



CapEx in supporting pastoral development

Cross-border transhumance corridors in West Africa

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Key messages

- Cross-border mobility is a resilience practice of pastoralist communities in West Africa. The mobility of animal and their herders is motivated by the search for pasture and water as well as to avoid areas affected by livestock disease or to engage in livestock trade. The movements vary greatly in distance and may take place within a country or into bordering countries.
- In recent years, conflicts between crop farmers and pastoralists have become recurrent. These conflicts arise in the “host” countries or regions into which the herds move.
- The various countries in ECOWAS (Economic Community of the West African States) have formulated and passed legislation and legal texts, but these have not been put into operation.
- Pastoralist development projects and programmes are helping to improve transhumance practices by establishing infrastructure along the livestock corridors. However, this infrastructure is still insufficient.



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CapEx series on pastoralism

Pastoralism is practised on a quarter of the globe's surface and provides a source of food and livelihood for millions of people, especially in areas that are too dry or high for reliable production of food crops. For the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) work in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, pastoralism is a key domain. Having recognised the value of learning from experiences in development cooperation across countries and regions, the Subgroup Pastoralism in the SDC network for Agriculture and Food Security undertook an internal learning process called "Capitalisation of experiences in supporting pastoral development" (CapEx Pastoralism for short). The Subgroup members identified issues about which they wanted to learn more, so as to be more effective in supporting the development of pastoral economies and livelihoods. During the CapEx process, they compiled information and formulated texts on selected topics. This brief is one of a series of briefs that came out of this process. The briefs are intended primarily for SDC and its partners at country and regional level, particularly in West and Eastern Africa, and SDC staff in Switzerland, but also for other development practitioners and donors engaged in pastoral development.

1. Introduction

Transhumance into the southern part of the Sahel developed in the 1970s with population growth in the Sahel and the ensuing crisis in the livestock sector. Effects of climate change observed in the subregion led to intensification of these movements. Thus, countries such as Benin, Togo, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, like countries in the Sahel region, have become host or transit countries. Transhumant livestock production can be a source of conflict between crop farmers in the host countries and the pastoralists from the Sahel countries because of pressure on the shared natural resources. In addition, it should be noted that advances in veterinary medicine and the emergence of large herd owners have led to an increase in livestock numbers. All these factors combined have caused pastoralists to make cyclic movements into arable and agropastoral areas in efforts to maximise the use of pasture in these areas. Nonetheless, this form of livestock production contributes greatly to food self-sufficiency.

Key terms

Grazing area is an area identified, demarcated and specially reserved for grazing livestock. It may or may not be developed. It must have good-quality and abundant pasture and be able to receive a large number of animals. It should not be fragmented by crop fields or closed vegetation formations (i.e. dense dry forest). The size should take into account not only the quantity and quality of pasture but also the pasture carrying capacity.

Transhumance is an animal production practice characterised by regular seasonal movements between complementary ecological areas, whereby a few individuals accompany the herds while the largest part of pastoral group remains sedentary. The herds generally leave a disequilibrium environment, where pasture has become scarce, and move toward areas that still appear to have abundant pasture. In this context, transhumance in West Africa may be considered as a form of adaptation to these environments, making good use of the ecological complementarity between the Sahelian and the Sudanian zones.

Cross-border or long-distance transhumance refers to long-range movements of animals (north–south and then south–north). This kind of transhumance always involves a country of origin and a host country. The areas crossed are called "transit zones" and may involve a third country. In West Africa, long-distance transhumance takes place from January to May during the dry season. The herds may cover several hundred kilometres. This type of transhumance involves mainly cattle, which need larger quantities and better quality of fodder than do sheep or goats.

