SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

TRANSNATIONAL
DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN

FARMERS AND HERDERS

IN THE WESTERN SAHEL AND LAKE CHAD BASIN

CHRIS M.A. KWAJA

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About the Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria (FFARN)

This policy brief is a product of the Forum on Farmer and Herder Relations in Nigeria (FFARN). FFARN is a network of academics and practitioners from governmental and non-governmental institutions who work on peace and conflict/security issues in Nigeria and who have experience responding to farmer-herder conflict at sub-national, national, and/or regional levels. FFARN provides a quarterly platform for interdisciplinary exchange and joint identification of areas for additional research and practice to generate strong evidence for multilevel policy influence on farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria.

Members of FFARN represent academic and practitioner institutions including:

- *Abdulsalami Abubakar Institute for Peace and Sustainable Development (AAIPSD), Niger state, Nigeria*

- *Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria*

- *Centre for Ethno-Religious and Peace Studies, Federal University of Technology, Wukari, Taraba state, Nigeria.*

- *Centre for Peace and Development Studies, Benue State University, Nigeria*

- *Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin, Nigeria*

- *Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria*

- *Institute for Peace Studies and Social Rehabilitation, University of Abuja, Nigeria*

- *Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria*

- *Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR)*

- *Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Commission (NSCDC)*

- *Plateau State Peacebuilding Agency*

- *Pastoralist Resolve (PARE)*

- *Civil Society Research, Advocacy and Funding Research Advocacy (CORAFID)*

- *Interfaith Mediation Center*

- *Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) Abuja Province*

- *Mercy Corps*

- *Peace and Security Network*

- *Search for Common Ground*

- *Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP)*

- *United States Institute for Peace (USIP-Nigeria)*

TRANSNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN FARMERS AND HERDERS IN THE WESTERN SAHEL AND LAKE CHAD BASIN

"If we don't take action, current trends suggest that by 2020 an estimated 60 million people could move from desert-ification areas of sub-Saharan Africa towards North Africa and Europe, and that worldwide, 135 million people could be placed at risk of being uprooted" - Kofi Annan, 2006

Executive Summary

Over recent decades, relationships between nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralist communities and sedentary farming communities throughout the African continent have rapidly shifted.[1] From Mali to South Sudan, series of attacks between farming and herding communities have claimed thousands of lives and displaced tens of thousands more. In fact, the violence called "farmer-herder conflict" is not one conflict, but a number of different conflicts intertwining and overlapping, leaving death and destruction across the continent. Climate change, weak or non-existent governance structures, deep identity-based divisions, and chronic instability are all contributing to and resulting from the violence that has spilled across national borders. With many farmlands already considered degraded, and an estimated 50 million people in the Sahel reliant on livestock herding for survival, the risk of further escalation of the violence is significant.[2]

This paper offers recommendations that draw on academic research and practitioner experiences on mitigating the drivers and effects of farmer-herder conflicts in the Western Sahel and Lake Chad regions. The countries considered in this research are: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria. Given the transnational nature of the conflicts and the drivers themselves, a holistic approach to addressing the core drivers of farmer-herder conflicts is essential. The following policy recommendations are targeted to international, regional, and national institutions and actors:

To international institutions:

- **Create and implement a transnational strategy for each region to address farmer-herder conflicts.**

- **Coordinate conflict-sensitive donor responses to desertification, insecurity, and famine.**

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1   In this paper, "pastoralists" and "herders" are used interchangeably to mean the same.

2   United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *2017 Sahel: Overview of Humanitarian Needs and Requirements* (Geneva and New York: UN OCHA, 2016). https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HNRO_Sahel-2017-EN_1.pdf ; Robert Muggah and Jose Luengo Cabrera, "The Sahel is Engulfed by Violence. Climate change, Food Insecurity and Extremists are Largely to Blame," *World Economic Forum,* January 23, 2019. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/all-the-warning-signs-are-showing-in-the-sahel-we-must-act-now/

- **Invest in development and resilience initiatives that build social and economic interdependence across identity-based divisions.**

<u>**To regional bodies:**</u>
- **Strengthen regional response mechanisms to prevent and mitigate clashes between farmers and herders.**

- **Adopt an integrated regional approach to dealing with environmental shocks.**

- **Review and re-establish a transnational corridor for the easy and free movement of herds.**

- **Strengthen policies on border security management and coordinate policy on small arms and light weapons.**

<u>**To national governments:**</u>
- **Renew commitment to implement the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) and other regional agreements.**

- **Employ bottom-up approaches to conservation and resilience that involve all relevant stakeholders.**

