



Lessons learned in promoting accountability and resolution of natural resource-based conflicts in Africa

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23 November 2020

Questions

- *What lessons are there on what works to promote accountability and justice for communities in natural resource-based conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa?*
- *How can security providers play a positive role?*

Contents

1. Summary
2. Mediation of conflicts over natural resources
3. Informal and alternative forms of dispute resolution
4. Nigeria-specific evidence
5. References

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1. Summary

This report looks at lessons learned around the promotion of accountability and resolution of conflicts over natural resources, with a focus on Africa, specifically Nigeria. This rapid review focuses on water and land conflicts specifically, although some of the literature refers to natural resources more broadly to also include mining and fossil fuels (oil). Key measures focused on that may help societies to achieve accountability and resolution in conflicts over water and/or land in Africa include formal institutions (reform of public institutions and policies), informal or traditional mechanisms (such as community-based peace initiatives, customary rules, dialogues) and hybrid mechanisms (such as land tribunals).

There is a vast literature on natural resource conflicts in Africa, much of which focuses on the “resource curse” and the drivers and dynamics of conflict; less literature focuses on resolution mechanisms, specifically accountability or the role of security providers. However, this body of literature is still significant (especially in relation to community-based and traditional peace mechanisms in Africa). There is a strong focus in the literature on farmer-herder conflicts in Africa (and Nigeria). This rapid review mostly draws on academic sources of literature, although some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and donor literature is also utilised.¹

Key findings:

- Natural resource disputes occasionally escalate into violence in Africa, this is more likely to occur where there is no mutually agreed dispute resolution process (African Union Panel of the Wise, 2019).
- Interventions to address ‘farmer-herder conflict’ must be grounded in a sound understanding of pastoralism; must change the narrative around insecurity and pastoralism at all levels (i.e. representing pastoralism as an old-fashioned, unproductive system); establish local platforms to listen, negotiate and resolve conflict; invest in intangible infrastructure (such as traditional organisations) alongside physical works; and restore government legitimacy and the rule of law where jihadist groups have successfully mobilised local resentments (Krätli & Toulmin, 2020, pp. 79-80).
- Western approaches to conflict resolution tend to focus on litigation, whereas indigenous African conflict resolution strategies focus on reconciliation (Okeke-Ogbuafor et al., 2019). In particular, alternative forms of dispute resolutions have emerged outside the judicial process held by the formal courts, as the formal litigation processes is often expensive, prolonged, and fraught with technicalities (Home, 2020).
- Successful alternative dispute resolutions for natural resource conflicts in Africa seem to have followed traditional dispute-resolution practices and prevailing societal norms and values. However, these may not be compatible with human rights law. Alternative dispute resolutions should be conducted in local languages if they are to be locally acceptable, and should adopt a flexible approach to types of evidence accepted (Home, 2020).

¹ See also Cooper, R. (2018). Natural Resources Management Strategies in the Sahel. K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies. <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/14277> and Bolton, L. (2020). Lessons from conflict resolution interventions. K4D Helpdesk Report 782. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies. <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/15214>

- The use of land tribunals, a hybrid form of judicial administration, is increasing in Africa. Although their success has been mixed. Reasons put forward for this include inadequate resourcing, poorly defined mandates, corruption, or lack of legitimacy (Home, 2020).
- Community peace structures are especially relevant in situations of chronic conflict, and disputes over natural resources (Peace Direct & Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2019).
- Key lessons on community-based peacebuilding include: responsiveness and adaptability of these mechanisms is key to their impact and success (especially being close to the ground and local knowledge and ability to respond quickly to prevent escalation to violence); successful community-based peace structures tend to reflect the diversity of their communities and voices; the inclusiveness of peace initiatives can have a positive impact on local governance more broadly; many take the form of partnerships with (local) NGOs; they operate on a small-scale, which can limit their ability to scale-up to tackle wider conflict dynamics (Peace Direct & Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2019).
- Dialogue is key in informal mechanisms. Co-benefits of resolution and cooperation are also important to emphasise (Mbih, 2020). To be of lasting impact in building peace processes, dialogue between community representatives needs commitment from credible leaders, financial resources and long-term external support.
- Literature from Nigeria highlights the importance of continuing to invest in local dispute resolution, and social cohesion among communities needs to be built at the same time, with integrated interventions (Mercy Corps, 2017). Community-level interventions should be paired with robust advocacy campaigns (Mercy Corps, 2019). Informal institutions like traditional rulers and local village conflict management committees through use of dialogue, cooperation and education are some of the most effective conflict management strategies in Nigeria (Dimelu et al., 2016). Although others report that the effectiveness of traditional authorities has been compromised in parts of Nigeria, and some communities prefer the formal, Western litigation approach to resolution (Akov, 2017). The effectiveness of voluntary policing in farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria has also been questioned (Onwughalu & Obiorah, 2017).
- Participation is critical to foster accountability processes in natural and community resources management in sub-Saharan Africa, in any resolution mechanism (formal and informal). Participation of all levels and echelons of a community needs to be ensured (Musavengane & Siakwah, 2020). This is particularly true for marginalised groups such as women and youth.

