



Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue



Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

A leading mediation organisation in
Francophone Africa



A flexible and discreet institution which works on negotiated conflict solutions

Founded in 1999 in Geneva, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) is a private diplomacy organisation based on the principles of humanity, impartiality and independence. HD's mission is to help prevent, mitigate and resolve armed conflicts through dialogue and mediation. For nearly 20 years, HD has helped conclude peace agreements across the world thanks to its privileged access to a wide range of parties having an influence on conflicts. The organisation is currently involved in more than 40 dialogue and mediation initiatives in more than 25 countries. Since 2012, it has become a key player in the resolution of conflicts in Francophone Africa.

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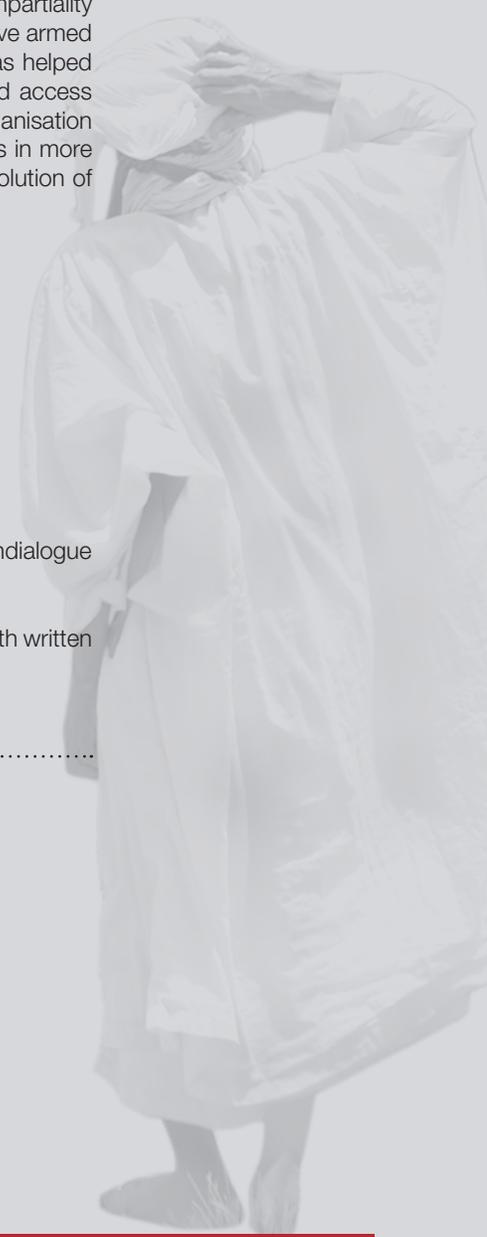
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Expertise built on experience

In Francophone Africa, HD has been engaged in five different types of initiatives:

- **Mediation of political agreements:** In Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Cameroon and the Central African Republic (CAR), HD acts as a neutral mediator, facilitator or intermediary in political negotiation processes. For example, HD played a significant role behind the negotiation of the Republican Pact, which marked the official end of hostilities in CAR in 2015. The organisation also played a key role in brokering an agreement between armed groups in Bouar in 2018, and in the Accord for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR in 2019, in support of the African Union facilitation team. HD also facilitated peace agreements between the Fulani community of Niger and the Daoussahak community of Mali in 2016, and between the Fulani and Dogon communities in Mali's Mopti region in 2018.
- **Mediation of agreements on sharing natural resources:** HD manages an extensive conflict resolution programme between pastoral and farming communities in the border areas between Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad. Each year, a network of more than 1,500 local mediators resolves around 100 conflicts relating to transhumance, access to watering holes and pastures, and cattle theft.
- **Mediation of security guarantees for humanitarian action:** In CAR, HD has negotiated security guarantees with all of the armed groups and national armed forces, thus allowing national vaccination campaigns to take place.





- **Facilitation of dialogue processes:** In 2015, HD carried out a perception study on the drivers of insecurity and violent extremism in the border regions of the Sahel. On this basis, the G5 Sahel states mandated HD to conduct a dialogue process between youth organisations and state institutions to inform the development of their respective national and regional youth policies. HD also facilitates dialogue between representatives of different branches of Islam in Mali to facilitate their engagement in stabilising the country.
- **Support for the implementation of peace agreements:** Governments and local authorities regularly mandate HD to provide advice and assistance on the implementation of peace agreements. Notably, the organisation has developed proven expertise in the reintegration of ex-combatants, transitional justice and reconciliation through its work in Burundi, Mali and Niger.