- **Advance equitable and inclusive management of land and water resources.**

- **Support and advance statutory and traditional methods of non-violent dispute resolution.**

Introduction

Violent conflicts involving farmers and herders are rapidly becoming a major source of instability in the Western Sahel and Lake Chad Basin (LCB) regions. The livelihoods of both farmers and herders are dependent on reliable access to land and water. While farmers tend to be sedentary, traditional nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists graze their cattle in line with the seasonal migrations and search for water and pasture that will sustain their herds, often crossing national boundaries in fulfillment with these needs. As pastoralists migrate in search of water and pasture, they can encounter farms, insecurity, and other population centers that block traditional grazing routes, statutory grazing reserves, and water points. Where different livelihoods overlap, deadly clashes have sometimes emerged between farming and herding communities due to encroachment on farmlands, crop damage by cattle, theft of herds, and the deterioration of systems to resolve these conflicts.[3]

In recent years, climate change and political crises have impacted access to land and water resources, sharply exacerbating conflicts between farmers and herders. Nearly 70 million people are already estimated to be harmed by desertification in the Sahel,[4] and 30 million are affected by the rapidly shrinking Lake Chad,

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[3]   Philip Obaji Jr., "Recharging Lake Chad Key to Ending the Conflict Between Nigeria's Farmers and Herders," *ReliefWeb,* September 5, 2018. https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/recharging-lake-chad-key-ending-conflict-between-nigeria-s-farmers-and-herders

[4]   Bagumil Terminski, "Current Dynamics of Desertification in Africa – Facts and Statistics," *The Nigerian Voice,* May 6, 2012. https://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/89273/current-dynamics-of-desertification-in-africa-facts-and-sta.html. The United Nations Committee to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) defines desertification as land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors including climatic variations and human activities.

whose water volume has decreased by 95% since 1963.[5] In addition, poor governance systems, instances of state collapse, and insurgencies in countries like Mali and Niger undermine existing dispute resolution mechanisms that adjudicate claims over resources. In this volatile context, farmers and herders compete for access and control of land and water to disastrous effect.[6] Competitions for resources become entwined with identity-based distinctions, each fueling the other.

The changes in climate and deteriorating security situation in the Sahel are compounded with the effects of increasing population growth. Concurrently, population growth has increased the demand for food and animal products, creating a spike in the price for beef. Over 62 million cattle are grazed throughout the Western Sahel, supplying 80% of West African animal products.[7] In some areas, this has encouraged new pastoralist trends, including increased herd sizes, professionalization of herding (hired cowboys to manage herds), and the use of private security personnel and arms for self-defense and herd protection. The practice of herd owners hiring younger pastoralists to manage herds is not new, as generations of Fulani herd owners have hired young Fulani men who do not have their own cows. However, in recent years urban political and military elites have acquired large herds and employed herders who are increasingly well-armed.

Farmer-herder conflicts thus come at the nexus of these burgeoning economic developments and changing livelihoods. In a region where nearly 11 million people are already food insecure, there is a significant risk that competitions for livelihoods will continue to grow in number and in lethality.[8] If the appropriate actions were not taken now, these trends will exacerbate or create additional tensions in a region fraught with instability;[9] already, jihadist and insurgent groups like the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWAP) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) have capitalized on the chaotic insecurity of farmer-herder conflicts to advance their interests or stoked the tensions themselves. This paper will discuss the transnational dimensions of farmer-herder conflict and offer recommendations for how national, regional, and international bodies can take immediate action to prevent these conflicts from further destabilizing the region.

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5   Ahmad Saldika, "Africa's Vanishing Lake Chad: Action Needed to Counter an 'Ecological Catastrophe,'" *Africa Renewal,* April 2012. https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2012/africa%E2%80%99s-vanishing-lake-chad; The Nation, "Nigeria Spearheads Recharge of Lake Chad with Water Congo River – Buhari," *The Nation,* June 21, 2018. https://thenationonlineng.net/nigeria-spearheads-recharge-of-lake-chad-with-water-congo-river-buhari/

6   Mark Mortiz, "Understanding herder-farmer conflicts in West Africa: Outline of a processual approach." Human Organization (2010): 138-148.

7   SNV, "Meating West Afric"s Mega Cities," *SNV,* January 2018. https://snv.org/update/meating-west-africas-mega-cities ; United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, *Pastoralism and Security in West Africa and the Sahel: Towards Peaceful Coexistence,* (Dakar: UNOWAS, 2019). https://unowas.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/rapport_pastoralisme_eng-april_2019_-_online.pdf

8   Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Sahel Regional Overview – December 2019,* (Rome: FAO, 2019). http://www.fao.org/emergencies/resources/documents/resources-detail/en/c/1249381/

9   Benjamin Maiangwa, "'Conflicting Indigeneity" and Farmer–Herder Conflicts in Postcolonial Africa." Peace Review 29, no. 3 (2017): 282-288.

