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Integrated and Secure Livestock and Pastoralism Project in West Africa (PEPISAO)

Using information systems in the prevention and management of conflicts related to pastoral mobility



NOTE DE CAPITALISATION

Introduction

This experience was shared at a workshop held in Lomé (Togo), from 29 to 31 October 2019, and organised by PEPISAO (Projet Elevages et Pastoralisme intégrés et sécurisés en Afrique de l'Ouest). It was complemented by amendments from about forty pastoral and agricultural associations from West Africa and Chad. The experience is based on "Using information systems to prevent conflicts related to pastoral mobility"; it is supported by the Réseau Billital Maroobé (RBM). RBM is a network of pastoralist organisations based in 9 West African countries, namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Chad and Togo. The network is expected to extend to Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. RBM's objective is to contribute to the recognition of the right to mobility and the security of pastoral land in order to promote negotiation amongst stakeholders, facilitate the alignment of national and regional regulations and provide arguments for advocacy.

The information mechanism set up is entitled: "Observatory of rangeland and the integrity of transhumance and trade corridors for livestock mobility in West and Central Sahelian Africa -OPTIMAOC". This information mechanism is funded under Component 2 of the Regional Dialogue and Investment Programme for Pastoralism and Transhumance in the Sahel and Coastal Countries of West Africa (PREDIP) and is based in Niamey, Niger. PREDIP is a project coordinated by CILSS.

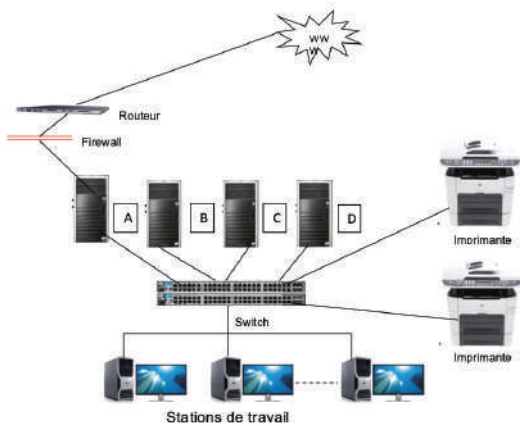
In this "OPTIMAOC" information mechanism, there is a system based on sending SMS (short message service) and IVR (interactive voice response) to livestock farmers. This system is led by RBM and started in 2018. Its objective is to rapidly disseminate information to pastoralists. It is being tested in the departure areas of transhumant herders, their home areas, and border areas in the Republic of Benin. Today, this experience is being extended to other coastal and Sahelian countries. Although it is still new, some lessons can be learnt from this experience.

Our warmest thanks to:



¹ BURKINA FASO (ANDAL et PINAL, ROPPA , RECOPA) MAURITANIE (GNAP, APSS Mauritanie) SENEGAL (DIRFEL, Kawral de Younouféré) NIGERIA (PARE, CORET) GUINEE CONAKRY (CAP Bokondjon, CONASEG), LIBERIA (Association of Cattle Advocate) TOGO (ONG – CDD, FENAPFIBVTO) BENIN (ANOPEP, POTAL MEN; FUPRO Bénin, APSS Bénin) COTE D'IVOIRE (AEBRB, OPEF, COFENABVI-AO) GHANA(GDCA GNACAF) MALI (RBM, FEBEVIM) TCHAD (KAWATAL, CONFIFET, COPAFIB) NIGER (CODE RURAL, CONACOOOP, EFK FNEN-Daddo, RBM)

BACKGROUND



One of the causes of conflicts related to pastoral mobility is the lack of information, both at the level of herders and at the level of decision-makers or public authorities. Pastoralists have little information about national and regional regulations on transhumance. For example, the Beninese authorities issue an inter-ministerial decree each year to set the new rules for transhumance, including entry and exit dates, entry and exit points, grazing routes and areas, taxes to be paid, etc. These decrees are usually issued in December of each year, when the candidates for transhumance are already preparing to leave. If there is no rapid mechanism to inform herders of the new provisions, this shortcoming could undermine the smooth running of the transhumance.