2. Mediation of conflicts over natural resources

Justice and accountability

Although there is no universally accepted definition of justice, there is broad agreement that it focuses on fairness and equity – i.e. concerned with fair treatment or due reward and the equitable distribution of ‘things’ (Dobson 1998; Maiese, 2003; Schroeder and Pisupati 2010 cited in Sowman & Wynberg, 2014, p. 8).

According to Bukari (2013 cited in Issifu, 2016, p. 146) successful resolution of any conflict should be based on a human centred approach, comprising of the improvement of security and good relations among people, as well as the improvement of human well-being and rural development. The need for accountability in conflict resolution is clear but the type of process that is suitable in any given situation will depend on the context. The range of measures that may help societies to achieve accountability commonly include (Democratic Progress Institute, 2015, p. 8):²

- Prosecutions through national or international courts and the related issue of amnesty;
- Truth-seeking, through truth commissions, for example;
- Reparations for victims, including symbolic forms, such as memorialisation;
- Reform of public institutions, particularly in the justice and security sectors; and
- Other, 'non-formal' initiatives, undertaken by civil society and 'traditional' approaches to accountability may also promote accountability and reconciliation.

Conflicts over natural resources

A report by the African Union Panel of the Wise (PoW, 2019, p. 4) on improving the mediation and resolution of natural resource-related conflicts across Africa, emphasises that **most conflicts over natural resources in Africa are resolved quickly, without international intervention**. Occasionally, however, these disputes can escalate into violence and this is **more likely to occur “where there is no mutually agreed dispute resolution process”**. Furthermore, disputes over natural resource also are “more likely to lead to violence if they overlay existing ethnic, political or religious differences, or in the context of widespread corruption and organized crime” (African Union Panel of the Wise, 2019, p. 4).

The PoW identified a number of examples of good practice (at national and international levels) in Africa of the management, mediation and resolution of natural resource disputes and use of shared natural resources. Including (African Union Panel of the Wise, 2019, pp. 11-13):

- **Establishing a common understanding among conflicting parties of the dimensions of their dispute** (quantifying it) can be an important first step to finding creative solutions to resolving it. In many cases, the very process of assessing natural resources, and developing a shared understanding of a specific problem or mutual need, can be a first step toward building trust.
- **Environmental cooperation between divided groups often takes place in a series of steps that build trust and deepen relationships over time**. The pathway often starts with dialogue, then advances to information sharing, then to joint activities, and finally to coordinated or joint management.
- **While parties may have divergent views on the political front, they often share a common dependence on the same natural resource**. The resource interdependence

² Note these are related to conflict and reconciliation more broadly, not specifically to do with natural resources.

of communities with shared natural resources can serve as a strong incentive to communicate and cooperate across contested borders or religious and ethnic divisions.

- **Cooperation over natural resources and the environment often requires the engagement of stakeholders in ways that transcend traditional lines of power and authority.** A peace process is most resilient when stakeholders are engaged on multiple levels.

Farmer-herder conflicts

A recent paper from IIED on farmer-herder conflict in sub-Saharan Africa, emphasises that these groups **have a long history of cooperation**, and that “in many parts of Africa there has been strong complementarity between these livelihood systems and related forms of land use for generations” (Krätli & Toulmin, 2020, p. 7). Emphasising that it has been **this complementarity that has been disrupted**. They provide the following example to demonstrate this: “animal damage to crops is commonly accepted as the most frequent cause of conflict. But it is often, itself, just a link in a long chain of mismanagement, such as farmers cutting new fields in grazing areas or along established livestock passages, themselves the consequence of short-sighted or misguided land-tenure policies and poor governance” (Krätli & Toulmin, 2020, p. 7). The paper was largely desk-based work, validated through discussion with a reference group that included representation from pastoral civil society, and field-level engagement with a set of organisations and actors was also undertaken.

The paper reviewed several case study projects aimed at preventing and resolving farmer-herder conflicts, and draws several common issues (although recognises that each context is different):

- **The model of decentralisation followed in much of Africa has had mixed impacts.** If decentralisation is to live up to its potential, it needs to establish dialogue-spaces for resolving problems between groups, while minimising the practical impact of boundaries between each local government area (Krätli & Toulmin, 2020, p. 74).
- **Many areas suffer from long-term government neglect.** Investment in strengthening institutional arrangements is key to creating spaces for negotiation between parties to discuss land use and mobility patterns each season (Toulmin et al. 2015 cited in Krätli & Toulmin, 2020, p. 74). In the face of variable rainfall, there needs to be flexibility to leave options open and encourage real-time management of farmland, grazing and water resources, depending on the rains. Governments must regulate and control private investment in livestock production in pastoral areas, as it affects the availability of resources while escaping local regulation mechanisms (Krätli & Toulmin, 2020, p. 74).
- **Conflicts are often self-sustained processes.** Working with the media to move away from the current negative stereotyping of pastoralists is necessary. The political economy brought about by conflicts also helps sustain them, as certain people will always find multiple opportunities to gain economic advantage from disruption. There is a need, therefore, for opportunities and spaces for women and youth to contribute to institutions and processes, thus bringing their perspectives into focus (Krätli & Toulmin, 2020, p. 75).
- **Confusion between ‘customary’ and state/judicial procedures has created fertile ground for growing conflict, with often contradictory and inconsistent rules for accessing natural resources and managing conflict.** Building bridges between these

two structures would foster a common understanding and better accountability (Krätli & Toulmin, 2020, p. 75).

