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Cohort 4: Climate-related security risks and sustaining peace

Preventing transhumance-related intercommunity conflict in Chad: Towards a climate-sensitive conflict analysis

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1. Introduction

August 2019 saw a significant spike in violent conflict between farmers and livestock herders in Chad, which resulted in the deaths of about 100 people over a nine-day period. Although sporadic clashes between these two communities are not uncommon, the unprecedented scale of the violence overwhelmed traditional, local conflict resolution mechanisms and prompted the government to declare a state of emergency in the two eastern provinces of Ouaddaï and Sila and to close Chad's border with Sudan.

This issue brief sets out to address three key questions: What is driving this intercommunity conflict in Chad and what can explain the recent spike in violence? What could be potential entry points for addressing the current crisis and preventing future conflict? And how could these entry points be translated into integrated, joint programming in support of the government's efforts to prevent conflict and build peace?

2. Background and context

The socio-economic significance of pastoralism to Africa, the Sahel and Chad

It is difficult to overstate the importance of pastoralism¹ on the African continent, across the Sahel and in Chad. Approximately 268 million people—the equivalent of the entire population of Indonesia—practice some form of pastoralism across 43 percent of Africa's landmass,² be it in the form of transhumance,³ nomadism⁴ or agro-pastoralism.⁵ Across West Africa and the Sahel, where 38 percent of the land is primarily arid and therefore unsuitable for crop production, pastoralism generates a significant proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) and, due to its export-oriented and cross-border nature, acts as a powerful vector of regional economic integration.⁶

1 "Pastoralism" is the overarching term given to a variety of forms of animal husbandry.

2 Blench, R. *'You can't go home again' Pastoralism in the new millennium*. Overseas Development Institute (ODI), 2001.

3 "Transhumance" is a mobile livestock farming method that is based on regular, seasonal movements that are mostly predictable. Each year, herders follow the patterns of the seasons and travel over largely the same trails and pasturelands.

4 "Nomadism" is characterized by the continual and unpredictable movements of all members of a family or a group with their livestock herds.

5 "Agro-pastoralism" involves the integration of crop- and livestock-production and is practiced among sedentary, nomadic and transhumant communities.

6 *Déclaration de N'Djamena : Élevage Pastoral, une contribution durable au développement et à la sécurité des espaces saharo-sahéliens*. Adopted 29 May 2013.

In Chad, about \$1.8 billion worth of livestock⁷ is under management by pastoralists and this renewable resource generates about \$250 million in added value annually.⁸ Directly or indirectly, pastoral systems in Chad constitute an essential resource for about 40 percent of the rural population,⁹ about 3.5 million people, and generates about 23 percent of the country's GDP.¹⁰ The age-old practice of transhumance has proven to be a highly adaptive and effective method of producing nutriment from marginal land, thereby bolstering food security, economic well-being and resilience in a harsh environment that presents numerous challenges to survival. Long seen as an economic activity without a future, pastoralism is today widely recognized as an important source of development.

The relevance of a climate-sensitive conflict analysis

The adoption by the Security Council in 2017 of Resolution 2349 on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin signalled a sea change in the UN's approach to climate-related security risks. For the first time, the Council recognized that climate change was impacting the peace and security landscape in the region and called for "adequate risk assessments and risk management strategies by governments and the United Nations."¹¹ This was followed by an August 2018 Security Council presidential statement on West Africa and the Sahel that marked the first time that it addressed farmer-herder conflicts in the region. The statement expressed "concern for increased tensions between pastoralists and farmers in the region, driven by competition for natural resources, rapid population growth, weak governance, pressures related to climate and ecological factors, and the circulation of small arms and light weapons."¹²

To understand the dynamics of transhumance-related conflict in Chad, it is necessary to know that the country has three distinct climatic zones: (1) A subtropical zone within the equatorial rain belt to the south that covers about 10 percent of the national territory and that has a wet season from May to November (up to 1,400mm of rain) and a dry season from December to April; (2) a Sahelian zone in the central region that covers about 30 percent of the country and that has a longer dry season and a brief wet season between June and September

(between 200 and 650mm of rain); and (3) a Saharan zone in the northern region that covers about 60 percent of the country and has a desert climate with hot, arid conditions and almost no rainfall (less than 200mm per year).

A symbiotic relationship under threat

Most livestock in the Sahel is raised according to a transhumant production system, characterized by cyclical migrations that coincide with the wet and dry seasons. Herds travel north during the rainy season to take advantage of temporary pasture that appears when rain falls on land that is arid for most of the year. At the end of the rainy season, herds return south, as temporary pasture is exhausted, to graze on lands that are also occupied by sedentary, crop-producing farmers.