The Transnational Dimensions of the Conflicts between Farmers and Herders in West Africa

Conflicts involving farmers and herders pose a critical risk to regional stability as these resource-related conflicts intersect with political, social, and economic interests. The conflicts are complex: they are decentralized, transcend multiple national borders, and exacerbate existing (and in some cases create) socio-political tensions such as criminality, vigilantism, and religious and ethnic divisions. The manifestation of the conflicts is unique to the place where it occurs, but there are underlying and exacerbating factors that are common to different parts of the regions. A piecemeal "whack-a-mole" approach to addressing these conflicts without full consideration of their transnational dimensions will hinder the reduction of violence. Broadly, there are six underlying dimensions that transcend national borders.

1. Ineffective governance systems and the breakdown of dispute resolution mechanisms have increased the prevalence of violent conflicts.

For generations, farming and herding communities lived with a symbiotic relationship. Grazing cows would feed on the detritus of harvested crops and, in exchange, the cows' manure would fertilize the fields for the following year's harvest. Given the regular relationship between these two communities, there were systems in place that handled and resolved complaints when cattle trampled crops or herders were able to graze their cattle. However, as opportunistic actors emphasize the incompatibility of socio-political or ethno-religious differences in order to build support for their causes, these mechanisms for adjudicating claims over land and water have deteriorated.

In many places where traditional mechanisms for dispute resolution between farmers and herders have broken down, statutory systems have been unable or unwilling to fill the void. For instance, Dogons who comprise most of farming communities in central Mali share 200 dialects. It is impossible for a Dogon from Bankass to understand a Dogon from Koro. To understand and communicate with each other, they use the Fulani language, until a local militia recently prevented the use of this language. This not only reduced communication between Fulani and Dogon, but also between Dogons in the area. In Nigeria, traditional leaders and Fulani ardos were called together to negotiate compensation in instances where cattle damaged crops. Given the spikes in insecurity, these methods have been bypassed or outlawed.

Indeed, in many parts of the regions, state institutions are ineffective, unrepresentative, or absent altogether. For example, existing land management frameworks and pastoral policies are not widely enforced due to the state's absence in rural areas, a lack of awareness among local authorities, and/or widespread corruption. The ambiguity around how formal and informal regulations interact is an additional driver of conflicts, enabling "land-grabbing" by political and business elites who seek to profit from an increasingly lucrative animal-product trade in West Africa.[10]

Many of the groups affected by violence have been historically marginalized from political and economic power, breeding deep distrust and resentment towards the state. Pastoralists and farmers alike do not see their needs represented in many of the solutions put forth by governments in the region. As the pastoralists see their nomadic lives and their herding livelihoods slipping away, they do not see their needs represented in many of the solutions presented by governments.[11] At the same time, farming communities also see their lives and livelihoods under threat and are dissatisfied with the initiatives put forward to address the situation. These initiatives have generally not drawn on the existing research evidence and have been pushed forward without adequate inclusion of the affected parties.

The collective result of these realities is that farmer and herder communities often take matters into their own hands to defend their livelihoods. This has resulted in communities using confrontational strategies against perceived adversaries, even if such strategies are sometimes highly self-destructive.

> *Farmers used to harvest their crops and leave residues available for cattle herders to feed their livestock with. Farmers in turn used cattle manure as fertilizer. These relationships often extended to other activities, like gift exchanges and community dialogue. However, as farmer–herder tensions escalate, farmers now resort to extreme measures to avoid interactions with herders, such as by burning their crop residues so that there is nothing left for cattle to eat.*
>
> *This practice not only hurts herders and their cattle, but also farmers themselves. What one group of farmers said during my research has stuck with me: after harvesting their crops, the men loaded the produce onto their truck before burning their farm. However, their truck could not start, and the fire consumed the truck and the crops. In their frenzy to retaliate against herders, these farmers destroyed the products of their own hard work.*
>
> *I do not burn my residues, but my ability to support my family and to fund my education has nonetheless taken a hit because my neighbors often do. Residue burning devastates crop growth by depleting the soil of nutrients and making soil prone to erosions. Unfortunately, these effects cross the boundaries of individual farm plots.*
>
> *Stories recounted by Abdul Bala, Mentee Program of FFARN during research in Kano state, Nigeria*