One methodology for a variety of contexts

Although each mediation process is unique, HD follows three key principles in all cases:

- **HD intervenes only at the request of the conflicting parties and respects official mediation structures.** HD ensures that the parties have reached consensus on its involvement, and safeguards its independence by reserving the right to withdraw from any mediation process. HD also adheres to the United Nations' Guidance for Effective Mediation Processes.
- **HD accompanies the parties through the entire conflict resolution process,** from initial contacts with conflict parties to the implementation of agreements.

- HD does not impose the causes of, and solutions to, a conflict but instead helps the parties themselves to formulate their respective grievances, goals and red lines. The organisation may suggest paths towards a resolution to the conflict but it is the parties' responsibility to develop an agreement, which best meets, their expectations. HD also relies on local customs and practices of conflict resolution.

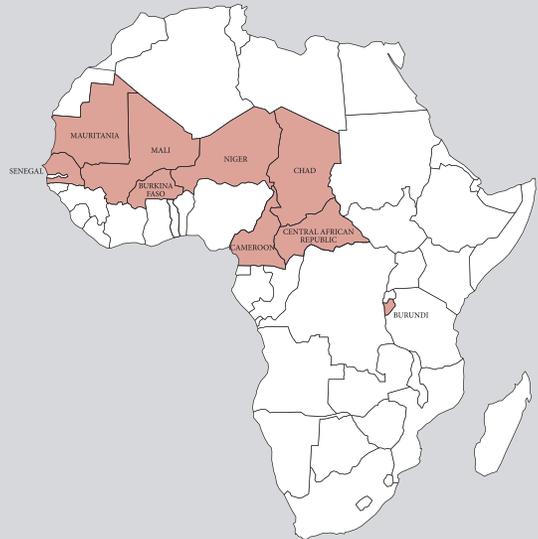
Inclusive mediation using a multidisciplinary approach

HD strives to make sure mediation processes are **inclusive**, in order to ensure that no parties that could influence the conflict's resolution are excluded, whether their influence is political, social, religious or related to ethnicity. HD also emphasises the need to involve women and young people in peace processes.

HD works on three complementary levels: i) **locally**, to ensure the relevance of the agreements being negotiated, and to involve communities in discussions about them and their successful implementation; ii) **nationally**, by involving governments as well as civilian or armed opposition groups; and iii) **internationally**, to guarantee the support of states and multilateral organisations involved in peace processes.

HD favours a **multidisciplinary approach to conflict resolution**. By including the historical, political, social, cultural, economic and religious dimensions of new crises, HD seeks to encourage parties to focus their negotiation efforts on the root causes of the conflict, rather than on the symptoms.

Mediation projects in Francophone Africa



A local presence with international expertise

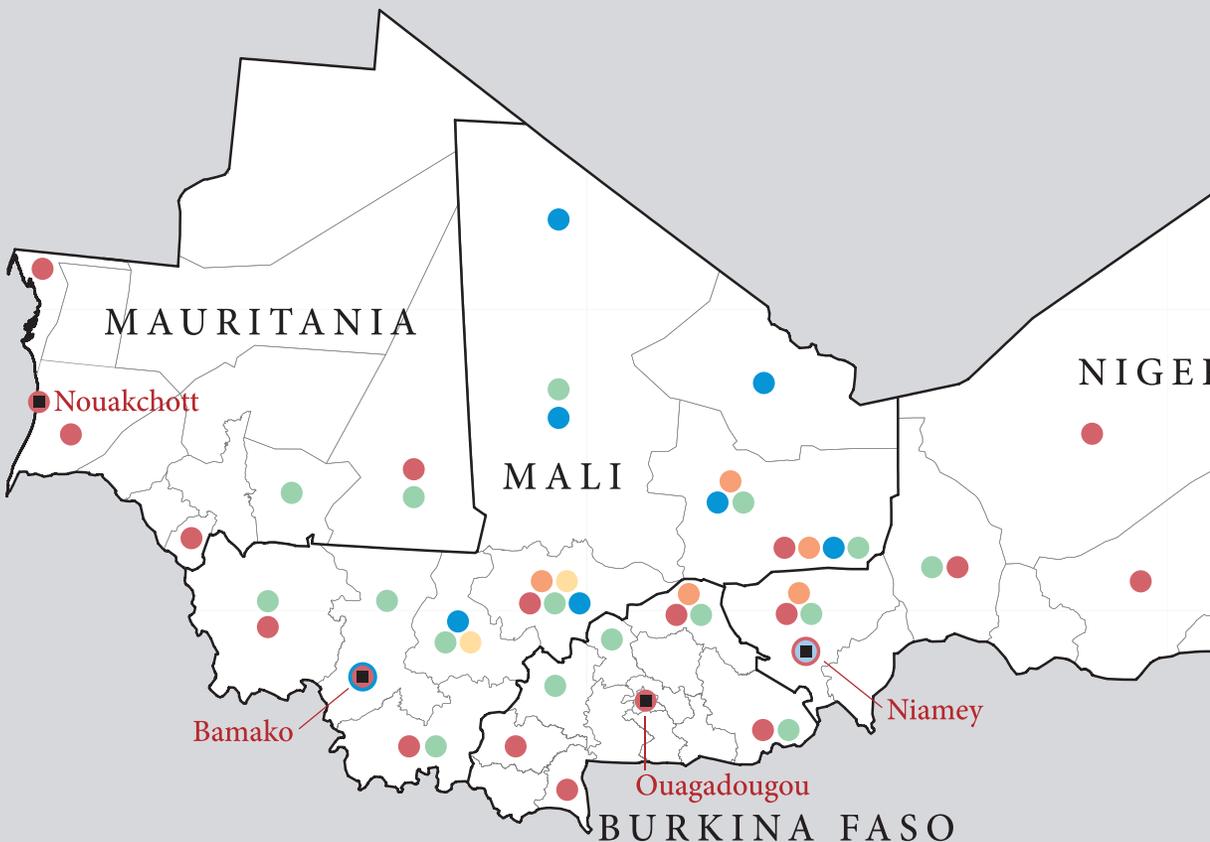
HD operates in ten countries across Francophone Africa, from its country offices in Bamako, Dakar, Diffa, Bangui and Nairobi. Its team consists of **local mediators**, all African and with extensive networks, and of an **international group of thematic advisers** who provide expertise on a wide range of conflict resolution issues including: transitional justice; the reintegration of ex-combatants; inclusion of civil society in peace processes; political Islam; African political history; and models of governance and economic recovery programmes. HD's approach combines a local presence with international expertise, helping to ensure that its action is both consistent and effective.