Transhumance corridor: This is a strip of land reserved for livestock passage to access pasture, a source of water or other herd infrastructure such as a livestock market, vaccination area or livestock-holding area. Waterpoints, grazing areas, markets, salt licks, fords, resting areas and passage routes are important elements in cross-border transhumance. Accommodation and trails are developed to allow animals to pass through farming areas or to allow access to water. Both farmers and pastoralists recognise the usefulness of the corridors as a factor for peace. Nonetheless, crops are sometimes sown in the corridors and signs have often been removed from the demarcated corridors. This can often be explained by poor monitoring and because the local people were not consulted. Characteristics of a transhumance corridor include:

- Width from 50 to 100m depending on the extent of land-use pressure;
- Multidirectional depending on the path of livestock movements, availability of resources and pastoral infrastructure, and use of the land for cropping;
- Straight or curved path depending on detours that may need to be taken;
- Usually marked by clear signs appropriate for the area (paint marks on trees, planted vegetation, beacons, plaques etc).

Conflict between farmers and pastoralists: There have always been tensions between crop farmers and pastoralists. One cause of dispute has been the straying of animals into farmers' fields. Conflicts often arise when herders are caught in the act. Other groups of actors refer mostly to damage caused by the transhumant pastoralists in the fields. Damages registered are often material in nature (destruction of dwellings, destruction of fields, serious or mortal injuries to livestock etc) as well as human (loss of life or serious injuries). Conflict resolution committees are often called upon for mediation and amicable settlement, accompanied or not by fines. However, most of the disputes are settled in court through submission of cases by parties to the police or directly to the court.

2. Specific cases

The two following cases give examples of: i) participatory development of a transhumance map in Benin; and ii) a methodological approach to setting up a transhumance corridor and management committees in West Africa.

Case 1: Participatory mapping of local and cross-border transhumance¹

Every year, Benin receives immigrant pastoralists from the bordering areas in Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria. Often, the host areas for the incoming herds are classified forests. The riverside bourgou plains are also used. These immigrant pastoralists have local intermediaries or facilitators, who are individuals or pastoralist organisations settled in the areas around the forests. The pastoralists come into Benin in search of pasture, water and security for both their animals and themselves. Other reasons include avoiding cultivated areas near their home bases, maintaining a long tradition and livestock trade.

Public-sector initiatives in collaboration with development partners are underway in participatory resource management involving the local people and the transhumant pastoralists. A study was carried out in order to provide the relevant authorities with spatial reference data on the transhumance corridors and the infrastructure for transhumant herds. The study enabled the mapping of transhumance routes at both national and departmental (county) level and provided maps of: i) entry points into Benin and routes normally used by transhumant herds; ii) veterinary posts along these routes; iii) waterpoints and other infrastructure for the transhumant herds; and iv) areas of tension related to transhumance in Benin.

¹ Source : MISPC / DGAI (2014)



Map of corridor for pastoral herds (Credit: Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation)

Three steps were followed: i) searching for planimetric documents by making an inventory of recent mapping documents covering each county; ii) GPS (Global Positioning System) surveys of demarcated transhumance corridors, waterpoints and grazing areas, livestock-holding areas and points where transhumant herds enter into Benin, carried out by a group composed of local authorities, local residents (especially crop farmers and livestock-keepers), members of the transhumance management committee, a forestry officer and the consultancy team; and iii) socio-economic studies primarily to identify existing and latent conflict zones in each county. These studies also helped identify transhumance corridors, demarcated routes, waterpoints, grazing areas, stock-holding areas and entry points of the transhumant herds that had not been previously noted.

Case 2: Methodological approach for setting up a transhumance corridor²

As part of a regional project to support livestock productivity in West Africa (PRAPE), the APIDev-NGO (Association for Promotion of Sustainable Development Initiatives – Non-Governmental Organisation) – as an implementation partner of Acting for Life with European Union (EU) funding – is

seeking to safeguard the transhumance corridors and access to livestock trade. The methodological approach was as follows:

i) Situation analysis: a) Gaining knowledge of the environment and the local actors: this is a crucial step in the process because it is at this level that one meets the local representatives and resource persons and can explain and inform all the stakeholders involved in the planned process of developing infrastructure and can collect data related to livestock numbers. It is thus possible to have a complete picture of the initial situation in order to be able to track changes over time. b) Identifying and defining the sites of the infrastructure to be developed: in collaboration with representatives of the local people from different socio-professional groups at different levels, identifying through their suggestions the different sites for building the pastoral infrastructure, complying with the needs of the local people. This is done by making “transects” along the paths indicated by the local people. GPS is used to take geographical coordinates and to geo-reference the sites mutually agreed upon. The results, processed by GIS (Geographic Information System), allow localisation and mapping of the different structures to be established.