2. Climate and demographic changes intensify the competition over resources.

Intensifying natural resource pressure has increased the frequency and severity of clashes involving farmers and herders across the LCB and Western Sahel, both local and those crossing national borders. Desertification and climate variability have altered migration routes, limited access to arable land, and reduced the

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11   Chris M.A. Kwaja and Bukola I. Ademola-Adelehin, *The Implications of the Open Grazing Prohibition & Ranches Establishment Law On Farmer-Herder Relations in the Middle Belt of Nigeria*, (Washington DC: Search for Common Ground, 2017). https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Open-Grazing-Prohibition-Law-in-Benue-State-December-2017.pdf

availability of reliable water sources. At the same time, demand for such resources are likely to increase in conjunction with West Africa's anticipated population boom. Over the next decades, the market for animal food products is thus expected to grow significantly: the United Nations forecasts that demand for meat, milk, and eggs in West Africa's rapidly expanding coastal cities will quadruple by 2050.[12] The burgeoning need for inputs to produce these goods, combined with the dwindling availability of such inputs in many areas in the two regions, creates considerable risks for the escalation of resource-based violent conflict.

It is important to note that these violent conflicts are not automatically created by climate change and population growth. Rather, climate and demographic changes often increase the frequency of resource-related disputes, overwhelming the ability of already-strained local institutions to conduct peaceful dispute resolution. In many cases, these changes further exacerbate the dissolution of mutually beneficial agro-pastoral relationships. The combination of environmental risks and desire to capitalize on an increasingly profitable industry has prompted communities, especially farmers in arable southern areas, to develop diversified agro-pastoral systems to increase their resilience against unexpected shocks. These systems, however, often result in decreased mutual reliance between farming and pastoralist communities. Whereas agro-pastoral relationships were previously built on the basis of exchanging animal products for water access and agricultural residue, farmers' and pastoralists' animals now compete for the same resources.

3. Non-state armed groups take advantage of the governance and security vacuum to capitalize on farmer-herder conflicts.

The rise in activities of insurgent and jihadist groups (Boko Haram, al-Qaeda, Islamic State of West Africa Province [ISWAP], Islamic State in the Greater Sahara [ISGS]) in Chad, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria has resulted in the restricted movement of herders into areas that were hitherto easy for them to access.[13] Under such conditions, following traditional grazing routes used for generations would risk life and/or cattle theft. This has changed their routes, bringing them into contact with new communities. The inability of governments within both the Western Sahel and LCB to curb insurgents and terrorist groups has serious effects on civilians targeted by these groups, as well as conflicts between the farmers and herders. ISGS in Mali, for instance, promoted a liberation idea of freeing hired pastoralists from herd owners. As much of the border areas between countries are poorly monitored, these activities create serious transnational spillover effects.

In addition to violent extremist organizations, groups of armed bandits operate throughout the Western Sahel and LCB. These criminal networks have sought to profit off instability by expanding their operations, often transnationally. Some of these groups, especially in northern Nigeria and southern Niger, have engaged in extensive cattle raids and vigilante attacks on communities. In the northern Nigerian state of Katsina, 158

12   SNV 2018
13   Paolo Zucconi, "The Sahel Uncertainty: Climate Change and Insurgency," *Global Risk Insights,* July 28, 2019. https://globalriskinsights.com/2019/07/sahel-climate-change-insurgency/

civilians were killed in raids in 2019.[14] These raids on towns were almost always accompanied by the use of sophisticated weaponry, razing of homes, and the theft of hundreds of cattle. Kidnapping has also become a significant problem where individuals are held at ransom. So far, there is no evidence that a common ideology is motivating these attacks.

One of the most lucrative activities, cattle rustling, further sows distrust among community members. Cattle are portable and easily transferrable into cash. Once cattle are on the market, it is almost impossible to prove whether livestock was stolen or belongs to the purported owner. Given the rising demand for dairy and beef, the price of cattle has skyrocketed in the region. In some areas, the producer price per ton of cattle increased between 60 and 240% between 2000 and 2009[15] – creating lucrative incentives for stealing cattle. To combat rising criminality, communities are increasingly turning to vigilante groups for protection. These groups are sometimes organized along ethnic or sectarian lines. The use of identity-based protection groups can enhance false narratives on the inevitability of violence between different communities. For example, the growing resentment towards the Fulani, the predominant ethnicity of pastoralists in the region, has created a basis for persecution and targeted violence by ethnic-based militias or communal attacks on pastoralist communities. For instance, 160 Fulani people were killed in an attack on Ogossagou village in Mali in March 2019.[16] This narrative of Fulani marginalization and persecution has also historically fueled the recruitment narratives of non-state armed groups calling on Fulani people to join their ranks.

