



Photo: Bahono Roger 2015

Policy Brief

Dynamics and impacts of transhumance and neo-pastoralism on biodiversity, local communities and security in the Congo Basin

Key Messages

Uncontrolled cross-border transhumance causes environmental degradation and increasingly threatens local biodiversity as well as the ecological integrity of protected areas

Neo-pastoralism is at times linked with arms trade, illegal trafficking, local conflicts and further deteriorating security situations in already challenging contexts

Further side effects and risks include the occurrence and resurgence of zoonotic diseases

To combat the negative side effects of neo-pastoralism, actors in the region as well as the international community are strongly advised to support:

- Building local economies and livelihoods
- Establishing functional political processes and legal frameworks to support the management of transhumance activities
- Collaborating across borders, acting jointly and synchronizing efforts
- Following up on existing governance and management initiatives such as the N'Djamena Declaration

In recent years, the flow of transhumant animals from the Sahel to the equatorial zone has been constantly increasing. It is often connected to different corollaries such as arms trafficking or increased insecurity or conflicts in and between local and indigenous communities. Further side effects include negative socio-economic impacts and increased pressure on wildlife, biodiversity and the northern parts of Central Africa's forest ecosystems.

Beside the pressing need to regulate unsustainable transhumance and neo-pastoralism for ecological reasons, there is also an urgent need to act to avoid further fuelling of civil and armed conflicts in the northern Congo Basin.

Adding further complexity, the situation in the region is indicative of geopolitical developments: the gradual unravelling of the Chadian and Southern Sudan State and the Sudanese State are one reason for the movement of pastoral communities from the central Sahel to the Congolese forest (PND, 2018). Additionally, the recent intensification of southward migrations of livestock in

search of grazing resources combined with neo-pastoralism is disrupting regional and traditional land use patterns and has opened up a new settlement frontier. This often renders coexistence of mobile pastoralists and local farmers problematic and raises new concerns for the network of protected areas in the region (Luizza, 2017).

To address mentioned challenges, political, diplomatic and operational actions have been taken but need to be reinforced to increase their effectiveness on the ground to produce tangible effects.



Photo: Ecofac6

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Status quo & major trends

a. Socio-economic and cultural importance of transhumance

Livestock farming is a key economic activity for the whole of Central Africa and transhumance is a traditional form of living. As a result of population growth and urbanization, the demand for animal products is increasing rapidly throughout the region. This represents an economic opportunity for all animal production sectors, including mobile production systems like transhumance.

Transhumance represents an important income source for local communities. Populations in host areas can build an economy around transhumance and increase their border security. Indeed,

along their journey, transhumant herders make consumption-related expenditures. This expenditure covers the costs of human and animal health, animal feed, catering, accommodation for herders and other social needs in the host countries. Conversely, these host countries serve as outlets for the sale of the animals and their products. The actors also forge social links that help to ease tensions and build diplomacy at the local level.

On a macro-level, livestock farming is a major economic activity for states such as Cameroon, Chad and the Central Af-

rican Republic (CAR). In 2018, it accounted for 35% of agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) and 5.85% of total GDP in the Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale (CEMAC) zone.

From a social point of view, transhumance is also an important cultural activity, facilitating exchange between communities. For example, many seasonal markets are created and local communities trade agricultural products with transhumant herders.

b. Negative impacts of transhumance

Transhumance is a form of livestock farming with origins in the distant past. It is characterized by seasonal movements of livestock following a precise itinerary and calendar connected to annual meteorological and regional climate patterns. By this means, it allows for the use of grass resources that are distant in space and often successive in time (Saïbou, 1986).

The recent shifts in transhumance dynamics in the Congo Basin are a consequence of climate change, the expansion of agricultural plots, terrorism, and armed conflicts. Transhumant herders are both perpetrators and victims of armed conflicts – the consequences of which affect their daily life as well as other activities, such as agriculture and the management of protected areas.

Despite providing opportunities for peaceful exchange as described above, transhumance often generates conflicts between pastoralists and farmers, between different herder communities, and lately between herders and protected area managers.

Recently, the impacts of transhumance on the biophysical environment, inclu-

ding on protected areas, have been growing. More and more protected areas are increasingly frequented by transhumant livestock despite existing government regulations. As an example, the national parks of Zakouma (Chad) as well as Waza, Bouba Ndjidda, and Bénoué (Cameroon) are periodically crossed by herders.



