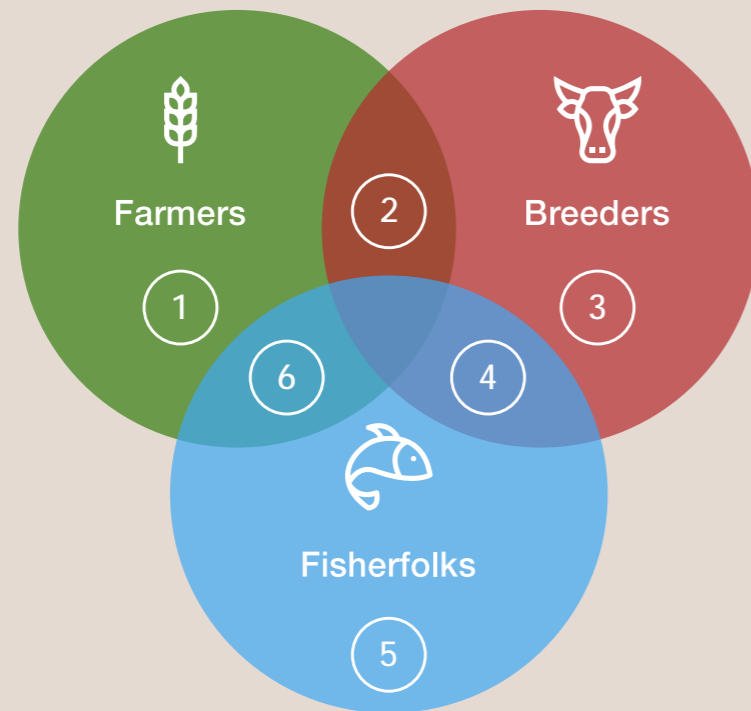
There is no permanent bureau at the cross-border level but meetings are organised twice a year. They gather about a third of the leaders and give them a chance to exchange their experiences and to discuss cross-border problems (such as transhumance, cattle or vehicle thefts, etc) where mutual collaboration is needed.

What types of conflicts are they striving to resolve?

While identifying the leaders, HD looked into the natural resources which are exploited in the region and the transhumance tracks taken by nomads and pastoralists, as well as animal thefts, cattle diseases and municipal conflicts. Following consultations with the communities in all the municipalities where the project has been introduced, HD helped the networks to establish a list of nearly 900 conflicts to resolve. The range of conflicts is shown in the chart below.



Different types of inter-communal conflicts



1. The origin of conflicts between farmers

- Field boundaries
- Fields which have been lent out for use
- Property disputes with the State (land titles)
- Exploitation of mining resources

2. The origin of conflicts between farmers and animal breeders

- Access to waterpoints
- The expansion of fields onto transhumant passageways
- Illegal occupation of pasture
- Damage done to the cultivated fields by animals which escape or are uncontrolled

3. The origin of conflicts between animal breeders

- Access to waterpoints
- Passageways
- Cattle thefts
- Access to pasture
- Lack of knowledge of legislation leading to disputes with the State

4. The origin of conflicts between animal breeders and fisherfolks

- Poisoned ponds
- Fishing nets damaged by cattle

5. The origin of conflicts between fisherfolks

- Sharing of fishing resources

6. The origin of conflicts between fisherfolks and farmers

- Nets in ricefields
- Damaged ricefields

Other conflicts addressed by the networks, other activities made possible as a result of re-establishing trust

- Family problems (disputes, new spouses, money, abandoned children, repudiation)
- Conflicts between village chiefs (accused of supporting jihadists, sympathy towards armed group, religious difference)
- Simple thefts, vehicle and cattle thefts, kidnappings, highway bandits, murders
- Indirect relations with armed group (cattle or vehicle recovery)
- Establishment of contacts with authorities or technical State services
- Conflicts between communities created by an NGO implementing a badly-defined project
- Awareness-raising among transhumants about laws, customs and practices
- Awareness-raising among women leaders and mothers about the risks of recruitment by armed groups, migration, banditry, etc.



III. A traditional methodology for mediation

Mediation methodology

When a conflict erupts between two communities, there are three different ways local people can involve the network: the mediators can be called in by the concerned parties, by a third party or by one of the leaders if they are a witness.

The approach the networks take to resolving the situation is in line with the standards of any political mediation by identifying the parties' grievances, objectives and red lines, facilitating a negotiation process and helping the parties to establish a consensual agreement and a follow-up mechanism.