More specifically, the reference group consulted by the authors put forth the following "tested approaches for re-establishing relationships between groups after violent conflict" (Krätli & Toulmin, 2020, p. 79):

- Using local conventions or negotiated agreements.
- Shared learning about conflict management tools among principal structures and institutions that need to understand and master nested systems of law, spanning multiple landscapes and socio-political systems (e.g. Agence Française de Développement's (AFD) Programme Sécurisation des Systèmes Pastoraux (Pastoral Systems Security Program, PSSP) Zinder, Niger).
- Problem analysis, as carried out for pastoral water projects in Chad (AFD).
- The dialogue structures, training approaches and dissemination of legal knowledge on pastoralism used by Gestion Non-Violente des Conflits (Network for the Non-Violent Management of Conflicts, GENOVICO) in Niger, with ZFD³ and FNEN Daddo (National Federation of Breeders of Niger).
- Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA)'s Alliance Farming project⁴ in northwest Cameroon, which encourages pastoralists and farmers to find sustainable ways to use the land for the benefit of both communities (see section on Cameroon for more information). – See point 1 below.

The paper puts forth the following recommendations for those designing interventions to address 'farmer-herder conflict' (Krätli & Toulmin, 2020, pp. 79-80):

1. **Ground the work on conflict involving herders in a sound understanding of pastoralism**, the economic and ecological logic behind mobility, the potential complementarity with cropping and recognition of the contribution pastoral systems make to GDP and exports. Africa's drylands should be understood as regions where mobile livestock keepers use their expertise to harvest variable but high-value resources and play a valuable role in maintaining resilient landscape systems. For example, see Chad bullet point above.
2. **Change the narrative around insecurity and pastoralism at all levels:**⁵ Theorists and decision makers must stop representing pastoralism as an unproductive system locked in the past and battling against the odds in a hostile, resource-scarce environment. Instead, drylands need to be seen as offering an environment in which variability is the rule, and

³ ZFD is the Civil Peace Service of the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH). See also the GIZ programme on Civil Peace Service: Crisis prevention and conflict transformation in areas of cross-border transhumance in Niger, Benin and Burkina Faso. <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/31624.html>

⁴ See <https://mboscuda.org/2017/09/09/encouraging-the-sustainable-use-of-natural-resources/>

⁵ For example, Eke (2020) argues that the representation and perception of Fulani herders in Nigeria today as reflecting ancient stereotypes of nomadic peoples i.e. savages, is a factor in the conflict, as it shapes people's relationship with, and reception of, Fulani herders, and so must be included in conflict resolution.

where pastoral systems have specialised to make such variability work for food production.

3. **Establish local platforms to listen, negotiate and resolve conflict.** Public authorities have a critical role to play in providing an impartial, fair platform where rival groups can negotiate and resolve their problems. These local-level platforms need recognition and connection into the wider architecture of state institutions to strengthen consistent approaches to resolving conflict. These need to reflect the voices of different social and producer groups. See example of Cameroon below.
4. **Invest in intangible infrastructure alongside physical works.** People need credible and legitimate organisations to structure and manage land spaces and relations between different interest groups using an area. For example, in northern Kenya, investment in the traditional Boran organisation (dedha) greatly improved grazing management during droughts and led to lower herd mortality and higher milk production than neighbouring areas.
5. **Restore government legitimacy and the rule of law, in the current context, where jihadist groups have successfully mobilised local resentments.** For most of the population, improving livelihoods and creating economic opportunities — particularly for young people — would go a long way to restore the state's legitimacy. In parallel, there is a need to invest in strengthening relations between citizens and government institutions, building confidence in effective decision-making structures and promoting leadership training to ensure local democracy and accountability.

Role of international community

A report by Brown and Keating (2015) for Chatham House highlights how sometimes the international community gets involved in natural resource disputes if they are not able to be solved domestically. The international community (such as the UN, international NGOs and donors) can support domestic dispute resolution in a number of ways, including directly (bringing together protagonists for discussions) or indirectly (helping to create the conditions in which resolution of the dispute might become easier). Three key ways include: providing objective and impartial analysis and training; convening stakeholders; and supporting dispute-resolution processes. The report also highlights a number of weaknesses with the international community's response (Brown & Keating, 2015, pp. 21-23):

- **Erratic engagement;**
- **The 'backyard effect':** International intervention to support the resolution of resource disputes tends to take place where there is a big power differential or an international stakeholder (often the former colonial power) with a somewhat paternalistic interest in the dispute being settled.
- **Poorly timed interventions;**
- **Perceptions of meddling:** In the absence of a clear invitation from the protagonists, international involvement can seem like meddling.
- **Lack of self-awareness:** Ultimately, the international community struggles to understand and respond to these complex resource issues in a meaningful way. There tends to be a

lack of self-awareness that the international community is an intensely political actor, with powerful vested interests.

- **Tendency to ignore political issues:** This seems to be especially the case when dealing with disputes over the socio-environmental impacts of standalone projects and community-level conflict over land or water issues.
- **Lack of technical knowledge:** Despite the frequency of resource disputes, there are still relatively few mediation or conflict prevention specialists with a background in natural resource management issues.

