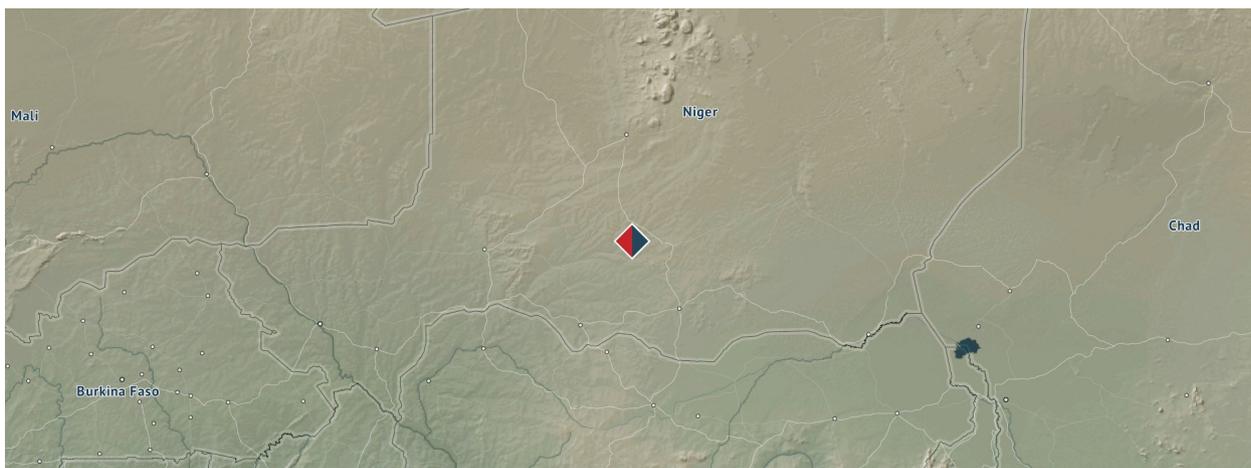




Conflict Factsheet

Pastoralist and Farmer-Herder Conflicts in the Sahel

Type of conflict Main	Intensity 4
Conflict Locality Africa	Time 1944 –ongoing
Countries Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Senegal, Nigeria, Niger, Eritrea, Chad, Sudan	Resources Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water



