CONTEXT

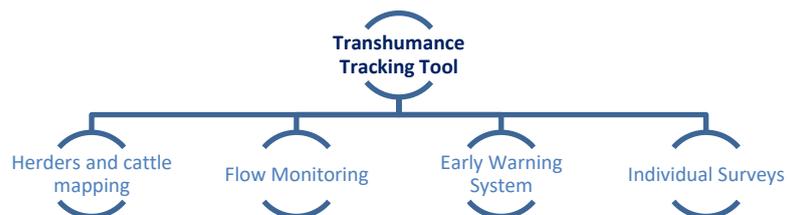PASTORALISTS WITH THEIR HERD OF CATTLE CROSSING A MAJOR HIGHWAY IN ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA. © IOM 2022

Some regions of West and Central Africa (WCA) are faced with several layers of vulnerability resulting, among others, from weak state presence and capacity, limited access to basic services, struggling economies, slow-onset and rapid impacts of climate change, exponential demographic growth, rising urbanization, and general insecurity due to the presence of communal conflicts and the expansion of Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs). In this context, weak governance systems and growing insecurity leave local populations to compete for dwindling natural resources, thereby placing further strain on social cohesion and undermining peaceful coexistence within and between communities. This is especially the case with respect to transhumance.

Cross-border transhumance is a longstanding traditional pastoral practice in Africa where herders migrate seasonally with their livestock in search of grazing land. In the Sahel and coastal countries of West Africa, a region characterized by long dry seasons, livestock mobility is an important livelihoods adaptation to increase resilience to climatic and economic vulnerabilities and risks. Transhumance is also a highly productive economic activity upon which both mobile and sedentary communities depend for food and income, while also serving as an important driver for regional integration and the strengthening of inter-community ties.

However, this practice has recently come under significant stress, threatening stability across the region. Historically, transhumance has been relatively peaceful, but climate change and environmental stresses have shifted migratory routes and seasonal migrations, resulting in a steady rise in tensions between farmer and herder communities, often linked to mounting competition for scarce natural resources. Faced with increasingly unpredictable rainfall patterns, communities are struggling to find suitable pastures or fertile agricultural land. Consequently, pre-existing cleavages have increasingly escalated into violent conflict when transhumant herds encroach onto unharvested fields, or when farmers sow their crops in designated transhumant corridors. Amidst growing communal tensions, there is a clear need for more inclusive and effective governance of shared resources to help maintain and restore social cohesion. Moreover, stronger, more capacitated governance, will also reduce the space for armed groups to capitalize on frustrations among aggrieved communities, which amplifies violence in an already vulnerable region.

THE TRANSHUMANCE TRACKING TOOL (TTT)

To better assist governments in their support to displaced and vulnerable persons affected by communal conflict and violence, IOM built on its longstanding experience in data collection and community stabilization in WCA to establish the Transhumance Tracking Tool (TTT) in 2018. The TTT is centered around four main components as shown in the adjacent figure. Through these components, the TTT maps (in)formal transhumant corridors, monitors transhumance flows, and captures real-time information on events and conflicts related to livestock mobility throughout the region, which is then shared with local governance systems to mitigate tensions before they escalate into violent conflict. Data are collected following the transhumance calendar, and dashboards are generated either monthly or every three months and shared with local actors and governance mechanisms.

Transhumance Tracking Tool

- Herders and cattle mapping
- Flow Monitoring
- Early Warning System
- Individual Surveys

For the implementation of the TTT, IOM relies on a network of 750,000 sentinels through a strong partnership with the Réseau Bilital Maroubé (RBM), a regional transhumant network of local herders' associations representing herders in 11 countries in WCA. In tandem, IOM works with pastoral organizations to provide reliable data to support evidence-based, inclusive policy /- and decision-making on transhumance. In complement to the data component, IOM utilizes its extensive networks of local stakeholders and experience in community stabilization to strengthen local governance structures by mobilizing local stakeholders around the TTT data reports through inclusive and participative dialogue platforms. With technical support from IOM, these community-driven platforms contribute to enhanced social cohesion through climate-adapted initiatives favoring more sustainable management of shared resources, environmental rehabilitation, inclusive job creation, and improved access to basic services. By providing key data on transhumant mobility, the TTT is a strategic tool to capacitate local conflict resolution mechanisms to prevent and reduce tensions among farmer and herder communities, as well as to inform the definition of tailored solutions to the climate, conflict, and mobility nexus.

As of January 2023, the TTT is active in Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone through the support of key financial partners (EU Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, UN Peacebuilding Fund, and USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs). IOM is currently also implementing the TTT in Somalia and seeks to expand it further in East Africa, as well as in the Central African Republic.

Contributing to the mitigation of conflict over natural resources between farmer and herder communities in Adamawa state, Nigeria (COMITAS)

In Nigeria, IOM deploys the Transhumance Tracking Tool with funds from the EU service for Foreign Policy Instruments to prevent and mitigate conflict over natural resources between farmer and herder communities. Through an integrated approach, IOM has partnered with Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground to restore social cohesion by enhancing local trust in authorities and reinforce collaboration between and within communities.

To this effect, the TTT dashboards and Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) system have provided reliable data on transhumant mobility allowing traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, community dialogue platforms, and governance frameworks to define targeted plans and policies, and propose concrete solutions to improve resource management and sustainable livelihoods. More specifically, through IOM's community-based planning methodology, communities have implemented Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) that, among others, rehabilitated basic social infrastructure, provided vocational skills training and job creation, supported participatory theatre for peacebuilding, and raised awareness about climate change and natural resource management. The awareness raising was then accompanied by targeted initiatives for climate change adaptation through reforestation and good agricultural practices. By combining real-time data on transhumant mobility with targeted interventions, IOM's TTT has proven a reliable tool to mitigate conflict over natural resources in a conflict-sensitive and climate-adaptive manner.