Communities as the keystones

Although the Sahel region may have been spared international conflicts, it is deeply affected by challenging dynamics that render its states more fragile. The depletion of natural resources, rapid demographic growth, increasing marginalisation of rural communities, and rampant corruption and inequality are just some of the key factors. These create significant tensions between towns and the countryside, younger and older people, rich and poor, and farmers and pastoralists. The region's models of governance are increasingly contested, with some calling for radical reforms. The disintegration of Libya significantly destabilised the Sahel states, leading to the rebellion in the north of Mali in 2012 and encouraging prolifera-

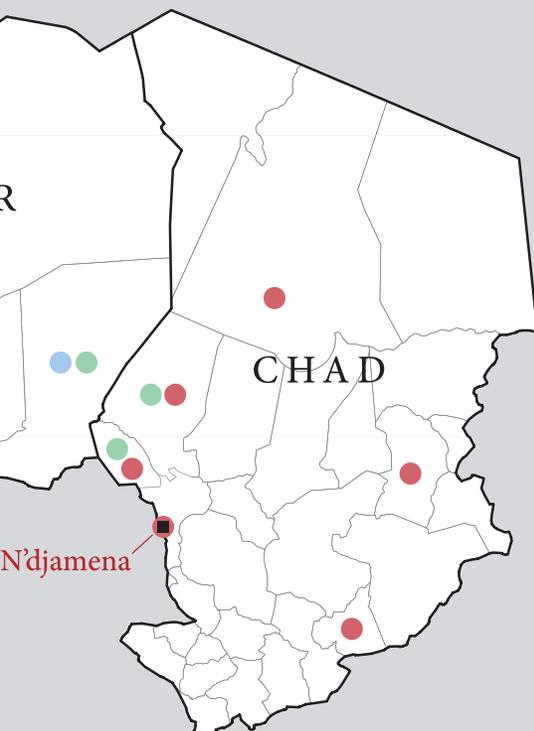
tion in light-arms smuggling, armed groups and organised crime. The deteriorating security conditions in rural areas have led to communities forming their own, poorly controlled self-defence militias whose actions have led to multiple series of attacks and indiscriminate acts of revenge. This intercommunal violence began in central Mali and has spread to neighbouring Niger and Burkina Faso. Often isolated in the vastness of the Sahel, rural communities are both the victims and perpetrators of violence, exacerbated by a fierce competition for natural resources. At the same time, these communities are also the key to addressing the conflicts, provided they are included in mediation processes.