As a first step, the network meets and develops a plan of action. Separate meetings are held with each community and their respective leader. At this stage, the idea is to reduce tensions and raise awareness among the parties of the importance of solidarity and finding an agreement which is acceptable to all rather than looking for revenge. The network leaders listen carefully to the facts presented by the conflicting parties.

The second step is for the network leaders to identify neutral ground for a meeting that will take place in front of a local authority figure such as a county or village chief. At the same time, the network collects as much information as possible on the conflict situation to form its own opinion.

The third step, which takes place once the network leaders understand the stakes, involves organising a mediation meeting with the parties in conflict.

The challenge for the network leaders in charge of facilitating the mediation is to remain impartial, to not voice their opinion and to ensure that everyone gets equal speaking time. Once all the facts have been presented, the network leaders look for a satisfying and honourable means of reconciliation.

When the conflict is resolved, the people serving as relays draft minutes of the meeting, including the agreed arrangement. Once signed by the parties, the minutes remain with the network. If the parties are unable to reach a compromise, non-resolution minutes of the meeting are drafted and the mediator continues their work bilaterally to try to bring the parties' positions closer.

Finally, meeting minutes include arrangements for the parties to contact the networks in case they feel the other party is not fulfilling their commitments. In this way, the networks' mediation efforts are dynamic and adapted to the hazards of the field. They also provide a mechanism for following up on the agreements.

"Boîte à Images" about transhumance

Les pasteurs ont le droit d'exploiter les ressources naturelles pour l'alimentation de leurs animaux.
للرعاة الحق في استغلال الموارد الطبيعية لسقي وإطعام المواشي



Les pâturages الرعاة

The networks are supported in their mediation efforts through these tools:

- Telephone directory of the 1,982 leaders to facilitate communication among them.
- List of distinctive brand marks associated with each community's and/or family's livestock to identify each animal's origin.
- "Informative table" that explains, in a simple way, the important points of the legislation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the G5 Sahel States and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) governing transhumance (arrangements to be made regarding movements, number of pastoralists according to the size of the herd, vaccinations required, etc). This table helps to reinforce the application of conflict reduction texts.
- Blank copies of conflict resolution and non-resolution records and restitution records for animals and miscellaneous goods.
- Directory of uses and customs by community and region.

- Airtime during prime time to broadcast radio messages during the transhumance period to avoid conflicts. Radio is a widely used means of communication in areas with no mobile phone service.

As part of the logic of conflict prevention, HD mediator networks support those involved in transhumance by:

- Sharing information on safety, availability of natural resources and disease (epidemics) on their route and at their destination.
- Assisting in case of problems with the authorities or technical services in the country and in the arrival area.
- Seeking support from partners, for example, for marking transhumance routes.
- Participating in the design, implementation and monitoring of national livestock policies

Directory of agro-pastoral mediators

| Province(s) de Yaga | Commune(s) de Boundaré, Tankougounadié, Titabé |
|---|---|
| HAMA Boubacar Fraction/Localité: Bortore (Titabé) Fonction: Leader Contact: | HAMA Hamidou Fraction/Localité: Ouro-Sabou (Titabé) Fonction: Leader Contact: |
| HAMA Hamidou Fraction/Localité: Titabé Fonction: Leader Contact: | HAMA Mindaiba Fraction/Localité: Tankougounadié Fonction: Trésorier adjoint Contact: |
| HAMADOU Goure Fraction/Localité: Formou (Boundaré) Fonction: Leader Contact: | HAMIDOU Boubacar Fraction/Localité: Tankougounadié Fonction: Relai Contact: |

Directory of animal identification

| Pays Region Département Commune(s) | Niger Diffa Ngourti Ngourti | Relai Contact Président Contact | Ibrahima Abdrahmane 1 235 96 70 02 96 Issa II Adam |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Communautés / Villages / Fractions Agadi arabes | | | |
| Communautés / Villages / Fractions Billahedey arabes | | | |
| Communautés / Villages / Fractions Boutti Touareg | | | |
| Communautés / Villages / Fractions Eih El Ofoye | | | |
| Communautés / Villages / Fractions Gajonte Toubous | | | |
| Communautés / Villages / Fractions Atrouna Tedas | | | |
| Communautés / Villages / Fractions Bilinga Toubous | | | |
| Communautés / Villages / Fractions Djouraye Toubous | | | |
| Communautés / Villages / Fractions Famulya arabes | | | |
| Communautés / Villages / Fractions Guidan Toubous | | | |

Agro-pastoral mediation and climate change

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Sahelian climate was characterised by a succession of wet decades interspersed with dry years. In the 1970s, this pattern was reversed with the onset of the first major droughts and the scarcity of rainy periods that led to unprecedented food crises.