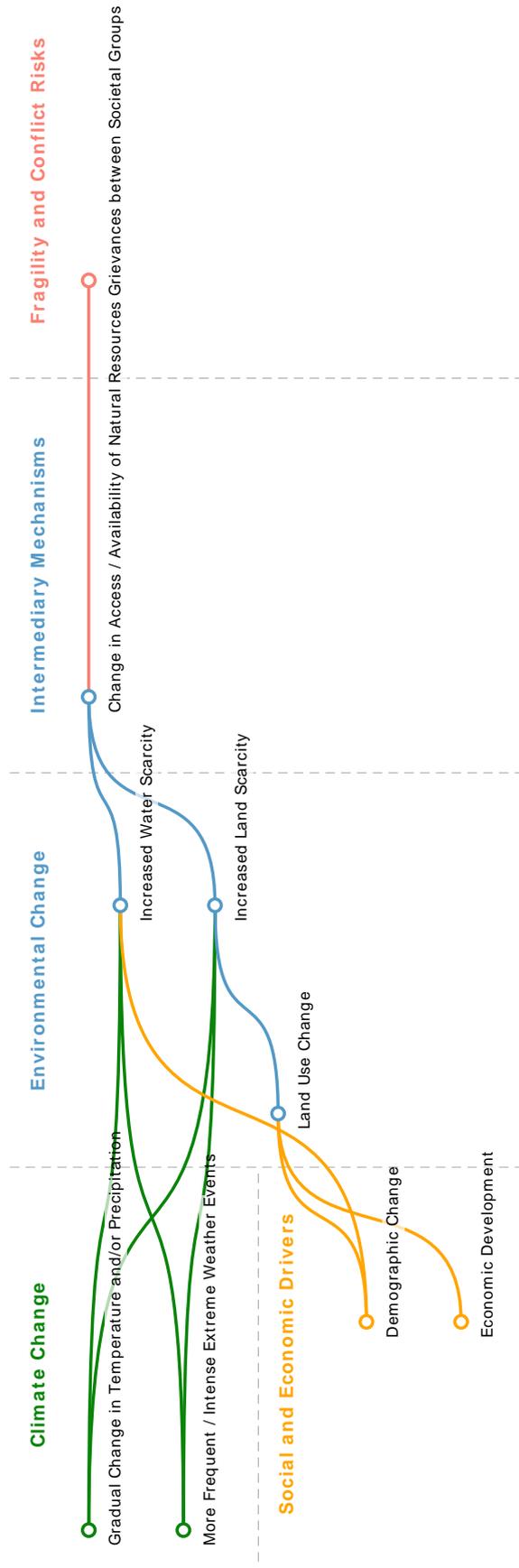
Local resource competition

Conflict Summary

Conflicts between farmers and herders, and between different pastoralist groups, in the Sahel frequently revolve around issues of contested land use (grazing vs. crop cultivation) and access to water. At times these conflicts are triggered, or exacerbated, by drought-induced movements of pastoralists. Livestock raiding is a further source of tensions and violence between different herding communities.



Conceptual Model



Context Factors



Agricultural / Pastoral Land, Water



Dysfunctional Resource Management
 Insecure Land Tenure
 Water-stressed Area

History of Conflict
 Low Level of Economic Development
 Overreliance on Specific Supplies
 Political Marginalization
 Unresponsive Government
 Weak Institutions



Conflict History

Farmer-herder conflicts between different pastoralist groups in Sahel states are mostly local, sporadic and low intensity conflicts without direct involvement of governments and government security forces. At times they can, however, trigger or interact with more violent conflicts (see [Communal conflicts in Darfur](#)). They frequently revolve around issues concerning land use (crop cultivation vs. grazing), including disputes over access to water and livestock raiding.

Resource scarcity, livestock mobility and farmer-herder conflicts

Securing access to water is a crucial prerequisite to pastoralists' mobility and hence, their ability to cope with difficult weather conditions in the Sahel. Farmers, on the other hand, have profited from agricultural modernisation and favourable land reforms to gradually expand cultures onto pastoral land. As farmers and herders utilise the same land, conflicts can arise, especially when herds encroach on cultivated areas damaging crops, or when water resources become heavily strained. Such conflicts are frequently exacerbated by government policies which encourage settled agriculture and common perceptions of nomadic pastoralism as unproductive and detrimental to the environment. Additionally, there is also a general lack of government engagement in pastoralist areas ([Benjaminsen, Alinon, Buhaug and Buseth, 2012](#); [Schilling, Scheffran and Link, 2010](#)).

Livestock rustling and conflicts over grazing rights

Conflicts between different pastoralists groups are frequently sparked by livestock thefts and conflicts over grazing rights. Indeed, this is especially true when different nomadic groups try to simultaneously access the same area. Although livestock rustling has always been an integral part of pastoralists' culture as a means of restocking herds after droughts and of providing young herders with bride wealth, this practice has arguably become more violent due to civil wars and the increased availability of weapons in the Sahel region. Political elites and insurgent movements have also exploited pastoralist conflicts to further their own causes ([De Haan, Dubern, Garancher, and Quintero, 2014](#); [UCDP, 2014](#)).

Communal conflicts and climate change

Both, farmer-herder conflicts and conflicts between pastoralists can be triggered or exacerbated by climate change. Increased drought frequency and severity, for instance, can force nomadic herders to change their itineraries and compete for water and land with other communities. Gradual changes in weather conditions can also open up new opportunities for cultivation and incite agricultural encroachment onto pastoral land. In the absence of effective regulations and conflict mitigation mechanisms this can lead to communal violence ([Benjaminsen et al., 2012](#); [Ba & Benjaminsen, 2009](#)).

Marginalisation, vulnerability and violence in pastoralist areas

Pastoralist regions in Sahel states remain marginalised areas, characterised by poor public services, an absence of effective security provisions and a general lack of government involvement. Customary institutions of resource management and conflict mitigation in pastoralist areas have gradually eroded in the presence of overlapping, albeit ineffective formal regulations ([Unruh & Abdul-Jalil, 2012](#); [De Haan](#)



et al., 2014). These factors contribute to the vulnerability of pastoralist areas to climate change and their propensity for violent conflicts.