Lack of participation

Participation is critical to foster accountability processes in natural and community resources management in sub-Saharan Africa, in any resolution mechanism (formal and informal). However, Musavengane and Siakwah (2020), using examples from Ghana and South Africa, caution that in practice there is a lack of full community participation (especially of the lower levels of society) in decision making at the grass-roots level in sub-Saharan Africa, even where participation takes place. Musavengane and Siakwah (2020, p. 1587) argue that “People who tend to represent the society during community consultation meetings are the elite of the society which leaves the lower echelons with representation without participation” and this has led “to loss of credibility in accounting for natural resources in sub-Saharan Africa”. It is hence vital that **“the elite of the society should maintain a critical distance in decision making and empower local community members to participate fairly during consultative processes”** (Musavengane & Siakwah, 2020, p. 1587).

3. Informal and alternative forms of dispute resolution

Hybrid formal-informal mechanisms – land tribunals in Africa

The literature broadly recognises **the role that the legacy of past colonial interventions has played in creating tensions between private, public and customary land tenure in Africa** (Home, 2020). Home (2020) explores the potential role of land tribunals as a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in Africa. Tribunals are “a hybrid form of judicial administration alongside the main court system, supposedly quicker and cheaper” (Home, 2020, p. 79). They come in many forms, address largely factual rather than legal issues, involve non-legally qualified members with expert knowledge, and usually take place near the location where the dispute arises. According to Home (2020, p. 79) “their relatively informal procedures make them more accessible and acceptable to the public.” They may use local languages and “can help inform local communities about their rights and obligations ...and connect with customary land tenure” (Home, 2020, p. 79). The emphasis is on fair and impartial processes.

The use of land tribunals is increasing in Africa. A number of traits where ADR has been used to try to settle land disputes in Africa are highlighted (Home, 2020, pp. 82-83):

- Few ADR mechanisms have performed satisfactorily in sub-Saharan Africa for various reasons: inadequate resourcing, poorly defined mandates, corruption, or lack of legitimacy.

- Successful ADR seems to have followed traditional dispute-resolution practices and prevailing societal norms and values. However, these may not be compatible with human rights law, particularly the AU Land Declaration on equitable access to land and related resources, including for youth and other landless and vulnerable groups, and women.
- Where the final verdict was supported by the community, not causing shame to disputants, implementation and enforcement are more easily achieved.
- The ADR mechanisms, if they are to be locally acceptable, should preferably be conducted in local languages, including the relevant land policies and laws.
- Decision-making bodies should adopt a flexible approach to types of evidence and proportional representation of women.
- The interaction between central, local and traditional authorities needs the valuation of land, assessment of compensation and issues of natural resources to recognise pre-existing land rights. In these areas, much ADR seems to have failed.

For example, in **Zambia** (Home, 2020, p. 85), a number of land disputes between different groups have emerged. Institutions dealing with land disputes include Land Tribunals, the Town and Country Planning Tribunal, the Magistrates Court and the High Court. The lands tribunal, established in 1995 as a low-cost alternative to the formal court system, is handicapped by its centralised nature, and limited capacity. Few Zambians are even aware of this legal option, due to a lack of funding for public awareness campaigns and the fact that most of the proceedings are conducted in English. Currently, the vast majority of land disputes are dealt with through local, traditional leaders, and can proceed through several ranks of leadership before reaching a resolution.

Community-based peace initiatives

Local peace committee is a generic, umbrella name for committees or other structures formed at the levels of a grassroot district, municipality, town or village with the aim of encouraging and facilitating inclusive peace making and peacebuilding processes within a local context (Olivier & Odendaal, 2008 cited in Issifu, 2016, p. 146). Other names include district peace advisory council, district multiparty liaison committee, village peace and development committee, committee for intercommunity relations, district peace council, and so on.

Peace Direct and Alliance for Peacebuilding (2019) looked at the effectiveness of local peacebuilding efforts, reviewing over 70 evaluations collected from a range of organisations and contexts across the world. In their chapter on **community based peace initiatives** they emphasise that these can take different forms, and that “**they are particularly good at resolving disputes over natural resources**” (Peace Direct & Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2019, p. 10). Grassroots peace initiatives based on local community structures are extremely common in the literature and well-represented in the evaluations the report reviewed. The report summarises the characteristics of these initiatives as (p. 10):

- Being ‘local’ in the purest sense of the word, typically covering a neighbourhood or district.
- Bringing together a representative selection of voices to resolve specific problems that have the potential to cause conflict and violence.

- Reflecting the underlying dynamics of their communities, often collaborating with and building on existing local power structures and processes.
- Defining and following a set of rules and procedures to maximize objectivity and fairness.
- Often being inclusive, involving women and men of different ages, and members of different ethnic communities and economic interest groups, along with local leaders.