Historically, the relationship between transhumant herders and sedentary farmers has been largely symbiotic. Since herds typically returned after farmers had taken in their harvests, farmers tended to welcome livestock into their fields to graze on the remaining vegetable matter and, in return, fertilize the land. Pastoralists often transported the harvests produced by farmers as they migrated with their cattle, in return for a portion of the harvest, a practice known as *chele*. Herders traded milk and meat products in return for cereals, fruit and vegetables from farmers. When conflict did break out between the two groups, it was normally managed by traditional, local conflict resolution mechanisms.

The ethnic and religious makeup of the farmer and herder groups adds additional dimensions to their relationship, as well as to the conflicts that sometimes erupt between them. Settled farmers in the south of the country tend to be Christian and hail from non-Arabic tribes such as the Sara and the Ouaddai. Nomadic herders, by contrast, tend to hail from Arabic or Fulani tribes such as the Uuuda'en, Ontorbe, Anagamba and Biibe Woyla.¹³ While ethnic or religious factors are not drivers of conflict between farmers and herders *per se*, they are often used as labels to identify the parties thereto. A real danger exists that the Arab/non-Arab conflict dynamics that are more common in neighbouring Darfur in Sudan could become more prevalent in Chad.

7 Between camels, cattle, goats and sheep, Chad was estimated in 2014 to have 19.5m head of livestock. *New Fringe Pastoralism: Conflict and Insecurity and Development in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel*. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2017.

8 Krätli, S. *Systèmes pastoraux dans le Dar Sila, Tchad*. Feinstein International Centre, Tufts University, 2017.

9 Ibid.

10 Agriculture contributed 52.6 percent to Chad's GDP in 2014. The livestock contribution to agricultural GDP in the same year was 44 percent, the fourth highest in the Sahel and the Horn. *New Fringe Pastoralism: Conflict and Insecurity and Development in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel*. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2017.

11 UN Security Council Resolution 2349 of 31 March 2017, p. 7. See also Born, C., Eklöv, K. and Mobjörk, M. *Advancing United Nations Responses to Climate-Related Security Risks*. SIPRI Policy Brief, September 2019.

12 Statement by the President of the Security Council. S/PRST/2018/16 of 10 August 2018.

13 *The Security Challenges of Pastoralism in Central Africa*. International Crisis Group, Africa Report No. 215, 2014.

3. Conflict drivers

Three main drivers are escalating the conflict between transhumant pastoralists and sedentary farmers in Chad: climate change; increased competition over scarce natural resources due to population growth; and shortcomings in governance at the local, national and regional levels. While not a root cause of the conflict *per se*, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in affected communities is increasing the lethality and, thereby, the intractability of farmer-herder conflict. Therefore, it will also be considered among the policy responses.

Climate change

As is also the case in the Lake Chad region,¹⁴ climate change is a key driver of transhumance-related inter-community conflict in Chad, not in an indirect or convoluted manner, but in a very physical and direct one. In particular, as manifested in the southward expansion of the Sahara Desert, rising temperatures, increasing variability in rainfall patterns and more frequent extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, climate change is disrupting age-old rhythms of transhumance.

The most recent and concrete example of this change is that, over the last few decades, the limit of transhumance movements in Chad¹⁵ has shifted about 200km southward. Today, these movements take place over longer distances and shorter timeframes, with pastoralists arriving south earlier than usual during the dry season—often before farmers have harvested their crops—and departing north later than usual during the rainy season. As a result, they spend more time overall in the southern sub-tropical region where settled farmers predominate.¹⁶

As a result of these three factors - prompting herders to move south earlier (before harvest time in the south), pushing them farther south into sub-tropical areas that are more densely populated by sedentary farmers and keeping them in the south for longer periods of time - climate change, in a very physical and concrete way, is increasing the likelihood that herders and farmers will encroach upon each other's spaces with potentially violent consequences.