Communities quickly adapted their production systems to this change. Species more suited to drought have replaced vulnerable species. Wool sheep, for example, have disappeared from the Gao region, replaced by goats and Tuareg sheep which are more suited to drought. Similarly, short-cycle plants (two to three months) replaced long-cycle plants (four months).

Nomadism and transhumance are essentially methods of resilience to climate change, since displacement allows for real-time adaptation to resource availability. More recently, a shorter rainy season has been noticed, with heavy rainfall events causing flooding and damage to livestock and fields and disrupting agricultural seasons.

Climate disturbances – coupled with the population explosion in the Sahelian states, the intense need for basic social services and inadequate government means to respond – are leading to increased conflict. Pastoralists are caught between a decrease in natural resources, as fertile land becomes scarce, and an increase in cultivated land. The reduction of pastoral space and the occupation of pastoral corridors, which have become the only fertile land in some localities, are factors that aggravate conflict between the different communities.

The agro-pastoral mediator networks have established a space for exchange between cross-border communities, allowing their members to share their activities, successful strategies and ongoing attempts to adapt to climate change.

HD's facilitation of dialogue between community representatives and the authorities (administrative, technical, communal and security services) at local, national and regional levels helps communities to overcome their difficulties and enables technical services to advise on or seek solutions to the challenges of climate change.

As the scarcity of resources leads to a large number of conflicts over their shared use, HD facilitates mediation of local conventions that allow the consensual and peaceful exploitation of disputed natural resources or agreements on the delimitation of transhumance corridors between farmers and pastoralists.



Some stories of conflicts and their resolution

Poor delimitation of an agricultural field in the village of Boudou Manga, Chad

Boudou Manga is an important agricultural village in the municipality of Liwa in Chad, where Kanembu and Kouri communities live together. Conflicts between farmers are common in this fertile area due to the imprecise boundaries of agricultural land. During the 2019 rainy season, a conflict arose between two farmers from two communities in the village. The Kouri farmer felt that his Kanembu counterpart did not respect the traditional boundaries of his fields. The conflict took on a worrying dimension as it spread to the two communities, which began to threaten each other. The Kouri farmer then decided to appeal to the network of mediators to arbitrate the dispute. The agro-pastoral network, together with the council of wise men, listened to the parties. After a visit to the site with the land chief, it was declared that the Kanembu farmer did not respect the traditional land boundaries and he was encouraged to respect them in the future. Today, the two communities are peacefully living side by side again.

Conflict between two tribes over the digging of a well, Mauritania

In the Nbeikett Lahwach commune in Mauritania, the Ehl Taleb tribe traditionally holds customary rights in this pastoral area. When the local authorities granted permission to a member of the Ehl Sidi tribe to build a well, the Ehl Taleb were not informed. Tensions between the two tribes over the administration of the land worsened and the local authorities called for a halt to the work on the well. On learning of

the conflict, the network of agro-pastoral mediators examined the details and members consulted with both sides to gather their sides of the story. A joint meeting of the two tribes was organised to resume the construction of the well. To date, tensions between the two communities have eased and there are better prospects for the actual construction of the well.

Equitable distribution of an inheritance in Lanfiala, Mali

Inheritance-sharing is another classic source of conflict within a community. In the village of Lanfiala in Mali, two brothers clashed over the inheritance of a field after the death of their father. The younger brother claimed the field belonged to him by right while, according to custom, the land is given to the eldest of the family. At the beginning of each crop year, the two brothers fought to decide who would cultivate the field. As a result, the two brothers stopped speaking to each other. The members of the agro-pastoral mediator network encouraged the brothers to visit the village chief's house. Then, they forgave each other and the younger brother apologised to the elder brother. They both drank from the same gourd to seal their new friendship. The village leader divided the plot in half and each brother pledged to respect the boundaries.

Political division among women horticulturists in Dolbel in the municipality of Bankilaré, Niger

In the village of Dolbel in the municipality of Bankilaré in Niger, the women of the village maintain two gardens. One is kept by 27 women and the other by 56 women from the same political family as the village chief. Until February 2018, despite the rivalries that existed between them, the women exchanged seeds and advice on their activities.