These cycles of retaliatory attacks have grown severe and threaten to further spiral out of control. There is a high risk that the confluence of criminality, ethno-religiously aligned vigilante groups, and resource-based conflicts could metastasize into broad identity-based conflict in the region.

4. Government responses to violent conflict between farmers and herders have been over-reliant on securitized responses and largely reactive.

The primary response from many governments has been to deploy the security forces to deal with the increasing inter-communal conflicts between these groups. Countries in the region face numerous internal security challenges, including armed insurgencies, cross-border criminal syndicates, human trafficking, and struggles for increased autonomy. Many of these countries suffer from extreme poverty and large sums of their national budgets are being used on security responses, but with limited effects. Chad and Mali, for instance, spend around 15% of their national budget on military expenditures.[17] This comes at the expense of spending on improving other pressing problems, such as weak judicial systems, lack of education, and scarce

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14   Clionadh Raleigh, Andrew Linke, Håvard Hegre and Joakim Karlsen, "Introducing ACLED – Armed Conflict Location and Event Data," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 5, (2010): 651-660.

15   "Producer Prices – Annual," FAOSTAT, Food and Agriculture Organization. Accessed March 3, 2020. http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/PP

16   Aaron Ross, "Mali Struggles to Disarm Ethnic Militia Suspected of Massacre," *Reuters,* April 19, 2019. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-security-militia/mali-struggles-to-disarm-ethnic-militia-suspected-of-massacre-idUSKCN1RV0T2

17   "Military Expenditure (% of General Government Expenditure)," Data, The World Bank. Accessed February 21, 2020. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.ZS?most_recent_value_desc=true

employment opportunities, all of which feed into and exacerbate the conflict. In Mali and Niger, insecurity, land degradation, and cattle theft have led many young people to join illicit trafficking networks as the *de facto* livelihood option.[18]

Militaries, polices, and other government allies throughout the region have implemented patchwork and often adversarial approaches to dealing with competitions for resources. In Nigeria, the military is deployed to deal with these conflicts happening domestically despite neither being trained to deal with this type of conflict nor knowing the local context and terrain.[19] This has resulted in delayed or ineffective responses to protect civilians from attack. Consequently, community trust in the security forces tends to be low, aggravating the already-daunting challenge of maintaining peace and security. This can create a paradox of security – where the deployment of forces can exacerbate the problems, but the absence of security also leaves civilians vulnerable to attack.

In some communities armed non-state groups have stepped in or have been supported by the government to provide community security, law enforcement, and service provision that the government is unable or unwilling to provide. For instance, the Mali government is withdrawing troops from conflict-affected areas after sustaining several attacks in rural, border areas in 2019. In this case and in others, the absence of the state has allowed for non-state groups that include violent extremist organizations, identity-based militias, and local vigilante groups to fill the security void. However, these groups are often responsible for their own attacks against civilians. In some places they enjoy popular support because they are able to fill the vacuum left by government and security forces, but no formal mechanism exists to hold these groups accountable for human rights abuses.

5. Weapons have flown uninterrupted across national borders, increasing the lethality of attacks.

The availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) has been an increasingly defining characteristic of farmer-herder conflicts across the region. The availability of SALWs on their own are not the drivers of conflict. Instead, the availability of SALWs has increased the lethality of attacks. With widespread instability in the region and increases in cattle rustling, some herders have taken to carrying small arms for self-defense. The presence and rumored presence of SALWs have stoked the flames of conflict and have increased the damage of retaliatory attacks. Unfortunately, within the Sahel and LCB areas, the reality today is that there is no concrete and coordinated policy that addresses the challenges posed by SALWs.

SALWs continue to play a central role in perpetuating and sustaining the protracted conflicts between farmers and herders. Coupled with state fragility and porous borders, SALWs have been able to flow across na-

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18   Matthieu Pellerin, *The Niger–Libya Border: Securing It without Stabilising It?,* (Paris: Ifri, 2018), 9. https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/Pellerin_Niger_Libye_OCP_Ifri_2018_0.pdf

19   Chris M.A. Kwaja and Bukola I. Ademola-Adelehin, *Seeking Security and Stability: An Analysis of Security Responses to Farmer–Herder Conflict in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria,* (Washington DC: Search for Common Ground, 2018). https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Seeking-Security-and-Stability_Nigeria_-Search-for-Common-Ground.pdf

tional borders without regulation. In Chad, the devastating abundance of SALWs led President Idriss Deby to declare a state of emergency and close the Chad-Sudan border as a way of cutting the circulation of arms into the country from Sudan, Central African Republic, and Libya.[20] Yet, these SALWs still sustained violent confrontations between farmers and herders, which were responsible for the death of 109 Chadians within a month.[21] The fluid movement of people within these regions also eases the flow of SALWs. In the case of Nigeria, it is estimated that there are 1,272 unguarded and illegal routes in and out of the country.[22] In the Liptako-Gourma region, where the borders of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger meet, criminal smuggling networks and an array of non-state armed groups create a launching pad to smuggle arms, drugs, commodities, and people across the continent.