This climate-driven, southward shift in transhumance movements is not limited to Chad. Farmer-herder conflicts have also increased in Nigeria as pastoralists migrate farther south, including into that country's more humid zones. Farmer-herder violence centred around Nigeria's Middle Belt killed around 1,200 people in the first six months of 2018—roughly six times the number of civilians killed by Boko Haram in the same period—while displacing around 300,000 people.¹⁷

Competition over natural resources

Competition over scarce natural resources, especially land and water, is another key driver of the conflict, which is itself driven by population growth of both people and livestock. Chad has one of the highest rates of population growth in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁸ The population is growing fastest in the fertile southern subtropical zone that lies within the equatorial rain belt south of the Sahel. Population growth in this region, which has been augmented by refugee inflows from Darfur and the Central African Republic, is pushing communities to plant more crops, which can result in encroachment by farmers upon pasturelands, livestock resting areas, water sources and transhumance corridors traditionally used by herders, which can spark conflict.

In addition to the growth of the human population, the size of livestock herds has also been increasing, driven by heavy investment by urban elites, including military and civil administration officials, in livestock, especially cattle.¹⁹ Investing in livestock can be a convenient means for businessmen and politicians (often one and the same), as well as senior military officials, to store their sometimes ill-begotten wealth, since it avoids the scrutiny that can be applied to bank accounts or other types of property, as well as the need to buy the land where the cattle graze.²⁰

These so-called neo-pastoralists often entrust their livestock to professional herders, whom they arm to protect their investment, especially if herders cross the border into the Central African Republic, where they are often harried by the non-State armed groups that control the area south of the Chadian border. Increasing demand for small arms and light weapons among both herders and farmers fuels arms trafficking, especially cross-border arms trafficking from Sudan and

14 Lake Chad Region: Climate-related security risk assessment. Expert Working Group on Climate-related Security Risks, July 2018.

15 Saleh, O.M. *Le Code Pastoral : Un outil de sécurisation des systèmes pastoraux et de renforcement des capacités de résilience des pasteurs*. Colloque Régional de N'Djamena, 27-29 May 2013.

16 Krätli, S. *Systèmes pastoraux dans le Dar Sila, Tchad*. Feinstein International Centre, Tufts University, 2017.

17 *Stopping Nigeria's Spiralling Farmer-Herder Violence*. International Crisis Group. Africa Report N° 262, 26 July 2018.

18 In 2018, Chad's rate of population growth was just over 3 percent, whereas the average for sub-Saharan Africa was 2.7 percent (World Bank, 2018, [seed-ata.worldbank.org](http://data.worldbank.org)).

19 Luizza, M. *Urban Elites' Livestock Exacerbate Herder-Farmer Tensions in Africa's Sudano-Sahel*. Adelphi, Environmental Change and Security Program, 2019.

20 *Cows, Cash and Conflict*. The Economist, 9 November 2017.

CAR, and further undermines the authority of traditional leaders.

The increasing size of livestock herds combines with human population growth to sharply increase the likelihood that livestock will encroach onto farmland and damage crops and that farmers will encroach onto spaces reserved for livestock herders. The increasing militarization of herders pushes farmers to also acquire arms, thus increasing the likelihood that deadly violence will result when clashes occur.

Governance shortcomings

The third main driver of transhumance-related intercommunity conflict in Chad may be characterized as shortcomings in governance, specifically in the justice sector and the national and regional legal frameworks regulating transhumance. The vested interests of local civilian and military elites in livestock raising, due to their heavy investments in the sector, tends to skew the locally-administered, official and traditional justice systems in favour of herders. As a result, farmers whose crops have been damaged, or who have suffered even more serious injuries, often do not receive adequate legal redress. Biased responses by the justice system in adjudicating disputes between farmers and herders increase frustrations among farmers, who feel they have no choice but to take matters into their own hands, and embolden herders to act with impunity.

The second dimension of these governance shortcomings lies in the absence of adequate legal frameworks at the national and regional levels. At the national level, the law regulating pastoralism in Chad dates from one year before independence (1959) and was originally conceived as a means of controlling and containing transhumance movements.²¹ It stipulates that all pastoralists must have a pass, follow precise itineraries and complete the transhumance within a time period defined by the authorities (this does not take into account the changes being wrought by climate change). The law was never followed up with implementing legislation and was largely ignored.²² In 2014, the National Assembly adopted a new draft code on pastoralism, finalized in 2011, but the Supreme Court deemed it unconstitutional and the law has languished ever since.

At the regional level, Central Africa does not dispose of a regulatory framework equivalent to that provided in West Africa by the ECOWAS Decision Relating to the

regulations on Transhumance between ECOWAS Member States.²³ It is perhaps one of the most comprehensive and ambitious instruments for the management of transhumance, although its implementation on the ground leaves something to be desired. Under the aegis of the African Union's Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa,²⁴ cross-border transhumance in Central Africa is regulated by the *Commission Économique du Bétail, de la Viande et des Ressources Halieutiques* (CEBEV-IHRA), which comprises six Central African Countries, including Chad. Although a regional, legal, regulatory framework governing transhumance in Central Africa does not yet exist, an initiative to create one under the auspices of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) is being spearheaded by the UN Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC).