But when the local government offered agricultural resources to the group of 56 women, the group of 27 felt wronged and saw the resources as political support to the other group. The relationship between the two groups gradually deteriorated and the risk of confrontation rose. In October 2019, the agro-pastoral mediator network took up the issue and, with the help of village leaders, the two groups sat down at the negotiating table. The women then agreed that any support from the local government should now be shared among all, regardless of political distinction. A consultation framework was set up at the level of the two horticultural groups to resolve all future disputes through dialogue.

A pastoralist's animals wander through crops in Burkina Faso

Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers are often over the passage of animals through fields. This type of conflict is usually resolved quickly and amicably through the network without government intervention. A farmer in Toéni, Burkina Faso who was tired of seeing a village pastoralist's animals wandering around his field and causing damage, went to his house to complain. The altercation quickly deteriorated and the conflict escalated by dividing the two neighbourhoods. The agro-pastoral mediator network, after hearing the two sides of the conflict, invited the men to go to the village chief. After lively exchanges, the pastoralist finally agreed to compensate the farmer for the losses incurred. In the absence of an agreement on the amount to be paid, the farmer finally agreed that the pastoralist did not need to reimburse him and both parties forgave each other.

What type of mediation should be used when conflicts over natural resources involve armed groups?

HD supports the networks in mediation where conflicts raise challenges which exceed the capacities of leaders due to the support offered by armed groups to communities in conflict. HD draws on its knowledge of the field, its experience in mediating 40 inter-community conflicts since 2017 and its relationships with the national authorities of the five countries and armed groups circulating in the border regions.

Network members begin by analysing the conflict and identifying the parties and all actors that may have a positive or negative influence. HD then conducts further consultations with the parties and supports them in identifying their grievances, objectives and red lines in order to identify avenues for negotiating a peace agreement.

From its perspective, HD focuses on the origin of the conflict, which is often a long-standing dispute over access to natural resources, rather than on the recent consequences of armed conflict. When conditions are met and each party has designated negotiators to represent them, HD facilitates an inter-community mediation meeting. Here, both parties review and validate the causes of the conflict. Alternatives are then discussed to determine which are acceptable to both parties. They then sign a conflict resolution

agreement recognised by local or national authorities to reinforce its scope and establish a mechanism for monitoring its implementation.

From the initial stage of the situational analysis to the establishment of the agreement follow-up committee, HD consults and participates in the mediation process with armed groups, allies of the parties to the conflict, neighbouring communities and certain specialists due to their knowledge of the dynamics of the conflict or the parties. This is essential to ensuring that an inter-community agreement can be reached, even if there are setbacks during the negotiation process. In fact, the power relationship on the ground between armed groups supporting communities in conflict sometimes determines their interest in supporting or not supporting a peace process.

It is crucial to identify the right time to negotiate an agreement. It is also necessary to be attentive to the decision of the members of the armed groups to participate in the mediation process. Sometimes this takes time. While the political level is essential, the operational level is no less so. Armed actors who share the daily life of communities in conflict will directly influence the sustainability of the peace process.

Exemples of minutes

PV de conciliation/Non conciliation

Pays : Mali Région : Gao Département/Prov/Cercle : Amangou
Réseau : Ouattagouma Date : 30 septembre 2019

Noms et Prénoms des leaders médiateurs : Noms et Prénoms des parties en conflit :
Ibrahima Mamoudou Moussa Hamadi (éléveur)
Abdou Abdoulaye Maïga Moussa Amadou (agriculteur)
Abdouhamane Haché
Minkéila Ibra
Lieu ou le conflit a éclaté : Koudougou Période du conflit : 27 septembre 2019

Objet du conflit (précisez le pourquoi du conflit) :
Dépense d'un champ de sorgho.
Les bœufs de Moussa Hamadi ont raviné une partie du sorgho de Ibrahima Mamoudou qui l'a convoqué devant le réseau.

Les décisions importantes prises pour résoudre le conflit :
Les deux parties ont été entendues au niveau du réseau. Moussa Hamadi n'a pas contesté le dégât. Moussa Amadou demande un dédommagement de 30 000 (trente mille francs). En lieu et place de l'argent, Moussa Hamadi a donné un taureau que n'a accepté. Ainsi, l'affaire est close.