Peace Direct and Alliance for Peacebuilding (2019, p. 21) draws a number of conclusions and lessons learned on community-based peacebuilding from its review:

- **Relevance in situations of long-term conflict and inadequate governance:** Community peace structures are especially relevant in situations of chronic conflict, as higher-level governance structures are often unable or unwilling to help resolve local disputes fairly.
- **Practical approaches, on a breadth of issues:** Community peace activists address with a wide set of issues (such as natural resource disputes, provision of justice) in a practical way, tackling issues on which they have legitimacy and traction, building peace from the bottom up.
- **Responsiveness and adaptability:** Many evaluations cite the responsiveness of community peace structures as being a direct result of their closeness to the ground and local knowledge, and of being untied to bureaucratic procedures. Their ability to respond quickly and adapt is potentially critical given the risk of small incidents escalating in situations of chronic conflict.
- **Inclusion:** Successful community-based peace structures tend to reflect the diversity of their communities, and allow people of different genders, ages and ethnicity to have their issues heard. Peace initiatives can be more progressive than their wider communities, for example in their approach to involving women, and providing migrants and refugees with a voice. However, such openness is not fully accepted everywhere, and evaluations note that some local voices were raised against it.
- **Local governance:** According to evaluators and the community members they consulted, the inclusiveness of peace initiatives can have a positive impact on local governance more broadly. Since improved governance is one of the keys to positive, sustained peace, local peace structures are thus making a significant indirect contribution to peace in the long term. Although in some circumstances, community-based peace structures can face challenges in establishing legitimacy and a 'licence to operate'.
- **Partnerships with NGOs:** Many of the examples given in the review have been of communities supported by NGOs, and community peace structures seem well-suited to collaboration with local and international NGOs. Several of the evaluations explore this, finding that local knowledge and capacity combined with external knowledge and access to resources is often very effective. However, others have noted the risk that outsiders – especially international organisations, or the national government – can undermine community initiatives by co-opting them, drawing them into inappropriate activities, or providing them with forms of support on which they become over-reliant.
- **Scale:** Community-based peace structures operate on a small scale. While this allows them to be relevant, knowledgeable and adaptable, it can also limit their ability to tackle

wider peace and conflict dynamics. However, the cumulative impact of repeatedly resolving different conflict problems in a given area can be greater than the sum of the parts. There are also often (missed) opportunities for scaling-up to achieve more impact.

Case Studies

The following case studies provide examples of community-based peace initiatives in practice.

Sudan – Local dispute and conflict resolution

Peace Direct and Alliance for Peacebuilding (2019, p. 18) highlight the example of peace committees in South Kordofan in Sudan which have successfully resolved conflicts between farmers and herders. For example, in 2017, a peace committee in Delenj intervened in response to growing tensions between semi-nomadic livestock herders and settled farmers in El Tokmah. El Tokmah is a collection of hamlets and encampments housing around 9,000 people from up to 20 ethnic groups, who traditionally follow a code of practice to help the farmers and herders avoid conflicts over shared land and water. However, these norms have come under increasing pressure in recent years, with many of the alternative grazing routes in the region being closed off due to the secession of South Sudan and persistence of chronic armed conflict. In 2017, the incursion of herders onto farmers' fields resulted in violence between Dar Nay'la nomads and Nuba Ajank farmers. In October, the elders of the El Tokmah communities requested help from the Delenj peace committee. The committee, along with support from Khartoum-based NGO Collaborative for Peace in Sudan, were able to produce an "agreement that, among others things, committed community leaders to restore and enforce traditional codes of practice that had maintained peace in the past; to keep livestock in agreed pasture lands further away from the farms; to establish a joint committee to monitor and respond peacefully to further infractions, and to levy fines on anyone breaking the rules or carrying small arms" (Peace Direct & Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2019, p. 18). The committee were also able to persuade the local government to create an additional water point to address another underlying issue of water resource pressure. They also persuaded international development organisations to bring new development interventions to El Tokmah. Researchers found that six months later the initiative had been successful, with "a decrease in reports of livestock infringements, as well as of the use of small arms and other violence, while there had been an increase in reports of people using peaceful dispute-resolution mechanisms" (Peace Direct & Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2019, p. 18).

Yemen – Conflict Resolution Committees (CRCs)

A final evaluation of Search for Common Ground's "The Community Peacebuilding Project" in Yemen (Al-Nabhani, 2018) provided an independent assessment of the impact of local CRCs on community resilience to violent conflict and on mitigating the risk of future conflict. The project was implemented over a 13-month period, with the goal of increasing local-level social cohesion within six Yemeni districts through dialogue processes (focusing on gender and masculinities) and creating local conflict-management mechanisms. This initiative used Search for Common Ground's tested Community Dialogue Approach (CDA), to build community capacity to opt out of violence and support inter-communal social cohesion.

The evaluation found that addressing conflict issues on natural resources and access to basic services through non-violent and collaborative processes has increased the communities' resilience to violence. The evaluation highlights that a key lesson learned with dealing with conflict related to natural resources and/or basic services was that it is **essential to include local leaders, local councils, community members, and locally selected Insider Mediators (IMs), as they play an essential role in increasing social cohesion and reducing local conflict. Moreover, these parties have the potential to facilitate participation, cooperation, and a better understanding of local issues.** The evaluation highlights the sustainability of the CDA, which ingrains mediation skills at the community level. The CRCs demonstrated their ability to identify conflicts, work collaboratively to find solutions, mobilise existing resources, source funding, and respond to complaints in a conflict sensitive manner.