4. Possible entry points for integrated programming

In light of the above analysis, the following present themselves as promising entry points for developing integrated and, possibly, cross-border, programmatic responses to address the problem of transhumance-related intercommunity conflict in Chad.

Local

Reduce the lethality of the conflict: As an immediate priority at the local level, efforts should be made to remove illegal small arms and light weapons (SALW) from the hands of civilians to reduce the lethality of farmer-herder conflict. The government has already made some progress in this regard by collecting some 8,000 SALW in the eastern provinces of Ouaddaï and Sila in the latter part of 2019 during the state of emergency it declared as a result of deadly clashes between farmers and herders, and has expressed its intention to extend the weapons collection campaign throughout the country. It would be important to ensure that disarmament be carried out in a balanced manner in accordance with international standards²⁵ so that one community is not made more vulnerable vis-à-vis the other and that the weapons collected do not eventually re-enter the illicit market. The joint Chad-Sudan Border Force and the Chad-CAR Mixed Border Commission would have important roles to play in reducing cross-border trafficking in SALW and the government

21 Law No. 04 of 31 October 1959.

22 Saleh, O.M. *Le Code Pastoral : Un outil de sécurisation des systèmes pastoraux et de renforcement des capacités de résilience des pasteurs*. Colloque Régional de N'Djamena, 27-29 May 2013.

23 ECOWAS Decision A/DEC.5/10/98.

24 *Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa: Securing, protecting and improving the lives, livelihoods and rights of pastoralist communities*. African Union, 2010.

25 The UN's *Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium* (MOSAIC) provides detailed guidance on, inter alia, collecting illicit small arms and light weapons (see <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/mosaic>).

would need to take special measures to stop the practice by which neo-pastoralists arm herders to protect their investments.

Strengthen local conflict resolution mechanisms: As well as reducing the lethality of farmer-herder conflict, removing illegal SALW from the hands of civilians would also help to re-establish the authority of local government officials and traditional leaders, who should be further supported in establishing or strengthening local dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms that fully integrate the perspectives, needs and capacities of men, women and young people from both the farming and herding communities. A foundation for this has already been laid. In October 2019, Chad's President convened the governors of all of Chad's 23 provinces, together with his Council of Ministers, and ordered that a national commission and local committees be created to work with the High Council of Self-Governing Communities and Traditional Chiefdoms to promote peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders. The government should be supported in making this vision a reality.

Reinforce the capacity of the justice system to respond impartially. The government and traditional leaders should be supported in order to ensure that both farmers and herders receive fair treatment and proper redress under the law, be it under the formal or traditional justice systems. This would guarantee that legal grievances do not further erode social cohesion and the social contract between the government and its people.

Develop transhumance-related infrastructure: The need to develop and expand transhumance-related infrastructure - such as water points, pastureland, livestock resting areas, transhumance corridors and veterinary health/vaccination centres and information technology to guide and communicate herd movements – should be assessed. Farmers and herders should be incentivized to work together on the sustainable management of scarce natural resources, especially land and water, using the latest technologies.

National

Update and apply the pastoral and land codes: At the national level, the National Assembly should be supported to rework the draft pastoral code into a balanced legal framework that will ensure predictability, transparency and accountability in the governance of transhumance in Chad through an inclusive process of consultation with representatives of farmer and herder groups. Special attention should be paid to ensuring that the pastoral code is compatible with the land code with respect to the shared management of common

resources and property rights. The government and local authorities, including law enforcement officials, should be supported in rolling out and enforcing the new codes, while sensitizing farming and herding communities on their contents.

Regional

Develop a regional framework for transhumance in Central Africa: At the regional level, ECCAS should be supported in elaborating an overarching framework for transhumance in Central Africa that will harmonize the practice across borders. Existing mechanisms for joint border management, including the Chad-CAR Mixed Border Commission and the Chad-Sudan Joint Border Force, should be strengthened with a view to facilitating the cross-border movements of transhumant livestock and disrupting illicit arms trafficking networks. Where possible, UN agencies and technical and financial partners should give priority to integrated, joint programming of a cross-border nature in order to address the transnational nature of transhumance.

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