Noms et Signatures des parties en conflit :
Moussa Hamadi
Ibrahima Mamoudou

Noms et Signatures des témoins :
Boubacar Amadou
Youssef Gbadouane
Seydou Mahamadou

PV de Restitution de Dig Dig

Pays : Tchad Région : Kanem Département/Prov/Cercle : Nord-Kanem
Réseau : Dig Dig Date : 07/11/2019
L'an : 2019/2020

a eu lieu à Dig Dig la restitution de Dig Dig
chameau

Nombre : un (1)

À Monsieur Mahamat Abdoulaye Youssouf
Prioritaire/Berger/envoyé

En présence de :
Noms et signatures des Témoins : XI Mahamat Oumar Gon
M. Choukou Mal'elli
Noms et signatures des leaders médiateurs : Alhadji Lamine Ahmed
Adam Mal'elli

Noms et signatures de la (ou des) personne (s) bénéficiaire (s) de la restitution :
Mahamat Abdoulaye Youssouf

Observations :
Nous avons constaté que la médiation est appréciée par toutes personnes présents et rien d'incohérence en contre partie.

IV. The respect of customs and the promotion of law

“Mobility is a fundamental right of herdsmen, nomadic and transhumant pastoralists. This right is recognized and guaranteed by the State and territorial collectivities. Mobility constitutes a rational and lasting exploitation mode of pastoral resources and may only be hindered temporarily and for security reasons and for the protection of persons, animals, forests, and crops according to conditions defined in the texts currently in force”
- Article 3, titre II, Ordinance no 2010-29 of 20 May 2010 relative to pastoralism in Niger.



Prior to departure on transhumance

Before departing on transhumance, pastoralists must be at least 18 years of age and in sufficient numbers, namely two for every 50 cattle. They are also required to carry ID, a vaccination record and a pass (this depends on the countries to be crossed).

In addition to the vaccination record for the cattle, the pastoralist must carry a transhumance certificate from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) mentioning the composition of the herd, its immunisation status, the routes to follow, the border crossings to pass and the final destination. This certificate can be renewed every year and:

- Ensures more control of the departure of transhumant herds
- Ensures the health of local herds is protected
- Informs populations in host areas of the arrival of transhumant herds.

The certificate is, in principle, free and issued by the service in charge of livestock breeding or veterinary services. The local administrative authority at the place of departure validates it. Without these documents, herds will have to be vaccinated on entrance to other territories, failing which they will be put into quarantine or sent back to their country of origin.

During the mobility period

The movement of animals has to follow tracks or transhumance routes at the local, national or sub-regional level, respecting classified or protected zones and the animal health police at all stations. Border crossing is allowed during the day only and at official entry points.

Once they reach national or sub-regional transhumance zones, pastoralists are expected to respect local conventions, legislation and the regulations of the host village or country – including the protection of classified forests and fauna or the management of pastures and watering places. The ECOWAS and CEMAC nevertheless promote a harmonisation of legislation and regulations throughout the different member states.⁶

Habits and customs: potential sources of conflict

While the management of conflicts linked to the exploitation of pastoral resources is governed by local habits and customs, the administration and judicial processes of this management follow the laws and national or international conventions ratified by the five countries.

Pastoral communities often do not understand this overlap. Furthermore, officials who develop or apply related law have little knowledge of the pastoral environment. There is little or no community participation and the rules do not take into account the cultural specificities of access to, and exploitation of, natural resources.

This lack of understanding also exists between the different communities since habits and customs vary from one to the other. This often leads to bloody conflicts between communities in the region, as outlined below:

⁶ See CWAS decision A/Dec.5/10/98 relative to transhumance.

- **Non-compliance with wintering rituals and harvesting periods in the Bwa and Dafing communities.** In the Boucle du Mouhoun region of Burkina Faso and in the Tominian circle of Mali, these two communities continue to respect animist rites. As such, the beginning of winter and of harvests are always preceded by the masquerade ritual. Before this ritual, it is forbidden to plant or consume new crops, bury humpbacked people and make animals march. These prohibitions are often transgressed by transhumant pastoralists or neighbouring communities who do not know about the ritual or by Muslim communities who consider it idolatry. The result is the outbreak of inter-community conflicts, even though the transgression of this rite is repaired, for the Bwa and Dafing communities, with the immolation of a black goat and three black hens or a white sheep and a white hen.
- **The destruction of grains grown in the Liptako Gourma area.** Historically, when grains were harvested, the stalks and residues were made available to the animals of the owner of the field or other pastoralists. But during the milk stage, when the plants are in the grain ripening or ear-bearing stage, pastoralists want their animals to benefit from the grains' high nutritional

value. According to the pastoralists, this excellent forage shortens the calving interval and increases births in the herd. But the destruction of millet and sorghum grains at this stage irreparably affects the crop and harms farmers. In some localities, to resolve conflicts arising from these situations, farmers are asked to monitor their fields during the day and pastoralists are asked to watch their animals during the night and understand that access to the cultivated field is only allowed after the harvest.⁷