6. Regional policies and responses have been inadequately implemented by national governments.

Regional bodies like the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have produced policies and initiatives to address some of these regional challenges. These initiatives include those aimed at curbing the effects of desertification and deforestation, as well as issues of cross-border pastoralism, such as the Great Green Wall Initiative and the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance, respectively. However, implementation is the responsibility of individual member states. As such, there has been inconsistent levels of implementation across different countries, limiting the ability of these initiatives to curb these driving factors of conflict. Many countries have thus far placed greater emphasis on the implementation of national or sub-national laws over regional protocols and agreements.

Key Regional Legislations and Policies on Transhumance

- African Union Policy Framework on Pastoralism in Africa (2010)

- ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol, 1998.

- ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol (1998) and Regulation regarding its Implementation 2003.

- ECOWAS Regional Agricultural Policy for West Africa, 2005

- ECOWAS Commission Strategic Action Plan for the Development and Transformation of Livestock Sector in the ECOWAS Region, 2010.

- Protocol of the Agreement between the Republic of the Niger and the Republic of Mali on the Transit of Livestock, 1988.

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20   Al Jazeera, "Chad Declares Emergency in East After Ethnic Killings," *Al Jazeera*, August 18 2019. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/chad-declares-emergency-east-ethnic-killings-190818142801954.html
21   Daniel N'Doh Nadjitan, "Chad Declares State of Emergency After Farmer-Herder Clashes," *Bloomberg*, August 19, 2019. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-08-19/chad-declares-state-of-emergency-after-farmer-herder-clashes
22   Mjadvara Musa, "Immigration Uncovers 1,272 Illegal Routes," *The Guardian*, 24 September, 2018. https://guardian.ng/news/immigration-uncovers-1272-illegal-routes/

The ECOWAS transhumance policy provides for freedom of movement between member states. In line with the organization's goal of reducing the conflicts between farmers and herders, the ECOWAS transhumance certification policy was introduced, known as the International Transhumance Certification (ITC).[23] This is consistent with the "1998 ECOWAS decision relating to the regulation of transhumance," which recognizes that though the trans-border movement of herders and their herds cannot be restricted, measures can be put in place to manage movement. The policy thus requires all herders moving from their country of origin to another to obtain the certificate from their home country before departure.

So far, the ECOWAS protocol on transhumance suffers from limited domestic implementation by ECOWAS members states due to the absence of the institutional mechanisms for monitoring and the lackluster development of the structural and institutional frameworks required for the implementation by the member states.[24] Some countries, like Togo and Côte d'Ivoire, have been comparatively strict in terms of the number of transhumant pastoralists that enter their countries, citing their ability to regulate the free movement of peoples.[25]

In 2007 the AU adopted the Great Green Wall initiative (GGWI) as a strategic step to address the challenges posed by desertification on the continent. The Western Sahel and LCB have been particularly wrecked by the consequences of desertification, deforestation, and water shortages caused by climate variability and environmental degradation.[26] For example, the Sahara desert has claimed over 350,000 square kilometers (217,480 square miles) of land area in Northern Nigeria over the past sixty years, thereby affecting the lives of over 28 million people and 58 million livestock; [27] fifteen of Nigeria's states also suffer from desertification at an astounding annual rate of 1,500 square kilometers, or 932 square miles. AU countries deeply affected by desertification – Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sudan – signed the convention for the implementation of the GGWI in 2010. The goal was to populate a swathe of land spanning 7,100km (4,412 miles) from Dakar to Djibouti with green landscapes.[28] However, implementation of the GGWI has been piecemeal across the Western Sahel and LCB.

The promotion of cross-border dialogue, cooperation and partnerships has become one of the instruments adopted by countries within the Sahel and LCB regions. Recently, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in concert with the AU, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the Crisis Management Ini-

23   Economic Community of West African States, "ECOWAS Stresses the Need to Obtain International Transhumance Certificate," *Economic Community of West African States*, March 30, 2017. https://www.ecowas.int/ecowas-stresses-the-need-to-obtain-international-transhumance-certificate/?ohdbiekfkfkfcbai#targetText=-Consequently%2C%20on%20the%205th,on%20transhumance%20within%20the%20Community.