Photo: Bahono Roger 2011

c. Dynamics of neo-pastoralism

The phenomenon of neo-pastoralism is rapidly gaining ground in most parts of West and Central Africa. The fragile political situation in most countries – particularly the Sahel region, with increased operations and control of large territories by extremist groups – has contributed to the expansion of investments in neo-pastoralism. This phenomenon is characterized by the control and trafficking of large herds of livestock by influential leaders, warlords and even established businessmen and politicians. Neo-pastoralism is a thriving business involving arms sales, livestock deals and other illegal activities such as drug and arms trafficking (Personal information from field sources and interviews).

d. Transhumance-security nexus

As an example of local conflicts aggravated by transhumance, the migration of Chadian herders to CAR and the settlement of the Peul Mbororo in the north-east of the DRC have been accompanied by serious tensions with local communities and authorities (International Crisis Group, 2014). More broadly, 70 per cent of Central African territory is currently occupied by armed groups and transhumance is often used as a source of funding (International Crisis Group, 2014). Migration is a consequence of instability: from neighboring CAR, many Mbororo have entered the DRC in successive waves, going to poor and marginalized districts of Bas- and Haut-Uélé. They are accused of colluding with the LRA, which in turn is accused of incursions into the DRC's national parks and nature reserves, notably Ga-

Information from various field reports and stakeholder consultations indicates the prevalence of neo-pastoral activities in landscapes like Chinko-Lere-Garamba along the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)–CAR cross-border area. Notorious groups active in the region include the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and other small groups located in CAR and DRC. Boko Haram factions operate in the Lake Chad Basin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and the Republic of Niger. The groups are well-armed with high-level networks including senior figures in the religious, traditional and public sectors.

Neo-pastoralist actors often do not hesitate to establish relations with armed or terrorist groups, with whom they exchange numerous products and services. These actors buy weapons from armed groups or subcontract the security of their activities. Thus, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has been an aggravating factor in the theft of livestock and inter-community clashes, particularly between herders and farmers in conflict zones (Lake Chad Basin, CAR, DRC), but also in the proliferation of armed groups operating in this region, which constitute a threat to the security of states and individuals (Personal information from field sources and interviews).

ramba Park and the Bili-Uéré Hunting Reserve. This problem of security concerns and political instability causing environmental damage as a side effect

was first observed in West Africa but is becoming a major concern in Central and East Africa and may extend to the entire continent.



Photo: AWF, 2019

Policy Options and Recommendations

a. Consider the context

Transhumance can aggravate different types of conflict that are in turn often linked to the use of ecosystem resources. Conflicts can arise between (i) farmers and herders, (ii) indigenous herders and transhumant herders, (iii) herders and water and forestry agents, (iv) herders and agents of the defence and security forces as well as other state agents, and (v) neighboring states. Tensions can also arise from marketing of livestock products (e.g., tax collection) or other societal problems. Mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution may be initiated at three different levels: tra-

ditional methods, mechanisms implemented by the state and international legal instruments.

- **Traditional methods** refer to the complex relationships between pastoralists and indigenous groups to solve socio-spatial problems.
- **Mechanisms put in place by the state** refer to existing laws and regulations.
- **International legal instruments** are used in the context of cross-border conflicts. Examples of these include:

Decision N°1/94-CEBEVHIRA-018-CE-29 of 16 March 1984, authorizing the introduction of the Livestock Passport and the International Transhumance Certificate in the case of CEMAC countries, or in the near future the Economic Commission of Central African States (ECCAS) Protocol, the Memorandum of Understanding between the RECs, and the African Union guidelines on pastoralism.

b. Perspectives of the N'Djamena Declaration

The declaration on transboundary transhumance was promulgated as part of the collaboration between the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) and the Republic of Chad during the International Conference held in N'Djamena from 23 to 25 January 2019. This declaration focuses on the need to shape an appropriate framework for collaboration on cross-border transhumance at the regional level that integrates issues of security, protected area management and the increasing degradation of ecosystems due to the effects of climate change. It stresses the need for political ownership of the peaceful management of transboundary transhumance that is consistent with joint actions to support biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. This declaration integrates security issues, natural resource management and advocates an innovative multi-sectoral cross-border approach. Through this Declaration, the northern Congo Basin

states as well as the bordering Sahelian and regional organizations commit to a common approach to environmental protection, agriculture, livestock and security. The negative effects of endemic neo-pastoralism on biodiversity and forest conservation in the Congo Basin are addressed by five strategic pillars: (1) transnational or transboundary legal framework; (2) protected area management and anti-poaching strategies; (3) sustainable management of transhumance activities and natural resources;

(4) communication strategies on transboundary protected areas and transhumance; and (5) peace building and security.

It has been established that if practised sustainably and with consideration of limited natural resources, pastoralism offers a perspective and promising path to innovative solutions to a wide range of global challenges (CORAF/WE CARD, 2015). Thus, in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals 13, 15 and



Photo: Baschirou, CEEAC

16, and in compliance with the African Union's Agenda 2063 (particularly its directives concerning pastoralism), regional organizations such as ECCAS and its member countries are obliged to align themselves with these international frameworks and, among others, to contribute to the preservation of the environment.

In this regard, actions worth considering include: i) support for increasing the productivity of traditional field crops; ii) measures for sustainable pasture management, including mutually agreed management plans for grazing rotations and limitation of herd size; and iii) particular support for the creation of legal security and land-use planning with clarification of use rights and appropriate participation of all user groups.