Cameroon – Alternative conflict management (ACM) strategies

ACM strategies in farmer-herder conflict has gained popularity since the 1990s and 2000s in Northwest Cameroon, with NGOs such as the Heifer Project International (HPI) and Netherland Development Organization (SNV) supporting ACM strategies. Complementarity of traditional herder-farmer socio-economic practices in the region provided the basis for alliance farming (AF) in agro-pastoral communities located around urban centres. Local farmers and herders are collaborating in the management of dwindling agro-pastoral resources and addressing farmer-herder competition resulting from environmental challenges. AF along with dialogue platforms (DP) at the community levels have been utilised by SNV in the Menchum Division in the northwest. AF and DP encourage indigenous knowledge exchange and practices that support environmental adaptation and resilience, social interactions between farmers and herders, tenure security over access to grazing and farming resources, the future of agro-pastoralism and food security (Mbih, 2020, p. 340). The DP is composed of community volunteers who receive training on conflict mediation strategies of promoting dialogue among conflicting parties for peaceful resolution without third-party intervention. When the conflicting parties cannot resolve their differences, the DP intervenes with an expert (often a trusted and trained member of the community). The DP often charges very little or nothing, mediators are often members of the same community and understand the local pastoral and farming systems, and disputes are carefully investigated on the ground (Mbih, 2020, p. 339).

SNV created nine farmer–herder platforms in nine severe-conflict communities to find peaceful ways of addressing conflicts and regulate seasonal agro-pastoral activities without competition. The SNV ACM initiatives were very successful, with a 65% reduction in farmer-herder conflicts in Menchum District between 2007 and 2010. A bigger AF and DP project, “In Search of Common Ground” (ISCG) was implemented by MBOSCUDA and others in 2013. This has been successful too, for example, MBOSCUDA registered and addressed about 73 cases of farmer–herder conflicts in Northwest Cameroon between 2013 and 2016 using DP with over 83% success rates to the satisfaction of conflicting and community members. Much has been achieved since the launching of the ACM through AF and DP in terms of **peaceful resolution of farmer–herder conflicts, as well as other co-benefits** including crop–livestock integration in the form of low-cost organic crop fertilizer using animal manure, availability of forage for livestock provided by crop residues, improvement in local food security, increase in per capita income of local farmers and herders, and environmental conservation in agro-pastoral communities (Mbih, 2020, p. 339).

Traditional informal practices

Zimbabwe

Shoko and Naidu (2018) explore **peace-based informal practices** used in managing scarce natural water resources in rural Mhondoro-Ngezi, Zimbabwe, using semi-structured interviews and observations. Finding that several informal practices exist, anchored on the foundations for social justice. Cooperation around water resources was achieved **through adherence to common rules**, anchored on the philosophy of *Ubuntu* (branded as *Unhu* by villagers) – that is cultural values, necessary for peaceful co-existence and self-censored behaviour that conforms to the communal spirit of sharing and caring for each other. The use of myths was an indirect way of conserving water for equity purposes by proscribing certain behaviour around shared water sources. They emphasise the importance of policy maker in observing these customary regulations in order to encourage and strengthen peaceful community co-existence.

4. Nigeria-specific evidence

Farmer-pastoralist/herder conflict resolution case studies

Middle belt region

Plateau state

Higazi (2016) explores the security responses of local vigilantes and the Nigerian state to farmer-pastoralist conflicts on the Jos Plateau, central Nigeria. This is an ethno-linguistically and religiously plural part of north-central Nigeria, with the city of Jos and its rural hinterland being widely represented as flashpoints of collective violence in Nigeria. Higazi (2016) argues that “to understand the sources of localised armed conflict, it is necessary to analyse how forms of ‘insecurity’ and narratives of ‘threat’ are **articulated in cultural, social and material terms.**” These all need to be taken into account to understand the social parameters and political logic of armed conflict, particularly in culturally diverse settings.

Kogi state

Dimelu et al. (2016) examined causes of conflict and effectiveness of management strategies in agrarian communities of Kogi State, Nigeria. Data was collected from a total of 135 randomly selected crop farmers and 72 herdsman. Their results found that farmers opined that 88% (14 out of 16) of conflict management strategies were effective, while the herdsman indicated that all (100%) the management strategies employed were effective. Management strategies included social and institutional strategies such as the use of village committees, dialogue, traditional rulers, compensation, engaging law enforcement agencies other. In particular, the study highlights informal institutions like traditional rulers and local village conflict management committees through use of **dialogue, cooperation and education are the most effective conflict management strategies**. However, key constraints to effective management were highlighted by the respondents as being poor funding, lack of institutional supports by

government and cooperation of disputants. The itinerant nature of herding, lack of constitutional power of traditional institutions, poor financial assistance and related institutional and behavioural issues constrain efforts towards effective management of conflict. Dimelu et al. (2016) argue that adequate financial and institutional supports by government to rural institutions involved in the management of conflict are key for greater commitment and accountability. The paper also highlights the difficulties the authors experienced in accessing the herders for the study, and their lack of cooperation. The farmers were more cooperative, but the traditional leaders who assisted in the mobilisation of farmers for focus group meetings were very evasive on the conflicts (Dimelu et al., 2016, p. 150). These issues highlight the difficulties in data collection around conflict and the inherent limitations in studies of conflict.