ii) Defining pastoral routes: a) Setting up a demarcation committee chosen by the village general assembly: the criteria to guide the selection of committee members are determined by the villagers. The committee must have representation from the different actors concerned (pastoralists, farmers, agropastoralists). The village assembly defines the number and profile of the committee members and their functions. b) The principles are: highlight and take into account the perceptions of the different actors; communication among actors in order to agree on sustainable solutions to problems in

² Source : APIDev ONG (2014)

managing the agrosylvopastoral resources; and defining conditions for success at the level of the village committee and the technical support team.

iii) Actual demarcation: a) Activities involving information, communication and discussion at county, district or village level. The activities on the ground at village level include: identifying and counting the residents along the routes; mapping the area in order to identify corridors to be marked; setting up a committee to demarcate the transhumance corridors; planning the demarcation activities in order to arrange meetings with the actors/users in the areas concerned; identifying the regular livestock routes; and marking the corridor or grazing area using signs agreed by all actors. The information is consolidated at the district or county level. The best time for doing the demarcation depends on each site but it normally in the period between the last harvests and the beginning of the first rains (dry season, especially after the wild bush fires have passed).

iv) Validating the demarcated grazing areas and corridors: The demarcation committee gives feedback to the village assembly about the marked corridors and grazing areas. Amendments are considered, if needed, and corrections made. It is important to inform all local and foreign users about the demarcated corridors and the rules for use so as to ensure compliance. A local convention for management of the corridors and grazing areas and for compliance with the rules for their use is drawn up at the village meeting and communicated to the entire community. The local authorities take note and orders are formulated to give them legal force.

v) Setting up a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanism: The M&E mechanism is defined together with the community: a) M&E method: planning and assessing activities, data collection, reporting, field visits, meeting; b) people and institutions involved: committee for managing conflict or transhumance at community level, national transhumance committee, police force, town-hall head of department of land and environment, president of the commission for land and environment of the County Council, local mayor, NGOs and projects, devolved State department in charge of livestock and protection of natural resources; c) indicators: number of stray animals, number of conflicts managed, number of fields cultivated in the corridors, rate or signs of pasture degradation; d) Tools: planning and assessment of the activities, rules governing the corridors and grazing areas, monitoring forms for corridors and grazing areas, activity report; e) Frequency of monitoring varies depending on the above-mentioned monitoring parameters.

This process enabled a safeguarding of the transhumance corridors and a reduction in conflicts between crop farmers and pastoralists.



Fulani Bunaji herd on transhumance along a demarcated corridor (Credit: Salihou Alidou)

3. Lessons for development cooperation

3.1 Analysing the situation

Pastoralists move frequently with their herds in search of good-quality pasture and water as well as to escape animal diseases and avoid areas of conflict. The success of their production system depends on a high degree of flexibility in herd movements, which may take different paths between districts in a country and across international borders, depending on changes in circumstances over time. Moreover, pastoralists use natural resources only seasonally, often with traditional rights of secondary land use such as to graze harvested fields, from which the primary land users – the crop farmers – gain soil fertility from the manure. To maintain flexibility in resource access, pastoralists have to engage in continuous negotiations with other resource users. Strengthening the institutions – both traditional and modern – that allow negotiations over rights of access to pasture and water is an important aspect of securing pastoral mobility.

All ECOWAS member States have endorsed the securing of pastoral mobility. Challenges faced by cross-border transhumance include: i) adaptation of transhumance to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, ii) better integration of cross-border transhumance in development policies, legislation and control at national level but applied consistently in the subregion; iii) response to the demand for livestock products (meat and milk) resulting from high population growth and growing urbanisation. Most of the subregional organisations – ECOWAS, WAEMU (West African Economic and Monetary Union), CILSS (Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel), African Union – regard cross-border transhumance as important for safeguarding and increasing livestock production, and various measures have been taken to make better use of pastoral resources (FAO 2012).