- **The exploitation of wild fonio millet⁸ plains in the Liptako Gourma area and in southern Mauritania.** Fonio millet is very nutritious for animals during the so-called milk stage between the end of August and the beginning of September. But the milk stage is sensitive in the plant cycle since it corresponds to the first stage of grain formation. Trampling and seed consumption by animals destroy the plant and reduce yields, which is detrimental to the communities that use it for human consumption. This misunderstanding is accentuated by the fact that since fonio millet grows in nature, it is available to everyone. Fulani communities, in particular, consider this type of grass to be a "gift from God".

⁷ In Mali, these decisions are enshrined in legislation, in Article 24 of Decree 06-439/P-RM of October 18, 2006, establishing the procedures for the implementation of Law 01-004 of February 27, 2001, on the Republic of Mali's Pastoral Charter.

⁸ *Panicum laetum*. This grass grows in nature.



Use of local conventions

Local conventions for natural resource management can be defined as negotiated agreements aimed at regulating exploitation – in terms of control, access, appropriation, use and exploitation – and respect for the environment.

In this sense, the local conventions are a tool for the prevention and management of conflicts related to natural resources but also a necessary tool for the shared management of these common resources. Therefore, they also serve to strengthen local governance.

Local conventions are usually oral but may also be in writing. Two development processes are possible: conventions can be developed internally or under an external initiative. In both cases, they involve various actors. Communities must be the driving force to ensure formulation and implementation of the conventions. The authorities, often local, are generally involved, in particular by checking the conformity of the local agreement with the legislation in force.

The following are some examples of traditional local conventions in force, where ignorance and infringement among non-native communities are often a source of conflict:

- **Access to water points in agricultural areas in Burkina Faso**

Access to the water point is often regulated by the dual principle of first-come, first-served and the primacy of water for humans over other uses. For example, the following rules must be observed: large herds have access to water points only at night and “modern” water points are used by the animals only after the surface water has dried up.

- **Access to fonio millet plains in Mali**

Fonio millet is a variety of wild grain that is highly valued by communities in northern Mali. It is freely harvested but indigenous communities have priority over others. As soon as the plant begins to sprout ears, it is strictly forbidden for animals to graze or to cut the grass in fonio millet fields.

- **The classified forests are protected in Mauritania**

Mauritania is a desert country and the scarcity of trees means they receive special attention. The dromedary camel, a common animal, feeds mainly on the leaves of thorny trees found in the wadis and shallow waters. Thorn forests are either classified – with no economic activity allowed – or are considered “village forests” where dead wood may be harvested and animals may graze. Access to these forests is free of charge but it is strictly forbidden to cut the trees, which results in a fine or, for those involved in transhumance, exclusion from the area.

- **The use of harvest residues in Niger**

In the Gourma area of Niger, the fields are used as pasture by pastoralists. But these can only be accessed once farmers have harvested or insured all crops. After the harvest, the traditional, communal or administrative authorities decide the date the fields are to be released by farmers and communicate it. It is understood that, after this date, pastoralists are not responsible for damage caused to unharvested crops.

- **Access to salt lands in Chad**

Access to lands with salt or natron deposits follows rules that may be written down and subject to religious requirements. Only resident communities can have access to salt lands by inheritance from father to son or by allocation of a plot of land by the traditional chieftain. During the rainy season, only pastoralists are allowed to use the natron deposits to feed their cattle.

To support the conventions related to use, HD facilitates the mediation of local conventions for the peaceful exploitation of disputed natural resources.

To do this, HD supports networks of agro-pastoral mediators in identifying resources that are subject to tensions between different operators and in mediating rules for sharing these resources with users and local authorities. At the end of the mediation process, management bodies are created with the mission to ensure all users comply with the rules and to explain them to non-natives.