Benue and Nasarawa states: Engaging Communities for Peace in Nigeria (ECPN)

Mercy Corps and Pastoral Resolve (PARE) implemented the USAID-funded Engaging Communities for Peace in Nigeria (ECPN), from 2015 to 2019 in the Middle Belt states of Benue and Nasarawa. The programme sought to prevent violent conflict between farmer and pastoralist communities through three main interventions: (1) strengthening the capacity of local leaders to resolve disputes inclusively and sustainably, including training and coaching them in interest-based negotiation and mediation; (2) building trust by facilitating opportunities for people to collaborate across conflict lines on quick-impact projects and natural resource management initiatives that addressed shared needs; and (3) fostering engagement among community leaders and local authorities to prevent conflict through joint violence prevention planning, as well as information sharing around conflict triggers and violent incidents (Mercy Corps, 2019, p. 1).

A randomised impact evaluation of the first phase of the project was undertaken. The evaluation found that ECPN improved the conditions for peace in the communities in which it operated. On most measures, ECPN communities either improved or stayed the same, while control communities stayed the same or deteriorated – given heightened tensions and a regionwide uptick in violence during the final round of data collection this is significant (Mercy Corps, 2019, p. 2). Intergroup contact and trust between farmer and pastoralist communities increased or deteriorated significantly less in ECPN sites than in control sites. Perceptions of security increased significantly more in ECPN communities than in control communities (15 percentage points by the end of the first phase of the programme). One criticism of peacebuilding programmes is that they **often only work with the “converted,”** those who want to participate, and do not affect the wider community. But the evaluation found that the benefits to those who participated did spread to the wider community, especially in relation to intergroup trust and perceived security. However, perceptions of the effectiveness of dispute resolution mechanisms did not improve in ECPN communities (Mercy Corps, 2019, p. 2).

The evaluation recommends that (Mercy Corps, 2019, p. 3):

- **Increase investments in programmes that facilitate positive contact between groups in active conflict.** This study demonstrates that contact theory-based peacebuilding programmes can support communities to maintain or improve relationships despite a broader escalation of violence.
- **Pair community-level interventions with robust advocacy campaigns to promote policies conducive to peace.** ECPN either improved peace outcomes despite the policy

and conflict environment, or at least kept communities from being pulled into the broader conflict.

- **Design interventions to maximize the ripple effect from direct participants to the broader community.** This study showed that people-to-people activities that facilitate close cooperation between members of communities in conflict had a positive effect beyond the specific individuals engaged. Unfortunately, the mediation component had less of a ripple effect. Programme interventions' logic should clearly articulate the intended ripple effect, and programme activities should be designed to accentuate this effect.
- **Invest in larger-scale, rigorous impact evaluations of peacebuilding programming.** Without a rigorous impact evaluation with a comparison group, the programme would have appeared to have little impact on peace outcomes in light of the overall deteriorating security conditions.

Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Plateau states: Community-Based Conflict Management and Cooperative Use of Resources (CONCUR)

From December 2012 to December 2016, Mercy Corps implemented the Community-Based Conflict Management and Cooperative Use of Resources (CONCUR), a four-year DFID-funded programme with the goal of reducing conflicts between pastoralists and farmer community groups and increasing local economic activities in four Middle Belt states (Mercy Corps, 2017). Mercy Corps' approach integrated three main objectives: 1) Build capacity of local leaders to resolve community conflicts in an inclusive, sustainable manner; 2) increase cooperation across conflict lines around economic activity and natural resource management, and 3) generate support for long-term policy solutions among local and national leaders through business-led research and advocacy (Mercy Corps, 2017, p. 2).

An impact evaluation of the programme found that it reduced tensions, increased freedom of movement, increased trust, improved conflict management and more peaceful management of shared resources. The evaluation concluded that **investment in conflict management skills for leaders to effectively mediate disputes between conflicting pastoralist and farmer communities in Nigeria's Middle Belt improved security and hence freedom of movement** (Mercy Corps, 2017, p. 3). These trained leaders, along with joint economic projects that likely increased trust, also influenced the overall levels of tensions in CONCUR sites. The projects provided a space for pastoralist and farmer communities to engage in more frequent, positive interactions, fostering trust and improving social cohesion. Seeing that people could resolve disputes peacefully created an environment where people could work together collaboratively across conflict lines, and those collaborations created an environment where people were willing to try to resolve differences peacefully.

The evaluation recommends (Mercy Corps, 2017, p. 4):

- **Continuing to invest in local dispute resolution:** Local dispute resolution is effective at reducing intercommunal conflict and improving community perceptions of security. Building the capacity of key community leaders through effective negotiation and mediation techniques make them more successful at preventing conflicts.

- **Build social cohesion among communities:** Integrate interventions that combine conflict management with other key activities that address underlying grievances in order to build social cohesion in the targeted area and strengthen the social fabric to withstand ongoing or future disruptive conflict.