Several technical and financial partners are working on cross-border transhumance issues. PRAPE operates in five WAEMU countries (Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, north Togo and north Benin); it is implemented by Acting for Life with EU funding. In four pilot communities in Benin, SDC's rural development support programme has contributed to safeguarding transhumance and access corridors for livestock. A coordinated approach has been tested with all actors (pastoralists, farmers, local authorities, decentralised state departments) in demarcating livestock corridors, installing beacons and setting up corridor management committees. This is also being tested in Niger with funds from SDC Niamey through the livestock sector support programme. A Swiss foundation (HEKS) in Niger is implementing a programme to develop international transhumance routes in the Maradi region. Another national project to support milk and meat value chains took charge of mapping and beaconing livestock corridors in 23 municipalities in Benin. The project for reducing transhumance pressure for better conservation of the protected areas of the WAP (W–Arly–Pendjari) complex is financed by the EU, IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), Citizens' Laboratory and the municipalities of Pama, Diapaga (Burkina Faso), Tanguiéta, Banikoara (Benin), Say and Torodi (Niger) for beaconing of corridors No. 2 and 3 in the ECOWAS area.

In a nutshell, most of the developments related to securing livestock corridors/access and grazing areas concern the ECOWAS corridors No. 2 and 3 and their branches. The ECOWAS corridors No. 4 and 5 suffer from insufficient or lack of development. Yet, these are the corridors that bring the largest numbers of transhumant herds into Benin, notably those coming from neighbouring Niger and the giant country of Nigeria. The Swiss Cooperation offices in Niger and Benin are in dialogue to seek synergy in their implementation of the different programmes.

3.2 Identifying entry points for development cooperation

The different community programmes in West Africa highlight the need to:

- Develop a strategic regional approach for an integrated common geographic area of the Sahel countries (Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali), as the main countries of origin for livestock trade, and the bordering countries ranging from Côte d'Ivoire to Nigeria, through Ghana, Togo and Benin. In these sub-areas, the stakes are different. Therefore, the approach to be developed would be based on the cross-border axes, strengthening cross-border governance and information flows, encouraging investment in priority areas with regard to problems and conflicts: i.e. border municipalities, densely

populated areas being crossed, water access areas, livestock concentration areas and transhumance hosting areas;

- Involve not only regional and national institutions but also umbrella pastoralist organisations: This approach would have to be community based to ensure proper steering, joint assessment and harmonisation of policies between counties of origin and the host countries, while fully involving subregional pastoral organisations;
- Develop cross-border arrangements and control of transhumance with the following activities: i) updating, marking and protecting transhumance corridors; ii) developing amenities related to the corridors; iii) setting up animal health infrastructure along the borders; iv) facilitating the use of the international transhumance certificate (ITC); v) reviewing and harmonising the legal texts on cross-border transhumance; and vi) setting up a regional framework for resolving and preventing conflicts.
- Develop a regional charter and promote a regional transhumance observatory through the following activities: i) setting up and ensuring operation of a regional transhumance observatory; ii) developing a regional transhumance charter.

3.3 Interacting with policy processes

Improved management of natural resources through organisation of cross-border transhumance and development of the routes is one of the six priority areas chosen by ECOWAP (ECOWAS regional agricultural policy), based on their contribution to reducing poverty and food insecurity, enhancing regional integration, and feasibility in the short and medium terms.

Advocacy by development agencies through policy dialogue with State and subregional institutions is also important to strengthen the pastoralist umbrella organisations so that they can lobby for taking their members' needs into account in national and regional policies. Development agencies should support the State governments and the pastoralist organisations to mobilise funds for development of infrastructure in the pastoral areas.

3.4 Key principles to guide the development-cooperation process

The main actors and users of the natural resources have different perceptions and interests that need to be highlighted and given consideration. Agrosylvopastoral resource management requires communication among the actors in order to reach agreed and sustainable solutions to the problems. Rational natural resource management requires a process of learning, dialogue, negotiation and collaboration among the various actors. An inclusive, multi-actor and participatory approach needs to be developed and should be applied at all levels from local to the subregion.

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