This is why it appeared necessary for RBM to set up an information system to allow the various actors, mainly the herders, to access information on the regulations governing transhumance, the situation of resources (pasture and water) and pastoral infrastructure in order to better prevent and manage conflicts linked to pastoral mobility.

In addition, the Observatory of rangelands and the integrity of transhumance and trade corridors for livestock mobility in West and Central Sahelian Africa (OPTIMAOC) is an information tool that allows for:

- event management by alerting on unusual phenomena in the pastoral environment to draw the attention of the authorities to a possible crisis;
- better planning of the establishment of pastoral infrastructures and, at the same time, informing herders on their state of functionality;
- management of land use by informing the authorities about cases of land grabbing for transhumance (corridors) and advocating for their release.

The distinctive feature of this experience is that it is innovative and based on digital technology. This is the only experience in the intervention area that uses mobile phone networks to systematically and synchronously inform a large number of pastoralists about the conditions and situation of transhumance. It allows transhumance actors, mainly herders, to have information in real time through the use of modern information technologies, particularly mobile cellular telephony. This experience is facilitated by the fact that most transhumant herders already communicate with their families and colleagues through mobile phones, which have finally become one of the most widely used means of communication. The use of mobile phones by transhumant herders as a means of communication is also proven by a study carried out by GIZ/ZFD from 2014 to 2016 on "the typology of transhumant herders between Niger, Burkina Faso and Benin".



Photo credit : RBM

STRATEGIE / APPROCHE / PERTINENCE

The first step in this experience was to set up a database of pastoralists' telephone numbers. This step involves working with "more people" as it involved more than 10,000 herders. This database is regularly updated by RBM to improve its coverage. Secondly, it is necessary to establish a relationship with a telephony provider who has the resources to reach the target quickly once the need has been expressed. Finally, information on transhumance regulations must be sought from official sources, processed and put into the appropriate format for dissemination that takes into account the target group, i.e., herders. The information is translated into local languages of the target area. The processing and design of the information dissemination format is done by specialists to reach the maximum number of herders.

Information dissemination tools used in the implementation of this experiment are:

① the use of SMS (short message service) and IVR (interactive voice response) messaging via the herders' mobile phones. In 2018, this made it

possible to inform more than 10,000 herders about the new regulations on transhumance in Benin and thus prevent conflicts.

② The automated call centre of telephone companies, which allows calls to be made through an online platform to a database of numbers or can be used as an automated response server.

This experience, based on the dissemination of information for the prevention of conflicts related to pastoral mobility, takes into account the "Do No Harm" principle as it provides actors, particularly herders, with useful information about the conditions of transhumance. In doing so, they take steps to ensure compliance with the regulations and thus avoid conflicts. The implementation of this experiment does not lead to conflicts. The results obtained correspond to the objectives pursued by RBM and its technical and financial partners in terms of conflict prevention related to pastoral mobility.

STAKEHOLDERS



Photo Credit : FARA

The main stakeholders involved in this experiment are:

Livestock farmers : they are the providers and users of information. They are the ones who provide RBM with their telephone numbers to receive messages or calls on transhumance regulations. They also provide information, for example, on the state and occupation of pastoral resources and infrastructure.

This information is then processed by RBM through OPTIMAOC, which disseminates it to public authorities and herders.

Public authorities: they provide information on the new transhumance regulations. This information is then disseminated by RBM via a service provider through SMS and IVR to the herders registered in the number base.

RBM focal points: they receive information from herders and transmit it to the SP/RBM for processing and dissemination.

The Permanent Secretariat (SP/RBM): it centralises the information received from the focal points and or public authorities, processes it and disseminates it.

Technical and financial partners (TFPs): they provide technical, methodological and financial support to the information collection, processing and dissemination system.