Towards the updating of the legislation governing rural lands

Rural property is governed by legislation designed to regulate all sectors of production. These standards are diverse and often have many limitations that make it difficult for the interested public to follow. Issues include:

- **A large number and a wide range of standards:** A single activity, for example agriculture or pastoralism, may be governed by many regulations (environmental codes, pastoralism law, agrarian and land management law, etc) and many states have sectoral policies on water, agriculture, land management and the environment.
- **Incomplete or complex procedures:** The main law governing an activity may refer to implementing decrees or inter-ministerial decrees whose adoption is not immediate. The result is to deprive the main law of its effects. For example, in Chad, Law 4 of October 31, 1959 regulating nomadism and transhumance in Chad has never been the subject of an implementing decree.⁹
- **Obsolete texts:** Some texts predate the countries' independence or, when they have been updated, are inspired by texts from the colonial period. This is the case in Mali and its 1986 State and Land Code. Considered at the time as a major innovation in the field, it is the result of the 1928 decree regulating public domain in French West Africa.
- **Concurrent rights:** In the Sahel, there is a dualism between customary law¹⁰ and positive law, particularly with respect to locally applied law. Pastoral areas are administered by the state – although it is often absent at the local level – and governed by positive law. However, common law is more frequently applied. For example, a farmer will cultivate a plot of land in a pastoral area on the pretext that it belonged to one of his

ancestors, as permitted by customary law, as opposed to positive law which prohibits farmers from cultivating fields in pastoral areas. In general, communities give priority to customary law.

- **Difficult application of the rules:** As a result of the communities' preference for customary law and the often negative perception that administrators have of it, government bodies responsible for preventing and managing potential conflicts are rarely called upon by agro-pastoral communities to manage their disputes. Therefore, even if the positive law would allow a pastoralist to turn against a farmer who plants a crop in a pastoral corridor, the harmed party generally prefers to use traditional leaders to resolve the dispute.

In 2020, the agro-pastoral mediators in the HD programme questioned local and national authorities on the inadequacy of certain regulations to cope with daily realities experienced by agro-pastoral communities and on the need to adapt them to reflect the expectations of the communities and allow for better appropriation of laws.

With this in mind, HD supports the states of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger in their efforts to improve the standards governing agro-pastoral activities. For example, in Chad, HD is supporting the process of adopting the agro-silvopastoral and fisheries framework law and is creating a framework for exchanges between national authorities and communities to ensure that the local recommendations are taken into account in the final text.

⁹ Legislation for pastoral land in Niger and Chad: a comparative analysis. Proceedings of the colloquium "African savannas in development: innovating to last", p.4 (2009), HAL cirad-00471281.

¹⁰ Positive law consists of all the legal rules in force in a State or in a group of States of the international community at a given time, regardless of their sources.



Conclusion : The impact and limits of HD's agro-pastoral mediation project

Once they are reactivated, traditional mediation mechanisms allow local people to resolve conflicts amicably and more rapidly than any courts of justice, which name the culprits and victims at the risk of permanently complicating relations between and within communities.

Mediation, on the other hand, makes it possible to appropriately resolve conflicts by focusing on the search for consensus in agro-pastoral communities. Between 2015 and 2018, the 321 mediators resolved an average of 73 conflicts per year. As of 2019, the expanded group of 1,982 mediators resolved an average of 260 disputes each year.

The impact of the project on the daily life of Sahelian populations

Firstly, with the establishment of a space for dialogue between communities (within countries and across borders) and the management of community conflicts from the outset, leaders are witnessing a decrease in conflict and the strengthening of social cohesion.

In the first intervention municipalities from which HD withdrew in 2019 after completing its activities, communities have reactivated old practices of dialogue and consultation around the peaceful exploitation of natural resources and conflict resolution according to traditional mechanisms.

With the directories of mediators, those involved in transhumance have interlocutors to discuss the availability of resources and the latest developments on the evolution of access standards. In case of problems with host populations, they benefit from the assistance of local mediators who are in contact with the mediators in their areas of origin.

Economic activities are supported, stolen animals are quickly reported and recovered, several livestock "black markets" have been dismantled and movement is easier. This is despite the fact that some areas are controlled by jihadists who have been instrumental in inter-community conflicts.

The presence of women in the networks brings added value and should continue to increase.

Because they tend to talk openly with each other in these areas, women get good information about conflicts which allows them to verify details and have a better understanding of certain crises. In addition, the first female members of the networks have gained confidence and now feel empowered to speak in front of men.