The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) first became involved in Mali during the mediation efforts that led to the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. HD has progressively developed a multi-level crisis mediation strategy for the Sahel: political, communal, religious and social. The strategy consists of systematically identifying every conflict and its actors and offering HD's mediation services, with the aim of resolving disputes one after another, and establishing endogenous, sustainable mechanisms to prevent and manage conflicts. As a result, dozens of intercommunal conflicts, sometimes of a cross-border nature, have ended with peace agreements, and many hundreds of disputes between pastoralists and farmers have been managed by HD's vast network of communal mediators. The network also works to reconnect the fraying threads of

dialogue between generations, between religious leaders, and between state institutions and often very distant communities. Individual local agreements may seem modest, compared with the scale of crisis in the Sahel. However, as the local agreements multiply, they are collectively becoming a significant factor in the region's stabilisation. Establishing permanent mediation mechanisms creates a positive dynamic for the prevention and management of conflicts.

Facilitated mediation process & dialogue in Sahel by HD



● Mediation and support for the peace process – Mali

Kidal, Gao, Ménaka, Tombouctou, Taoudéni, Mopti and Ségou

● Mediating the return of state services in Mopti and Ségou regions

Mopti and Ségou

● Intercommunal mediation in Diffa region – Niger

Diffa and Niamey

● Mediation in the border region Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso : Sahel

Mali : Gao, Ménaka and Mopti

Niger : Tillabéry

● Agro-pastoral mediation in the Sahel region

Burkina Faso : Boucle du Mouhoun, North, East and Sahel

Mali : Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso, Ségou, Mopti, Tombouctou, Gao and Ménaka

Mauritania : Hodh El Chargui and Hodh El Garbi

Niger : Tillabéry, Tahoua and Diffa

Chad : Kanem and Lac

● The voice of the youth in the Sahel

Burkina Faso : Sahel, Haut Bassins, East, South-West and Ouagadougou

Mali : Kayes, Sikasso, Mopti, Ménaka and Bamako

Mauritania : Hodh El Chargui, Tarza, Guidimakha, Darkhlet Nouadhibou and Nouakchott

Niger : Zinder, Tillabéry, Agadez, Tahoua and Niamey

Chad : Borkou, Moyen Chari, Kanem, Lac, Ouaddaï and N'Djamena.



Mediation and support for the peace process in Mali

«We are exhausted by this conflict, and we women are the most affected. Each man killed is a son or a husband. The number of widows just keeps growing.»

— A woman from Macina, in the Ségou region of Mali

The peace process and peripheral conflicts

Following the Tuareg rebellion in northern Mali in 2012, and the subsequent coup d'état that occurred against a backdrop of jihadist pressure in the north and centre of the country, a peace process initiated by Algeria in 2014 led to the conclusion of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali in 2015. Although the Agreement constitutes a solid roadmap towards peace, the three signatories (the Government, the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) and the pro-Government coalition of armed groups known as the Plateforme) do not share the same understanding of the Agreement, and perceive it as having been imposed by the international community. Furthermore, the negotiations, held mainly behind closed doors, failed to address the communal and religious issues that continue to fuel instability in Mali. Four years after the Agreement was signed, the peace process is still facing significant challenges. Although the parties have never questioned the ceasefire, frequent violations are recorded due to the parties' changing alliances and positions. Since 2017, the conflict has intensified, and now extends from northern to central Mali, despite the presence of national and international armed forces. The escalation in violence is partly linked to jihadist pressure and partly due to an increasing number of intercommunal clashes.

Mediation efforts in support of the peace process

In 2011, the Malian state mandated the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) to support national and international peace efforts in the country. HD's current work focuses on:

- Supporting the signatories' efforts to implement the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali by mediating between them to overcome sticking points. HD also facilitates dialogue between the signatories and local communities to ensure inclusive implementation.
- Facilitating intra-faith dialogue in the Gao, Timbuktu, Taoudeni, Ménaka, Mopti and Ségou regions to ease tensions between the different branches of Islam and strengthen the commitment of religious actors in the prevention and management of local conflicts. To this end, HD is currently supporting a network of 35 religious representatives in each region.
- Facilitating the mediation of local intercommunal conflicts likely to exacerbate conflict and insecurity at the national level.

Outcomes

- HD mediated the establishment of interim authorities in Timbuktu and Gao, as provided for in the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.
- HD mediated 16 intercommunal conflicts since 2018, with the support of religious stakeholders.

Areas of intervention

This mediation project is being implemented in Bamako and across seven regions in northern and central Mali: Kidal, Gao, Ménaka, Timbuktu, Taoudeni, Mopti and Ségou.



Mediating the return of state services in Mopti and Ségou regions

«Before, when you saw somebody coming towards you on the road, you were happy to meet them. But today, it's the opposite – we are afraid because we don't know who's who anymore.»