24   Patience, Adzande, "Migration of Pastoralists in Africa: Reflections on Practical and Policy Implications." *AFRICAN HUMAN MOBILITY REVIEW* (2019): 1650.

25   Manuela Leonhardt, *Regional Policies and Responses to Manage Pastoral Movements Within the ECOWAS Region*, (Abuja: International Organization for Migration, 2017). https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iom_ecowas_pastoralism.pdf

26   Terminski 2012

27   Jibrin Ibrahim, "State Crisis, Pastoralist Transhumance and Rural Banditry," *Daily Trust*, March 24, 2014. https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/state-crisis-pastoralist-transhumance-and-rural-banditry.html

28   Njidda M Gadzama, "The Development of the Great Green Wall in the Sahel of Nigeria with Some Local Constraints in Sustainability," *World Association for Sustainable Development*, 2016. http://www.wasd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Njidda-Gadzama_WASD-2016.pdf

tiative (CMI) launched the Lake Chad Basin Governor's Forum.[29] Though the forum is meant to support the efforts of the countries in the implementation of the Territorial Action Plans (TAPs), with specific reference to Boko Haram, the current state of insecurity in the region is also linked to the violent confrontations between farmers and herders. This is an encouraging development that should be further supported.

However, in lieu of regional initiatives, governments have often resorted to national responses in a largely reactive manner. In the case of Nigeria, there have been legislative and policy-level initiatives, such as the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP), to address the deadly conflicts between farmers and herders.[30] Certain state governments have enacted or considered state-level legislation to prohibit open grazing and move towards a ranching model of animal husbandry. These have been met with various levels of resistance and require concerted efforts to include all parties to the conflict to find sustainable solutions.

In Niger, national (and sometimes internationally backed) crackdowns on the movement of people and the criminalization of migration has further led to the marginalization of nomadic herders, which in some cases facilitates their recruitment into jihadist organizations and criminal enterprises. Across the regions, many pastoralists harbor long-standing grievances against the state, where they do not see their interests reflected in state policy and whom they perceive as being willfully inactive in addressing existential threats to their herding practices. Increased state presence and activity alone will not be sufficient to address these grievances.

Recommendations

Conflicts between farming and herding communities in the Western Sahel and Lake Chad Basin regions of West Africa illustrate the multifaceted and critical nature of tackling conflict drivers through a transnational lens. Climate change and environmental instability have disrupted livelihoods, especially traditional transhumance routes of livestock migration and reliable water access. The intersection of these increasing livelihoods conflicts with deep identity-based divisions has spread fear and dangerous stereotypes across national borders. People fleeing violence have fled to neighboring countries. So too have those responsible. Addressing this growing threat to civilian lives means looking at the conflict holistically.

This policy brief offers the following recommendations to international institutions, regional bodies, and national governments to tackle the growing threat of farmer-herder conflict in the Western Sahel and LCB:

To international institutions:

- **Create and implement a transnational strategy for each region to address farmer-herder conflicts.** The World Bank, European Commission, State Department, and others have invested in regional programs

29   Pulse Nigeria, "Lake Chad Basin Governors Forum Meet to Discuss Peace, Regional Stability," *Pulse,* July 13, 2019.   https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/lake-chad-basin-governors-forum-meet-to-discuss-peace-regional-stability/egmwr94

30   Punch, "Osibajo inaugurates National Livestock Transformation Plan," *Punch,* September 10, 2019. https://punchng.com/osinbajo-flags-off-national-livestock-transformation-plan/

to deal with the transnational nature of pastoralism, desertification, and conflict. These are important and need to be expanded to develop a clear and coordinated set of strategies for addressing resource-based competitions between farmers and herders.

- **Coordinate conflict-sensitive donor responses to desertification, instability, and famine.** Coordinated donor response to desertification, drought, and famine is an imperative part of an emergency plan for the Western Sahel and LCB regions that are threatened by climate change. A harmonized multi-donor strategic action plan on combating desertification that links local, national, and regional frameworks should be one that is anchored on building capacity and catalyzing community-led action to build resilience, rather than viewed as stand-alone policy. Crucially, such an action plan should be mindful of existing tensions around the distribution of resources and work to avoid exacerbating conflict. This recommendation can be achieved as part of the Territorial Action Plan, to be implemented by the governors of the LCB and Western Sahel.