OUTCOMES

The implementation of this information dissemination experiment has made it possible to inform more than 10,000 transhumant herders about the reforms concerning the legislation on transhumance in the Republic of Benin in 2018 and the following years. This enabled transhumant herders to make useful arrangements. The dissemination of information through SMS and automatic calls has helped to quickly avoid problems that could arise if transhumant herders arrived in the host country without having information on the new transhumance regulations, including entry and exit dates, entry and exit points, routes to follow, etc. This has helped to reduce cases of violent conflict.

At the individual/personal level

the change brought about by this experience is perceptible because each transhumant herder who has received information on the regulation of transhumance in the Republic of Benin tries not to take risks that might oppose him to the Beninese border authorities. In such a context, it is easy to accuse transhumant herders of violating transhumance regulations and expose them to fines and other forms of abuse.

At the socio-political level,

the experience gives RBM a solid argument for advocating with national authorities and sub-regional organisations for the improvement of the conditions governing the practice of transhumance.



Photo credit : AFAAS

This experience is efficient when one analyses the results obtained and the resources invested. The costs are low because there is no recruitment of human resources, no investment in equipment since

the phones on which the messages are received already belong to the herders. The implementation period is efficient for achieving the objective.



Photo Credit : RBM

The aim of this experiment was to inform herders and update them on the new regulations for cross-border transhumance in the Republic of Benin. The SMS and automatic calls have made it possible to quickly avoid troubles and prevent conflicts.

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ANALYSIS

The analysis of this experience of prevention and management of conflicts linked to pastoral mobility through the setting up of information systems, highlights the elements explaining the lessons learnt and recommendations for scaling up the experience.

1- LESSONS LEARNT/LIMITATIONS

The OPTIMAOC tool is highly instructive. The use of digital technology makes it possible to quickly convey information to a large number of targets. Responsiveness is a major asset in terms of communication. Technological innovation has become an essential tool. Transhumant pastoralists have quickly adapted to this new means of communication that is mobile phones. They have chips from all the countries they visit. They have a very good knowledge of how to use their phones. The major challenges in this experience are the rapid processing of information, updating of number bases and the drafting of messages that

must be in line with the provider's policy. Some situations require immediate attention and if the number of intermediary actors is high, this can delay action.

An important aspect of information is the speed in its processing and transmission. If one can invest in capacity building within local organisations and be fully autonomous in processing information and messages, one will save a lot of time. This is a short-term investment that would be highly beneficial.



Photo credit: PPAAO/CORAF Project

2-RECOMMENDATIONS

The operationalisation of the experience and the lessons learnt lead to the following recommendations for any scaling up of the experience:

- Ensure that the target group is committed to the mechanism in order to contribute

effectively to its success;

- Ensure the quality and reliability of the information disseminated: it is important to ensure that the information disseminated is relevant to the target.

About PEPISAO

The Integrated and Secure Livestock Farming and Pastoralism in West Africa Project is implemented by ECOWAS, which has delegated the implementation of Components 1 and 2 to CILSS with the financial support of the Agence française de développement (French Development Agency) (AFD), to deploy approaches for securing pastoral mobility and integrating modes of livestock production (i) within a shared regional vision, (ii) offering maximum guarantees for peaceful co-existence of the various users of natural resources. It is designed to be integrative in terms of its approach.

Its overall objective is to "strengthen the resilience of the populations and contribute to the economic and social development of the region" and specifically, to reduce conflicts related to pastoralism through the construction of a shared regional vision on the different modes of ruminant breeding. Through these specific objectives, the project aims to support and complement the various initiatives underway to develop a sustainable regional capacity to manage issues related to the various livestock production systems, particularly in the transhumance reception areas of the three major corridors in West Africa and the Sahel (Eastern, Central and Western corridors) in order to build a sustainable social fabric of peaceful coexistence and regional integration.

PEPISAO is implemented in the 15 ECOWAS countries as well as Mauritania and Chad. The key partners are ECOWAS, CILSS, UEMOA and AFD.



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