— A member of the youth from Mougna, in the Mopti region of Mali



Central Mali: a long-ignored conflict

Although the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali officially put an end to the country's North–South conflict, a multitude of new conflicts erupted at around the same time in the central Mopti and Ségou regions. Harassed by jihadist groups and feebly protected by public defence and security forces, Malian state authorities gradually deserted a large part of the central region. As is frequently the case with asymmetric conflicts, this resulted in a 'dirty war', with both defence and security forces and jihadist groups targeting communities suspected of supporting the enemy. Caught in the middle, communities began setting up self-defence units and forging alliances with armed groups – some backing the government, others backing the jihadists. Some young people from these communities also joined the ranks of armed groups. Alerted to the emergence of yet another conflict, the Government of Mali developed an ambitious stabilisation plan seeking to pacify the region by restoring the state's presence.

Restoring trust through mediation

Aware that the success of its stabilisation plan depended on its ability to secure the support of local communities, the Government of Mali mandated the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) to act as a neutral intermediary. HD recommended the establishment of a permanent mechanism for dialogue between communities and state authorities both before and after the return of public services in the region. The mechanism aims to facilitate a series of negotiations to ensure that the return of state services meets communities' priority needs and it does not expose them to reprisals. Ultimately, the mechanism should also be able to

offer a space for mediating disputes between the Government and citizens about the behaviour of state representatives.

As part of this initiative, communities have identified 210 leaders to represent their interests in discussions with the public authorities. Periodic mediation meetings allow them to:

- Compare views on the region's security issues;
- Review the parties' respective objectives and constraints;
- Develop, agree on, and regularly review, a timeframe for the return of state authorities and ensure its implementation;
- Set up a mechanism to prevent and manage tensions, conflicts and incidents between the state authorities and the region's communities.

Outcome

The establishment of a structured mechanism for dialogue, trusted by both local communities and state authorities and through which they can initiate negotiations for the return of the state in the Mopti and Segou regions.

Areas of intervention

This mediation project is being implemented in 14 municipalities of the seven following administrative cercles (district):

- Mopti, Djenné, Tenenkou, Youwarou and Koro in the Mopti region;
- Macina and Ségou in the Ségou region.



Intercommunal mediation in the Diffa region in Niger

«In this crisis, everyone is a victim. And today, we are exhausted.»

— A member of a Municipal Peace Committee in Niger's Diffa region

Diffa: from conflict to reconciliation

Since 2015, the conflict between Boko Haram and the states of Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon, as well as the military operations carried out against the jihadist group, have led to the evacuation of the islands in Lake Chad and the fertile lands around the Komadougou River. This has pushed some 250,000 people into Niger's Diffa region. As a result, certain municipalities are seeing an increasing population density, and displaced populations can no longer exploit their agricultural and grazing lands. The number of intercommunal conflicts over natural resources has therefore steadily risen. Access to watering holes, grazing areas and farmland is all the more crucial, as disruption to the region's economic activities has reduced the available means of subsistence. Tensions are also growing between host communities and displaced populations, as their cohabitation continues to persist. In addition to the severe disruption of economic activities, depletion of natural resources and increasing banditry, the fact that some young people from the Diffa region have rallied to Boko Haram has seriously strained intercommunal coexistence.

Preventing and resolving intercommunal conflicts

In May 2017, Niger's High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace (HACP) mandated the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) to support its National Crisis Recovery Strategy in the Diffa region. HD has consequently been facilitating the mediation of intercommunal conflicts, most of which are linked to disagreements over access to natural resources. To this end, the organisation supports the Diffa region's 12 Municipal Peace Committees, set up by HACP in 2015, as part of its efforts to ensure community cohesion through the prevention and management of conflicts.

Outcomes

- Mediation of a conflict prevention agreement between the Fulani and Mahamid Arab communities from the municipalities of Foulatari, N'guelbeli, Goudoumaria and Mainé Soroa, in December 2018.
- Mediation of a signed commitment by 18 traditional leaders to the prevention of intercommunal conflict along the Komadougou River, around the Lake Chad basin and in the oasis basins in the Diffa region.

Areas of intervention

This project is being implemented in 12 municipalities throughout the Diffa region: Diffa city, Bosso, Mainé Soroa, Chetimari, Goudoumaria, Foulatari, N'guelbeli, Gueskerou, Kablewa, Toumour, Ngourti and Nguigmi.



Mediation in the border region – Mali, Burkina Faso & Niger

«I know some young people who would like to lay down their weapons but don't dare to do so. They fear reprisals and the reception they might get from the authorities.»