Although commitments to pastoralists by state and regional authorities have often remained unfulfilled, there has been some progress in addressing the underlying causes of pastoralist and farmer-herder conflicts in recent times.

Resolution Efforts

Policymakers in Sahel states have become increasingly aware of the necessity to address the root causes of violent conflict in pastoralist areas.

Pastoral laws

Several countries, including Mauretania, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, have passed pastoral laws and codes, which define the rights of pastoralists and provide a more coherent framework to organise the common use of rangelands by different farming and herding communities. Implementation of these codes is still incipient in many parts of the Sahel, generally due to a lack of funding but they have already helped to curb the number of farmer-herder conflicts in some locations (De Haan et al., 2014).

Informal institutions and civil society initiatives

Pastoralist associations are active in Mauretania, Niger, and Senegal but have yet to convince policymakers to introduce improved range management practices. Local and informal institutions are an important tool of conflict mitigation but need to be further strengthened and merged with formal local institutions. Furthermore, the provision of veterinary services in certain regions has helped reduce pastoralist vulnerability (De Haan et al., 2014).

Need for further coordination and cooperation

Recurrent situations of insecurity are a major impediment to pastoralist development and peacebuilding in the Sahel region. Development and security initiatives need to be better coordinated in many places and trust in the government amongst rural communities needs to be built. In addition, there is a need for more cooperation between Sahelian states in order to tackle trans-boundary violence and arms trafficking and to address security issues linked with large refugee populations.



Intensities & Influences



INTENSITIES

International / Geopolitical Intensity



Human Suffering



INFLUENCES

Environmental Influences



Societal Influences



Violent Conflict

Yes



Salience with nation

Regional



Mass displacement

More than 100.000 or more than 10% of the country's population are displaced within the country.



Cross Border Mass Displacement

Best estimate that more than 100.000 or more than 10% of country population are displaced across borders.



Resolution Success

Reduction in Violence

There was no reduction in violence.

-

Resolve of displacement problems

Displacement continues to cause discontent and/or other problems.

-

Reduction in geographical scope

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.

-

Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.

-

Grievance Resolution

Grievances have been mostly ignored.



Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

There has been no reduction in intensity

-



Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

<p>Cooperation</p> <p>Cooperation between Sahelian states can be effective in tackling trans-boundary violence and arms trafficking, and in addressing security issues linked with large refugee populations.</p>	0
<p>Strengthening legislation and law enforcement</p> <p>Countries such as Mauretania, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have passed pastoral laws and codes, defining the rights of pastoralists and the use of rangelands.</p>	3
<p>Promoting social change</p> <p>Local and informal institutions, such as pastoralist associations, need to be further strengthened and merged with formal local institutions as they can be important tools for conflict mitigation.</p>	1

Resources and Materials

References with URL

[Ba, B. & Benjaminsen, T.A. \(2009\). Farmer–herder conflicts, pastoral marginalisation and corruption: A case study from the inland Niger delta of Mali. *The Geographical Journal*, 175\(1\), 71-81](#)

[Benjaminsen, T.A., Alinon, K., Buhaug, H., & Buseth, J.T. \(2012\). Does climate change drive land-use conflicts in the Sahel? *Journal of Peace Research*, 49\(1\), 97-111](#)

[De Haan, C., Dubern, E., Garancher, B., & Quintero, C. \(2014\). Pastoralism development in the Sahel: A road to stability? Washington, DC: The World Bank](#)

[Schilling, J.P., Scheffran, J., & Link, M. \(2010\). Climate change and land use conflicts in Northern Africa. *Nova Acta Leopoldina*, 112\(384\), 173-182](#)

[UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program. Retrieved Nov. 17, 2014 from UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia: Uppsala University](#)

[Unruh, J., Abdul-Jalil, A.A \(2012\). Land rights in Darfur: Institutional flexibility, policy and adaptation to environmental change. *Natural Resources Forum*, 36\(4\), 274-284](#)

Further information

<https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/pastoralist-and-farmer-herder-conflicts-sahel>