The declaration of the N'Djamena conference of 25 January 2019 recalls that "the regional dynamics of transhumance have long contributed to the economic and food balance of the Sahelian regions and their peripheries and must constitute an essential investment in national and sub-regional development policies".

c. Recommendations to ECCAS

The Regional Programme for Agricultural Investment, Food Security and Nutrition is the regional instrument for the operationalization of the ECCAS Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and addresses the issue of the promotion of livestock and the pastoral economy. Thus, ECCAS is a central body in the region that needs to be engaged if cross-border solutions for challenges such as transhumance are to succeed. Specific recommendations are as follows:

- The institutional reform process currently underway must clarify the anchor points and modes as well as the roles of all the specialized organizations, and in particular those of the Department of Environment, Natural Resources and Rural Development.
- The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP – ECCAS), which is currently being reviewed and reformulated with the support of the Food and Agricultural Organization and the African Union – InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources, should include guidelines for

developing a comprehensible and acceptable pastoral code that all countries should harmonize with when developing their own codes.

- ECCAS Regional Animal Health Centre needs to be operationalized as soon as possible with its capacities strengthened so that this structure develops strategies for the prevention and control of trans-boundary animal diseases including zoonosis at the sub-regional level.
- The Memorandum of Understanding on pastoralism and transhumance drawn up at ECCAS level in collaboration with UNOCHA needs to be finalized, adopted and operationalized. The same applies to the review, updating, finalization and implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and ECCAS on the one hand, and that between ECCAS and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on the other.

- Inspiration should be drawn from the IGAD model of organization, functioning and operational arrangements on the ground, to strengthen the capacities of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Commission économique du bétail, de la viande et des ressources halieutiques (CEBEVIRHA) / CEMAC and ECCAS, in order to improve knowledge of livestock movements (origins, herd sizes, itineraries, concentration areas, destinations, etc.) and to put in place representative and effective conflict prevention and management structures at both local and cross-border levels. This involves setting up a regional observatory on transhumance.
- There should be participation in the elaboration, improvement and implementation of the new landscape vision on biodiversity conservation coupled with development of modular activities such as land-use planning, green economy, governance, peace and security, human development, digital, science, technology and innovation, etc.

d. Member countries

- The **institutional environment must be improved** at the national level by strengthening the level of supervision of the bodies responsible for the development of agriculture, livestock, the environment and protected areas. It will then be necessary **to create or strengthen an inclusive platform at the level of each country to deal with all issues related to pastoralism** and transboundary transhumance in a systemic manner.
- **Policy and strategy documents for livestock development should be reviewed** in all countries of the Congo and Lake Chad basins, particularly those concerned with pastoralism and cross-border transhumance. They should be amended in an inclusive and consensual manner, **involving all stakeholders** in the livestock sector, agriculture, administrations in charge of land issues, mines, the environment, protected areas, defence, security, justice, decentralized territorial authorities, traditional chieftainships, representatives of civil society (associations of rural producers, NGOs, etc.), and the private sector.
- From these policy and strategy documents, **legislative and regulatory texts should be derived** that are in line with international standards, consistent with the objectives of sustainable development, and that are acceptable to and applicable by the stakeholders to better regulate pastoralism.
- **Conflict prevention strategies should be developed and implemented with involvement of youth and women** who are the most vulnerable and impacted groups.
- **Framework agreements between countries** should be established to, among other things, define the legal areas of cross-border cooperation and make the relevant legislation consistent, in order to better control the cross-border movements of transhumant herders in the light of what is done in the ECOWAS region between Benin and Niger or between Benin and Togo.
- **Governance of protected areas should be improved**, e.g., by capitalizing on the achievements of the Ecosystème des forêts d’Afrique Centrale (ECOFAC) programs, together with a wildlife management code and a **system for monitoring pastoral movements** using appropriate software such as the Transhumance Tracking Tool.

Conclusion and Outlook

The dynamics observed in recent years in Central Africa are creating a new regional space and economic opportunity for pioneers in livestock farming. Like many other transformations in the rural world, this is also a source of conflict. Unfortunately, the conflicts linked to transhumance take place far from the capitals, deep in the rural parts of concerned countries, and are therefore often overlooked despite the ever-increasing number of victims. In order to pacify these transhumance-related conflicts and take full advantage of trans-

humance as an economic activity, it is essential to strengthen the regulation of pastoralism and to put this issue on the agenda of Central African governments. Regional efforts such as the N’Djamena Declaration should be followed in order to address the cross-border phenomenon.

Furthermore, it is necessary to carry out studies to better understand cross-border transhumance activities. These studies could focus on, but should not be limited to, the following themes:

- Characterization and mapping of transhumance-related conflicts in Central African countries
- Impact of neo-pastoralism on the socio-economic plan and biodiversity in Central African countries
- Analysis of the role of actors in cross-border transhumance and local diplomacy.