— A religious leader from the Djenné cercle in the Mopti region of Mali

The absence of the state and the armed defence of community interests

For the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali to be successfully implemented, the sub-regional dimensions of the crisis must be addressed. Several armed groups who appeared in the wake of the Malian conflict in 2012 now roam the porous borders separating Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Some of these armed groups claim ties with signatories to the Agreement; others ally themselves with armed Jihadi groups; and others again declare a sort of communal legitimacy to justify opposition to the region's governments. The weaknesses of the three states and their armies, coupled with the limited presence of public services in border areas, prevent national authorities from effectively containing armed violence and responding to the concerns of local communities. The social fabric has deteriorated significantly since the 2015 crisis in Mali, and armed groups are fuelling inter- and intra-communal conflicts in order to protect their respective communities' interests and ensure their survival. Thus, there is a need to set up mechanisms for dialogue and mediation to identify sustainable solutions to the tensions troubling these border regions.

Tripartite mediation

The national authorities of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have mandated the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) to help address the drivers of conflict in their shared border areas. Since August 2017, HD has focused on:

- Supporting state authorities in opening channels for dialogue between on the one hand, non-Jihadist armed groups and armed groups that are not party to the Agreement, and on the other hand, frustrated local com-

munities. These channels enable the parties involved to express their grievances and objectives. To this end, HD has identified and is supporting community representatives who carry the necessary legitimacy to shuttle between the parties.

- At the parties' request, facilitating the political negotiations required to reach both cessation of hostilities agreements between armed groups and state authorities, and inter-communal peace deals supported by the authorities.
- Facilitating dialogue between the three states (Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso) to ensure that their conflict management efforts in the border regions are complementary.

Outcomes

- After securing the community self-defence units' support for the negotiation process, HD mediated a peace agreement between the Fulani and Dogon communities in the Koro *cercle* (district), Mali, in August 2018.
- HD mediated a peace agreement between the Dafing, Samogo, Fulani, Dogon and Bozo communities in the municipality of Baye, in the Bankass *cercle*, Mali, in September 2019.
- HD mediated a peace agreement between the Fulani, Dogon and Dafing communities in the municipality of Ouenkoro, in the Bankass *cercle*, Mali, in August 2019.

Areas of intervention

This project is being implemented in five border regions:

- Mali: the regions of Mopti, Gao and Ménaka;
- Niger: the Tillabéri region;
- Burkina Faso: the Sahel region.



Agro-pastoral mediation in the Sahel region

«In addition to the effective engagement of leaders in the resolution of communal conflicts, which we witness every day, agropastoralist communities have a better understanding of their rights and duties. This prevents new conflicts.»

— A representative of the Gao Governorate in the Gao region of Mali

A struggle for survival

The Sahel's pastoralist and agricultural communities depend on their shared natural resources. Today, however, their way of life is threatened by the increasing scarcity of those natural resources due to demographic pressures, desertification and insecurity. For farmers, survival depends on ever more precarious access to arable land. For pastoralists, the ability to move their herds with the seasons in order to feed them is vital. However, the resurgence of armed conflicts in the Sahel region has created insecurity, closed borders and disrupted the seasonal cycle of transhumance. Given development strategies that favour agriculture, and social services poorly adapted to their way of life, pastoralist communities are left to their own devices. Against this background, the competition for access to watering holes and pasture – pitting farmers, fisherfolk and sedentary cattle ranchers against nomadic pastoralist communities – has become politicised by the interplay of alliances with rival armed groups across the Sahel.

Supporting a cross-border network of community mediators

In 2015, faced with the risk of increased militarisation of agropastoralist conflicts, the states of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso mandated the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) to launch a mediation initiative between the nomadic and sedentary communities in the border areas between their countries. The initiative has since been extended to Mauritania and Chad in support of the G5 Sahel priority plan for investment in the pastoralist regions. Through this project, HD has focused on:

- Supporting more than 1,000 community leaders, in a network across 120 municipalities in the frontier regions, in their mediation ef-

orts to resolve conflicts over access to natural resources.

- Mediating conflicts over access to natural resources that have become so politicised that they surpass the abilities of community mediators. To mediate these conflicts, HD draws on its field experience and the networks it has developed with national authorities and among armed groups.
- Facilitating dialogue on agropastoralist issues between agropastoralist communities and relevant authorities at the local, national and regional levels. This is done to encourage joint efforts to manage natural resources and prevent cattle-rustling.

Outcomes

Between 2015 and 2018, HD supported the mediation of nearly 300 conflicts concerning access to natural resources and cattle theft in the border regions between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.

