



Conference // Prevention and management of conflicts linked to the governance of natural resources in West Africa: opportunities and challenges

12-14 November 2019, Niamey

Context

Mostly rural, West African inhabitants are highly dependent on the exploitation of natural resources for their livelihood and development. Agriculture, livestock, but also the exploitation of wood, wildlife and non-timber forest products are at the heart of the economic systems of the countries in the region. The sustainable use of these resources is often based on informal modes of governance that are strongly rooted in the various West African societies. These modes of governance are now increasingly being challenged and weakened by social, economic, institutional and environmental changes that are taking place throughout the region. High population growth, changing land policies, the destruction and conversion of ecosystems, urbanization, climate change and the security context are all destabilizing and conflict-prone factors in the management of natural resources in West Africa. These conflicts can represent huge obstacles to development in countries that are among the poorest on the planet.

In this context, the GIZ-ZFD programme has been working for several years to prevent conflicts linked to cross-border transhumance, particularly in Niger, Benin and Burkina Faso, in order to ensure that the system of productive complementarity between agriculture and agropastoralism is maintained.

In this part of Africa straddling the Sahel region and coastal countries, current dynamics in land tenure, security and the ethnicization of some conflicts make the very nature of the latter increasingly complex, including in the region's national parks and other protected areas. This complexity and interconnectedness of conflict factors led the programme to redefine its strategy for conflict prevention and transformation in 2018. In addition to strengthening the dialogue between farmers and herders, GIZ-ZFD now aims to promote sustainable use and equitable access of populations to renewable natural resources, on the one hand, and to strengthen the resilience of young people in the face of the temptation to join violent extremist groups, on the other hand.

In addition, the GIZ was recently commissioned by the European Union and the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to carry out the Frexus (Nexus in fragile contexts) project. Through the Nexus Water-Energy and Food Security project, which is active throughout the Niger Basin, the project aims to strengthen the security and resilience of local populations to climate change in fragile environmental and security contexts, particularly in Mali, Niger and Chad.

The objective of Frexus is, on the one hand, to develop and test a methodology to better understand and address the links between resource use, climate change and conflict and, on the other hand, to identify and implement activities that, through the creation of development opportunities, break the negative spirals of resource scarcity and violence, and strengthen the resilience of local populations to climate change and conflict. In order to ensure the implementation and success of

the project, Frexus aims in particular to strengthen synergies between the actors involved in the management of natural resources and the local, national and international security sectors.

It is with this in mind that the GIZ-ZFD programme and the Frexus project are organizing an international conference on the **theme *Prevention and management of conflicts related to natural resource governance in West Africa: challenges and opportunities.***

Objectives

The conference has three main objectives:

- **To inform**, through presentations by specialists in the field of conflict prevention and management related to natural resource governance, all participants on the latest developments, experiences and best practices related to conflict management in their respective fields.
- **Create synergies** between technicians, researchers, judges, politicians and civil society actors from West Africa and elsewhere, working in different fields but sharing their capacities and willingness to participate in the prevention, reduction and transformation of conflicts related to the management of natural resources. By participating together in working groups on specific issues related to the topic of the day, participants will have the opportunity to share their respective expertise and experiences and identify new areas of work and collaboration. For the GIZ-ZFD, in addition to exploring new collaborations, it is also a question of obtaining elements from the field and scientific research in order to strengthen its database and readjust its conflict prevention and transformation strategy accordingly.
- **Communicate the results** of the three-day conference to all relevant stakeholders, including West African civil society organisations. To this end, a follow-up committee, composed of conference participants, will ensure the reporting process to all parties concerned. This will allow GIZ-ZFD, Frexus, their partners and any institution working in the conflict sector to have and exploit the results of this conference.

Conference structure

The three-day conference will focus on three themes:

Day 1: Land governance, agro-pastoral conflicts and changes in land issues in West Africa;

Day 2: Conflicts in and around West African protected areas: challenges and opportunities;

Day 3: Prevention of conflicts related to natural resource governance in a deteriorating security context.

Each thematic day will be divided into two parts. The morning will be devoted to presentations by specialists on specific issues. The afternoon will be moderated by working groups (panels) that will discuss issues related to the morning's presentations. The working groups will be composed of

specialists and interested persons from various professional backgrounds and countries. Each panel will have a facilitator and a rapporteur who will facilitate, document and ultimately communicate the results of the reflections to the conference plenary. Later, the Monitoring Committee will communicate the results of the conference to all parties concerned, as well as to the authorities and institutions concerned.

Participants

The conference will bring together some 100 participants coming from over 10 countries in West Africa and beyond, including technicians, judges, researchers, security forces officials, civil society actors and politicians.

Dates and venue of the Conference

The conference will take place in Niamey from 12 to 14 November 2019.