- **Invest in development and resilience initiatives that build social and economic interdependence across identity-based divisions.** Because inter-communal conflicts between farmers and herders are deeply linked to livelihoods, this work should also build economic linkages between the groups, strengthening cattle and agricultural value chains throughout the region, and revitalizing symbiotic practices between the two communities.

To regional bodies:

- **Strengthen regional response mechanisms to address clashes between farmers and herders.** Though the causes and effects of the farmer-herder conflicts across the Western Sahel and LCB are not uniform, there are areas for national, regional, and continental policies to offer solutions to the core conflict drivers. There is a need to harmonize these responses in ways that would allow for better coordination and synergy in implementation in the future. At the same time, these should be adopted explicitly in policies at the national, state, and local levels of government; a multi-tier approach would allow for contextualization while adhering to common guidelines. By so doing, areas of duplicity and conflicts of approaches would easily be identified and addressed for better results.

- **Adopt an integrated approach to dealing with environmental shocks.** Competition over natural resources, particularly land and water access, is a key cause of conflict in the Western Sahel and LCB. Regional bodies should focus on building integrated frameworks that focus on mitigation, preparedness, emergency response, and recovery. As both a medium and long-term measure, this is meant to build resilience and serve as a life-line for vulnerable households or communities. This should follow the direction laid out by the UN's FAO to prioritize: promoting inclusive and equitable access to natural resources and inputs; strengthening the resilience of transboundary agropastoral communities to food crises; increasing beneficial cross-border trade opportunities and veterinary services; improving the capacities of government technical services, NGOs, and CSOs to scale up good pastoral and agropastoral

practices; and supporting coordination and strengthening food security information management and early warning systems.[31]

- **Review and re-establish a transnational corridor for the easy and free movement of herds.** Member states of the Western Sahel and the LCB regions should take deliberate steps towards the review and [re] creation of transnational corridors of passage for herds within the regions. In undertaking such tasks, the involvement of border communities through their traditional leadership and governance structures is very important as a way of averting violent confrontations and building broad buy-in for the proposed plans.

- **Strengthen policies on border security management and coordinate policy on small arms and light weapons.** Within the regions, regional actors such as the ECOWAS, LCBC, and the ECCAS should strengthen their policies on border security management through better synergy amongst immigration and customs officials, as well as border communities. An approach that utilizes joint patrols and intelligence sharing, as a vehicle for forging integrated border security management or governance, is a necessary pathway towards enhancing the connectivity of agencies with mandates to monitor and secure borders. There is a need for stronger collaboration amongst member states towards crafting concrete policies to check the flow and use of SALWs in these areas, both from the supply and demand sides. Member states of both regions should work towards institutionalizing mechanisms for tacking issues around SALWs through the establishment of national commissions.

To national governments:

- **Renew commitment to implement the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) and other regional agreements.** The success of regional agreements, including the GGWI and herd movement certification policies, rely on the extent to which member states demonstrate greater commitment towards implementing the projects to address the shocks associated with desertification in the regions. Through sustained funding and political will by states and development partners, the goal of reclaiming the lands taken over by desertification would be easily actualized.

- **Employ bottom-up approaches to conservation and resilience that involve all relevant stakeholders.** As a forward-looking strategy, the GGWI, which affirms security for the people rather than states, should focus more on an inclusive bottom-up approach, as opposed to a top-bottom one. Crucially, both farmer and pastoralist communities should be equally represented in discussions about conservation and resilience approaches. The value added in this has to do with the fact that doing so makes the initiative more likely to secure the buy-in of the people for implementation, sustainability, and impact. This is central to the question of addressing some of the deficits associated with planning and inadequate resources for sustainability.

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31   Food and Agriculture Organization, "Boosting Pastoralists' Resilience, Key to Achieving Peace in the Sahel," *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations,* April 25, 2019. http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1191704/icode/

- **Advance equitable and inclusive management of land and water resources.** Traditional mechanisms of dealing with disputes over management of natural resources have been unable to cope with the stressors of population growth, climate change, and increased demand for animal products. National governments should work to build local level capacities for resilience and equitable, inclusive management of resources.

Conclusion

The current conflicts between farmers and herders in the Western Sahel and LCB provide both challenges and opportunities for the regions and their people. National and regional institutions have initiated policies to deal with some of these transnational dimensions of conflict. However, national responses have been overly reliant on military responses and regional responses have been inadequately implemented.

While the challenges are linked with weaknesses associated with the inability of national and regional institutions to design sustainable mechanisms for adaptation and resilience, the opportunities therein are linked to the fact that other regions outside the continent have been able to overcome such shocks. It is not enough for governments at all levels to initiate policies. The people most affected by the violence must be central to its transformation.

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