Areas of intervention

Mediation efforts have been implemented in 19 border regions:

- Mauritania: the regions of Hodh Ech Chargui and Hodh el Garbi;
- Mali: the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso, Ségou, Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao and Ménaka;
- Burkina Faso: the regions of Boucle du Mouhoun, Nord, Est and Sahel;
- Niger: the regions of Tillabéri, Tahoua and Diffa;
- Chad: the regions of Kanem and Lac.



The voice of the youth in the Sahel — A dialogue between youth organisations and state institutions

«Youth holds the authorities responsible. But what about their own responsibilities?»

— A representative of the Chadian authorities

A strategic problem with structural solutions

Some 50 million people under the age of 30 live in the G5 Sahel countries of Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso and Mauritania, accounting for 65% of the overall population. However, their prospects are limited: education systems clogged by the demographic explosion have resulted in poor overall levels of education, freedom of movement is impeded by insecurity, job markets are stagnant and poverty is rampant. The generation gap resulting from the globalised outlook of youth and the conservative nature of their elders is threatening the Sahel region's social and political cohesion. In addition, youth feels excluded from political decision-making processes. All this is stopping younger generations from fulfilling their potential and increasing the allure of violence, organised crime and migration. To encourage youth to engage in associations and political action, youth organisations need to build their capacity and express their needs and grievances in a participatory manner.

Generating feedback and breaking down barriers

In response to these problems and at the request of the G5 Sahel countries, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) has been working on this issue since 2017. HD has supported the creation of a dialogue process between more than 1,000 youth organisations and state institutions across the Sahel region, thus encouraging the greater involvement of youth in decision-making processes at local, national and regional levels. Spaces for dialogue have been structured around the specific themes of academic and professional training, access to the job market, civic participation for youth, migration and religious radicalisation. Debates are held at four levels, between:

- Local and national youth associations;
- Youth associations and their local traditional, civic and religious authorities;
- The ministries involved in managing youth policies;
- National youth association delegates and their governments.

The conclusions and recommendations stemming from these discussions have fed into the development of an Integrated Strategy for Youth for the G5 Sahel countries. The project also seeks to feed these recommendations into ongoing discussions between the Sahel region's governments and their international partners on cooperation programmes for youth.

Outcomes

Facilitation of discussions between the national authorities and youth organisations in the G5 Sahel countries to adapt national policies to benefit youth.

Areas of intervention

Five areas in each of the G5 Sahel countries are taking part in the dialogue process:

- Mauritania: the regions of Hodh Ech Chargui, Trarza, Guidimaka, Dakhlet Nouadhibou and Nouakchott;
- Mali: the regions of Kayes, Sikasso, Mopti, Ménaka and Bamako;
- Burkina Faso: Ouagadougou and the regions of Sahel, Haut-Bassins, Est and Sud-Ouest;
- Niger: the regions of Zinder, Tillabéri, Agadez, Tahoua and Niamey;
- Chad: the regions of Moyen-Chari, Kanem, Lac, Ouaddaï, Borkou and N'Djamena.



Mediation between the Government of Cameroon and Anglophone separatists

Cameroon: separatist conflict in the Anglophone regions

In addition to the conflict it is facing with armed jihadist groups in the north of the country, Cameroon also faces a separatist rebellion in its two Anglophone regions, the North-West and the South-West Regions. Made up of the former colonial territories of the *British Southern Cameroons*, these regions are now the scene of armed conflict between government forces and armed separatist groups. These are calling for the independence of the Anglophone regions and the creation of the State of “Ambazonia”. Although the Anglophones’ political struggle has been ongoing since they were joined to French Cameroonian territories in 1961, it has only recently degenerated into an armed struggle. The brutal repression of demonstrations by Anglophone teachers and lawyers at the end of 2016 led to a multitude of small community groups taking up arms against the security forces in 2017. Two years later, there are more than 10 armed groups backed by a handful of political organisations run by the diaspora. The conflict has resulted in thousands of deaths, 500,000 internally displaced persons and tens of thousands of refugees in neighbouring countries. In September 2019, President Paul Biya organised a national dialogue, which led to the creation of a “special status” for the two Anglophone regions and the liberation of certain security detainees. However, the initiative was boycotted by the separatist groups and did not contribute to the resolution of the conflict.

Establishing negotiations between the Government and separatist groups

The Government of Cameroon and the majority of the separatist groups have mandated Switzerland to act as a neutral intermediary to start direct negotiations between the parties. In turn,

Switzerland’s diplomats have sought the aid of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) to establish communication channels with the separatist groups and contribute its expertise in support of the peace process. The partnership between Switzerland and HD aims to end the violence through a mutually agreed political solution that addresses the parties’ grievances and defines a modus vivendi that can ensure sustainable, peaceful coexistence.