The project has long-term benefits for gender dynamics while respecting the communities' cultural differences, social inclusion and the recognition by men of women's abilities in certain situations.

Gradually, women no longer contribute only to the resolution of family conflicts. Those who have received support since 2015 proudly claim to have become emancipated since the project started.

Secondly, the low-profile work by agro-pastoral mediators in areas far from urban centres makes it possible to reduce the connection between communal tensions or conflicts over the distribution of natural resources and the larger conflicts between armed groups and states which plague the sub-region.

These efforts to manage disputes locally over access to natural resources also allow communities to demonstrate their capacity to foster co-existence in order to encourage authorities and technical services to support their efforts.

“Apart from the efficient engagement of leaders in the resolution of community conflicts that we are witnessing every day, pastoral communities understand their rights and duties better. HD also facilitates relations between technical services and nomad or transhumant herders”

An official in Gao (Mali).

Conflicts resolved by community mediators along the borders of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Chad (January 2019 – June 2021)

| | Burkina | Mali | Mauritania | Niger | Chad | General Total |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| Breeders - Farmers | 41 | 77 | 49 | 19 | 7 | 193 |
| Farmers - Farmers | 18 | 45 | 30 | 7 | 4 | 104 |
| Natural resources | 6 | 32 | 6 | 12 | 7 | 63 |
| Cattle theft | 19 | 13 | 6 | 12 | 7 | 57 |
| Breeders - Breeders | 4 | 30 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 52 |
| Fisherfolk - Other | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | | 7 |
| Family conflicts* | 43 | 78 | 25 | 22 | 12 | 180 |
| Change in the use of the property** | 2 | 15 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 23 |
| Conflicts between chiefs and religious people* | 1 | 12 | 1 | | | 14 |
| Theft of physical assets* | 1 | 5 | | 1 | | 7 |
| Miscellaneous - Other** | 15 | 44 | 5 | 23 | 1 | 88 |
| General Total | 151 | 353 | 132 | 107 | 45 | 788 |

* The resolution of these conflicts is not directly linked to the exploitation of natural resources; it illustrates the inter-communal trust needed to manage conflicts and tensions amicably.

** Miscellaneous conflicts include conflicts that are not related to the previous categories.

What factors limit the impact of signed conflict resolution agreements?

Factors that weaken agro-pastoral mediators' efforts include rampant changes in demographics; warlike conflicts between states and armed groups (including jihadists) which can lead to spirals of communal violence at any time; the nomadism of the parties; insufficient public services to meet basic needs; lack of oversight of livestock markets; poor harvests; lack of water points, pastures and corridors; and lack of enforcement of legislation.

When agro-pastoral mediators manage to empower communities to amicably settle differences and effectively sign agreements to resolve them, they often ask the authorities and technical and financial partners to answer about the source of the (often structural) issues, including the need for water points and demarcate a pastoral corridor. In Mali, for example, the mediators also call for the implementation of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes provided for in that country's peace and reconciliation agreement.

To transmit structural needs to the authorities and their partners, HD collected two or three priority needs per intervention municipality from the agro-pastoral mediator networks. These needs were identified collectively to ensure attention would benefit the entire community. The 358 structural needs identified include:

- 231 water points which are 65% of the overall needs (water points range from a small supply source to improved sumps, small dams and pastoral wells)
- 39 animal corridors which are 11% of the needs
- 38 developments of pastoral areas (vaccination parks, livestock parks, livestock markets, animal feed banks, slaughterhouses, etc) which are 10% of the needs
- 19 developments of agricultural areas (field fences, commercial landscaping perimeters, etc) which are 5% of the needs
- 16 rural roads or paths to open certain localities which are 4% of the needs

Since 2019, the agro-pastoral mediator networks have been presenting these needs to authorities and partners. The networks have committed to supporting their realisation, facilitating access as soon as possible, and advising authorities and partners to use intervention methods that have been agreed upon.



HD would like to thank Denmark for its support to the project since 2014 and the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa for its support since 2019.

This publication was produced with the financial support of Denmark and the European Union.

Its content is the sole responsibility of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) and does not necessarily reflect the views of Denmark and the European Union.

Captions and photo credits : The pictures were all taken in the Sahel region of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Tchad, in areas covered by the pastoralist project. They show community leaders, their meetings, cattle and the landscape. All the pictures are HD copyrights (©).

Cartography: © 2019 - Stéphane Kluser - Komplo



hdcentre.org

“hd | Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue