

NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The second ALFA Sahel webinar explored the role of natural resource governance, particularly at local level, in strengthening resilience and reducing conflict among farmers and pastoralists in the Sahel. Participants from 10 NGO, research and government organisations in 8 West African countries discussed two critical questions:

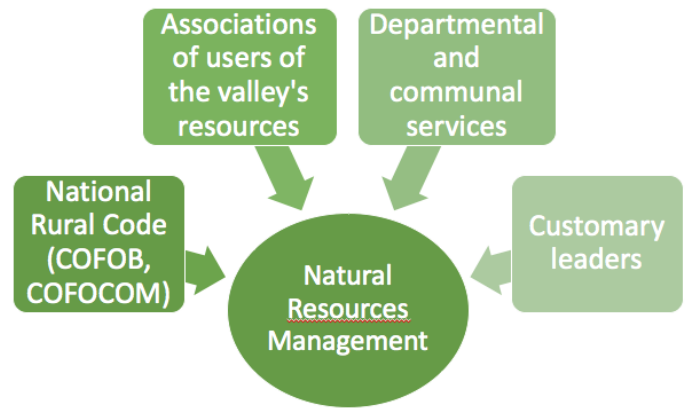
- The ways in which formal and informal natural resource management and governance systems are driving access, use, control and competition over natural resources for farmers, agro-pastoralists and pastoralists in the Sahel.
- How climate change is impacting the effectiveness of these governance systems, and how participants work supports improved governance at different levels.

To inspire the group and plenary discussions the webinars opened with short presentations of examples where governance is challenged by changes in livelihoods, land use and interactions between farmers and pastoralists, caused by the impacts of climate change and increasing pressure on natural resources. See Case 1 and 2.

The ALFA Sahel 2020 webinar series is a forum for joint learning among practitioners, decision-makers and researchers on the challenges and opportunities for climate resilience in the Sahel. Go to alfasahel.org to learn more

CASE 1: TARKA VALLEY ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

The Tarka Valley is a coveted and disputed dryland ecosystem dividing pastoralist areas to the north and agro-pastoralist / farming areas to the south. It provides a critical fallback and dry season grazing area enabling mobile pastoralist livestock keeping across the northern arid lands of Niger. It is also an important source of wood resources (timber, fuelwood, aerial fodder); water (high water table); and fertile cropping land. Uncontrolled and politicized access, droughts, land degradation, and increase in livestock numbers and crop agriculture, exacerbated by climate change impacts have led to competing claims over the use of the Valley. Improved governance is critical to safeguarding the natural resources of the Valley and this depends on strengthening institutions and strong coordination between them including customary leaders, associations of farmers and pastoralists, local government services and national legal and regulatory bodies. Given climate change challenges, linking adaptation planning to development planning is critical. The provisions of Niger's Rural Code, together with support to analysis of the valley's resources and developing equitable agreements on alternative land use are avenues to address these challenges.



CASE 2: GOVERNANCE OF NATURAL RESOURCES, TRANSHUMANCE AND CONFLICTS AT THE BORDERS OF BURKINA FASO, MALI AND NIGER

Informal agreements through which natural resource users collaborated and negotiated together have long been effective in creating shared and sustainable benefits between farmers and pastoralists. For example, pastoralist access to grazing of crop residues in farmer fields in return for farmers access to milk, manure for improved soil fertility and access to animal traction. Impacts of climate change, increase in population and monetization of services has increased pressure on resources and challenged the ability of farmers and herders to respect traditional rules which protect the environment as a whole. This combination of factors is leading to a breakdown of the informal natural resource governance systems. Lack of functional governance systems on the ground opens the way for land grabbing and land rights systems which favour wealthy farmers and private economic actors who are most often engaged in intensive resource exploitation. Pastoralists are displaced and their traditional grazing areas are reduced, with fewer options for their transhumance. The breakdown of the traditional governance and social fabric together with the impacts of climate change is further worsening land degradation and increasing competition and conflict for scarce resources. On the borders of Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, innovative attempts are being made to strengthen informal governance, local consultation frameworks and formal/informal linkages to enable fairer land allocation and management of other natural resources and to increase the capacity of actors to defend protected areas. This requires a range of processes:

- Bringing farmers and pastoralists together in local conventions and platforms;
- Information, education and communication (IEC) campaigns;
- Raising awareness of rights and the legal actions that are possible
- Participatory stock taking of access to resources and development of land charters;
- Advocacy for inclusive planning of the use of natural resources, taking climate change impacts into account;
- Cross-border consultations and high-level inter-state meetings.

OUTCOMES OF PARTICIPANT DISCUSSIONS

1. HOW CLIMATE CHANGE IS AFFECTING NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

Climate change in the Sahel is resulting in changing seasonal patterns, increase in droughts and floods and increasing uncertainty for people whose lives depend on natural resources. The impacts of climate change add to and interact with the impacts of other external factors that affect peoples' lives, for example changing land use and access. Pastoralists and agro-pastoralists are experiencing a scarcity and degradation of resources including pasture and water and a decrease in pastoral space. Farmers are pushed into a demand for irrigated cropping, which disrupts agreements on when pastoralists can access crop residues.

Degraded land and the need to manage new risks causes all these groups to seek to expand and diversify their areas of operation, adding to pressure and potential for conflicts.

Opportunistic livestock mobility with new and alternative routes is the main strategy that pastoralists and agro-pastoralists are using to manage ongoing climatic uncertainties. This requires securing land in pasture areas and water points. Today, transhumants could be considered climate displaced people, moving longer distances to reach pasture.

Farmers, agro-pastoralists and pastoralists who depend on the same resources and landscapes are all struggling to sustain livelihoods which are resilient to climate change. Effective governance is critical to enable equitable access and use, and now requires systems and structures that can understand the changing natural resource dynamics and support long term adaptation and resilience. The impacts of climate change are adding to the pressure on and breakdown of governance systems and linkages that work for vulnerable land users, leading to loss of confidence in these systems.

2. GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS AND THEIR ROLE IN INCLUSIVE CLIMATE RESILIENT NRM AMONG FARMERS AND PASTORALISTS

Traditional governance

Local leadership traditionally ensures respect of agreed community rules and belief systems on use and access to natural resources. This has been successful in conserving and managing important resources and deterring unsustainable exploitation.

Issues between the herders and farmers have been managed in recent years through traditional governance systems – showing they do have potential and could be strengthened. However, these systems are being undermined by several factors including:

- Conflicts within traditional systems and-between them and the formal administrative system;
- Uncertainty over which system to follow;
- The existence of privileged groups, elite capture and political manipulation and collusion;
- A feeling of inequity and favourism over who-gains access.

Escalated competition and conflict over natural resource access which can easily turn into violence challenges trust in traditional or new natural resource agreements.

Role of traditional governance in inclusive climate resilience: Climate change impacts have led to pastoralists and farmers moving into new areas with consequent new areas of competition for land and resources. Traditional NRM systems that have been disrupted could be revived. This would require an understanding of the dynamics of the disruption and the potential for climate resilient NRM.

Informal community-based governance

Community based organisations and groups may be formally recognised or fully informal but have a strong role to play in enabling vulnerable people to participate and have a voice in local decisions on natural resource governance.

Several examples show how women organising together enables them to work together and gain collective benefits, (eg group savings and loans, accessing land, irrigation, market gardening) help each other to solve problems, access information and manage climate change risks and impacts.

Replicating this among more and other types of groups at the landscape level with agreements developed between groups enables such systems to also address landscape and ecosystem level issues. For example, drawing up a charter for the use of natural resources in one commune in Burkina has helped to minimize farmer / herder conflicts and strengthen social cohesion. This does not give control, but it facilitates access and use of resources. Local agreements may play a role in protecting against cattle theft, radical informal groups, markets and cartels.

Informal systems do rely on traditional and / or formal systems to gain some form of formal or legal recognition which is needed for accessing uncontested rights particularly over land and grazing. These rights are a precondition to making any investment in improving resources – such as soil fertility raising, planting trees, learning and applying new techniques on how to use the land well. This dependence poses several challenges from access to the formal structures, to reaching consensus with and across the uncertain traditional/formal governance relations and retaining security of the agreements reached. Where land grabbing by powerful elites and the private sector is common, insecurity of informal and group access

Role of informal community governance in inclusive climate resilience: Awareness raising on rights and understanding of the political structures, training in advocacy, communication skills, public speaking capacity (and access to translation), can all enable women, youth and pastoralists to have their own voice, access information and defend themselves and their groups.

Formal governance structures, national laws and political will

Formal governance systems regulate access and use of natural resources in drylands and like the Niger Rural Code, their policies often support sustainable and equitable management. However, there are problems.

They may favour settled farming and the privatisation and exploitation of land and resources for economic growth. Even where pastoral areas are protected in law, pastoralist livelihoods which depend on mobility for sustainable livestock management are being undermined through contradictions between different laws and between formal and traditional governance systems as well as weak political will for implementation, monitoring and regulation. These open the way for legal or illegal appropriation of land for other interests such as mining and crop farming. It creates major obstacles for pastoralists to continue their traditional stewardship of sustainable ecosystems. Herders defend their rights related to natural resources and livelihoods in multiple ways. They need to know the legal frameworks, the mechanisms for claims and appeal and access to legal support in case going to court is necessary. Access to justice, use of human rights mechanisms and collaboration with magistrates and the industries competing over land rights all need support. Subnational governance systems with their formal technical services and administrative structures have great potential for creating an enabling environment for negotiating local agreements which are context specific and linked to traditional and informal systems as well as to national policy.

Role of formal governance in inclusive climate resilience: Subsidiarity is an important principle when faced with the highly localised and uncertain nature of climate change, which added to other pressures, pushes people into further undermining their own or other land users natural resource base. Climate resilience and adaptation can and are being integrated within some local development planning systems, sometimes linked to community planning processes where projects support this.

3. PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS TO BETTER SUPPORT CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Inclusive and representative systems

Inclusive systems which ensure the full range of actors and stakeholders are involved in negotiation and decision making on natural resource access, rights, use, management, transformation etc are critical at all levels. When different stakeholders are connected through governance processes and dialogue platforms they are better able to build relationships and understand each other, share their knowledge, needs and visions and accept the trade-offs that may be needed for all resource users to benefit equitably.

But meaningful representation of the people whose lives depend on these resources in multiple ways is still a challenge. Not all users have the same power to influence plans and access spaces for dialogue. Local power dynamics are complex and relate to multiple social dimensions (including but beyond gender) which need to be visible and included. For example, mobile herders and more sedentary agro-pastoralist livestock keepers have different needs and knowledge but the latter are more likely to be aware of and present in community level dialogues unless efforts are made to be fully inclusive at a larger ecosystem scale.

Participant Recommendations:

- Raise awareness among all resource users of the natural resource governance systems and legal frameworks in place and the rights of each actor. Enable participation of resource users in analysis of governance systems and their impacts on different socio-economic vulnerable groups.
- Establishment of more inclusive decision-making processes and consultation frameworks, eg through setting up local committees which are separate but linked to the traditional and local government systems; give a voice to different land and resource users by creating a space for meaningful negotiation between them and with formal structures.

- Facilitate the participation and empowerment of different vulnerable groups in analysis of climate change risks and vulnerabilities, visioning and planning for the future at landscape level, at the same time enabling engagement between groups. Scale and adapt existing tools to support this.
- Involve youth, women and men in more inclusive dialogue beyond traditional systems.

Coordination

Overlaps between the mandates of different governance structures (customary authorities /traditional leaders, sector ministries, police force, administration / chiefs, etc) at the local level create confusion and opportunity for manipulation and influence by more powerful actors in their own interests. Different livelihood groups align with or can negotiate more successfully with different systems, with potential for protracted conflict in the absence of collectively agreed systems for decision making.

Information to support effective decision making on land and natural resource use is commonly hard to access and limited to one aspect without reference to another, for example related to climate risks and forecasts, soil and crop suitability, forest, vegetation and degraded areas, social structures and systems.

Participant Recommendations:

- Promote coordination among all actors in mainstream development planning and natural resource management planning systems to ensure all interests and needs are known and allow for synergy between government, traditional systems, NGOs, private sector interests and resource users.
- Support better coordination between sectors at the political level to enable more coherent sectorial plans. Facilitate better collaboration between technical service agents as knowledge brokers between communities and formal governance structures.

- Support access and coordination among different types of data, analysis and evidence, synthesising and sharing the outcome and coordinating in relation to a known common purpose and intended outcome
- Facilitate the subsidiarity principle: transfer the competences of the State to the local government level and set up systems for communication, coordination and inclusive decision making, informed by national laws and local context. Include raising awareness of the legal frameworks such that decisions in compliance with the law can be accepted and applied.
- Strengthen the capacities of magistrates on the management of natural resources for better legal assistance (access to justice, collaboration with private sector, use of human rights mechanisms).

Implementation: Access to capacity, finance and resources

Changes in governance and policy processes will lead to changes in access and rights over land and natural resources which may have positive or negative consequences for different groups. For example, formalising land rights could lead to excluding pastoralists from access to pasture and conflict with traditional agreements.

Participant Recommendations:

- Seek ways to strengthen political will towards sustainable natural resource management informed by the resource base, needs and interests of all actors, climate risks and conflict risks.
- Strengthen clarity and capacity on what sustainable, climate resilient and inclusive NRM policy involves and address barriers to implementation of effective policy.
- Improve access to financial resources at all levels – mobilising access to climate finance could be a way to motivate and strengthen climate resilient NRM.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Webinar presentations, recording and participant contributions google document are available on the ALFA Sahel website here: <https://alfasahel.org/outcomes/>

IIED Briefing papers June 2020: [Farmer-herder conflict in Africa: re-thinking the phenomenon?](#)
/ [Conflit entre agriculteurs et éleveurs en Afrique : repenser le phénomène?](#)

Climate-Fragility Risk Brief: North Africa & Sahel: Oli Brown . April 2020: https://climate-securityexpert-network.org/sites/climate-security-expertnetwork.com/files/documents/csen_climate_fragility_risk_brief_-_north_africa_sahel.pdf