North central region

Akov (2017) argues that the role of the citizenship question (and other factors including elite land grabbing, ethno-religious identity construction, weak state capabilities, corrupt traditional institutions, the lack of an effective land tenure system and a widespread culture of impunity) is key in the ongoing history of farmer–herdsman conflict in the North Central region of Nigeria. Arguing for commitment from the Nigerian government to address the **citizenship question**, strengthen the capabilities of security institutions, uprooting the culture of impunity and revaluing its policy on land redistribution. Akov (2017) highlights that “parties in farmer–herdsman conflicts are [often] known to take recourse in ethno-religious sentiments in the violent struggle for land rights. While Christians largely side with the farmers, Muslims back the herdsmen, who like them are predominantly Muslims.” The citizen question “filters in when farmers see themselves as autochthons while perceiving herdsmen as migrants or encroachers” (Akov, 2017, p. 292). The citizen problem has emerged from unclear and conflicting parts of the constitution – thus, they need to be reconciled through a constitutional reform that is undertaken in consultation with the Nigerian people. Although Akov (2017) acknowledges that dampening ethno-religious identity and the citizenship problem will require more than mere constitutional reforms.

Akov (2017, p. 297) also highlights how traditional authorities are relied upon to settle livelihood disputes in most settled communities in Nigeria – village heads and elders as well as district and ward heads play important roles in conflict prevention and mediation. However, “many reports and studies suggest that some traditional institutions have been compromised, thus rendering them ineffective in most cases when it comes to quelling farmer herdsman disputes” (Akov, 2017, p. 297). Furthermore, the increasing weakness and or corruption of traditional authorities in the process of mediating livelihood conflicts in Africa in general and Nigeria’s North Central region in particular appears to have contributed largely to the persistence of farmer–herdsman conflicts in the region. The paper also highlights a number of strategies and approaches that have been adopted by the government at different levels in a bid to find lasting solutions to the persistent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen. However, these have largely been unsuccessful, and Nigeria’s institutions of conflict management and resolution are weak. Institutions such as the police, the army and other security agencies need to be strengthened.

Voluntary policing

Onwughalu and Obiorah (2017) examined the apparatus of voluntary policing⁶ as an alternative measure to containing herders-farmers clashes in Nigeria. It found that these conflicts continue

⁶ Onwughalu and Obiorah (2017, p. 7) recognise that the literature does not distinguish well between informal policing, voluntary policing and community policing. Their paper argues that informal policing is a wider concept that comprises both voluntary policing and community policing; with community policing depicting where the activities or functions are performed, while voluntary policing underscores the nature of recruitment and involvement of those who participate in carrying out these activities.

despite the proliferation of security agencies charged with specialised roles in the maintenance of law, order and security and passage of Anti-Open Grazing laws by some states. It argues that the structure and chain of command of Nigeria Police and the style of Nigeria's federalism (which skewed the establishment and control of the Police in favour of the centre) make prevention and/or timely containment of these conflicts cumbersome (Onwughalu & Obiorah, 2017, p. 2). Most states have established Voluntary Policing Outfits (also known as Vigilante Groups) to address security challenges – these can exist under different names, be founded on an array of bases (such as community associations, ethnic or religious affiliations and state sponsorship), and can perform diverse functions (Onwughalu & Obiorah, 2017, p. 11). The authors argue that “these informal security apparatuses have not been systematically positioned to contain these conflicts,” they recommend “repositioning the apparatus of Voluntary Policing... to systematically cut across villages, clans and hamlets” (Onwughalu & Obiorah, 2017, p. 2).

Western vs traditional conflict resolution

Southeastern region: Ogoniland

Western approaches to conflict resolution tend to focus on litigation, whereas indigenous African conflict resolution strategies focus on reconciliation (Okeke-Ogbuafor et al., 2019, p. 165). Okeke-Ogbuafor et al. (2019) explores these two theories of conflict resolution and their applicability to Ogoniland in Nigeria through 178 survey questionnaires from respondents in two communities, K-Dere and Kanni-Babbe, 31 key informant interviews and four focus group discussions. Okeke-Ogbuafor et al. (2019, p. 164) find that “while beneficiaries of both conflict resolution systems praise them, some community members do not feel educationally qualified and/or cannot afford to use western approaches to conflict resolution and perceive that indigenous African conflict resolution systems are a source of conflict rather than reconciliation.” In both oil-rich and oil-poor communities, the study found “that there seems to be almost as much criticism of indigenous African systems as of western approaches for their respective performances in resolving conflicts” (p. 177). The study emphasises that it is key to recognise that African community conflict resolution systems are just as heterogeneous as African communities are, and are not necessarily harmonious. Furthermore, “younger members of the [Ogoni] community increasingly see the undemocratic basis of the power of leaders such as traditional chiefs as anachronistic” and that “these traditional leaders are tainted by their complicity with the Nigerian government and oil capitalism” (Okeke-Ogbuafor et al., 2019, p. 178).

Due to the controversies surrounding both their uses in Ogoniland, the authors suggest an **additional** conflict resolution in the form of the office of public defender. This would “create opportunities for vulnerable Ogonis who do not trust their indigenous African system of conflict resolution yet feel unqualified to use western approaches to conflict resolution and/or cannot afford to do so” (Okeke-Ogbuafor et al., 2019, p. 180). Supplementing western approaches to conflict resolution with a legal aid system would make it more accessible to disadvantaged people, and would offer a practicable alternative to the potentially biased indigenous African conflict resolution systems (Okeke-Ogbuafor et al., 2019, p. 164).

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Suggested citation

Price, R.A. (2020). *Lessons learned in promoting accountability and resolution of natural resource-based conflicts in Africa*. K4D Helpdesk Report 921. Brighton, UK: IDS.

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