Given the diverse and fragmented nature of the separatist groups, HD concentrated its efforts on creating a broad platform that could engage in productive negotiations with the Government of Cameroon. Months of talks culminated in the creation of the Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT) in Montreux in September 2019, bringing together 10 separatist groups. The Coalition announced its willingness to enter into direct negotiations with the Government of Cameroon, and it called upon all separatist groups to join the process. Although a Swiss undertaking, this process has received valuable support from the international community—including the United Nations, the European Union and the African Union—and this will be essential to its success.

Nevertheless, in such a highly polarised environment, nominating negotiators, designing negotiation strategies oriented towards a successful political agreement, and adopting confidence-building measures and temporary partial agreements, remain significant challenges for both the parties and the mediators. HD remains committed, alongside Switzerland and all the parties involved, to contributing to ending this conflict and its devastating humanitarian consequences.



Mediation and support for the peace process in the Central African Republic

«The fact that 14 armed groups have reached out to each other to plan a way out of the interminable crisis which is rattling our country is a true ray of hope for the people, even though we know that there is a long road ahead before we will see the CAR's PAPER implemented.»

— A religious leader in the Bria region

An extremely fragile state

The Central African Republic (CAR) has been subject to chronic instability since its independence in 1960. The crisis that broke out in 2012 threatened to break the country apart. It was characterised by violence between Christians and Muslims, and it caused thousands of deaths and displaced over a million civilians. Despite support from the United Nations Multi-dimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the state still struggles to extend its authority beyond Bangui, the capital, and armed groups continue to control most of the territory. On 6 February 2019, the Government signed a Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (PAPR) with 14 armed groups. Within the framework of the PAPR, the groups agreed to end the use of violence in return for greater representation in state institutions. The parties also agreed on the framework for a process of justice and reconciliation, the setting-up of mixed security force units and their participation in a process of demobilisation and reintegration of irregular combatants. Nevertheless, the fragmentation of the parties to the Agreement requires a permanent dialogue mechanism that can facilitate the PAPR's implementation.

Dialogue and mediation at every level

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) has been present in CAR since 2007, contributing actively to the national peace and reconciliation processes through dialogue and mediation. The organisation was one of the driving forces behind the inclusive political dialogue of 2008 and the Bangui National Forum of 2015 that led to the adoption of the Republican Pact for Peace, National Reconciliation and Reconstruction in the Central African Republic.

This opened the way to the Accord on the Principles for Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration and Repatriation (DDRR), signed in May 2015. HD also accompanied the process which led to the 2015–2016 general elections. Since then, the organisation has been lending its expertise to the implementation of a political dialogue between CAR's Government and the 14 armed groups that are undermining its authority.

HD's main objectives are to:

- Advise the parties to the PAPR and contribute to its success for greater national stability;
- Support and accompany the process of transitional justice by encouraging its links to the DDRR process;
- Facilitate the mediation of local peace agreements and agreements on the peaceful management of natural resources between communities, as well as negotiate guarantees on humanitarian access with armed groups.

Outcomes

- Contribution to the mediation of PAPR, driven by the African Union, through advice to the parties before, during and after negotiations, with a view to encouraging their adherence to the process.
- Mediation of five agreements between 2017 and 2019 involving different armed groups and/or populations, which have contributed to the cessation of violence, the free movement of people and the resumption of normal activities, notably agriculture and pastoralism.
- Negotiation of humanitarian access and security guarantees from armed groups, which have enabled vaccination campaigns to take place across most of the country.



Mediation and support for the peace process in Casamance – Senegal

«The current calm in Casamance does not mean the end of the conflict. It is crucial that the two conflicting parties can now get together around a negotiation table in order to define the outlines of a settlement after more than 30 years of conflict.»

— A historian from Ziguinchor in Casamance, Senegal



The oldest conflict in Africa

The Gambia geographically separates Senegal's Casamance region from the majority of the country. This physical separation has given rise to a feeling of political and economic marginalisation. In the 1980s, this fed a separatist rebellion led by the *Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance* (Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance, MFDC). While today the conflict has diminished in intensity, it has still not been resolved despite a succession of peace processes. Due to internal disagreements, the MFDC has progressively split into four factions, thus compromising peace efforts. Upon his election in March 2012, President Macky Sall reached out to the rebels in Casamance, initiating dialogue with the MFDC's Northern Front with the support of the Community of Sant'Egidio, a Christian organisation. Furthermore, the Government mandated the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) to re-launch the negotiations that had broken down with the MFDC's three Southern Front groups in 2015. Although this conflict has largely been forgotten, a peace agreement is essential to enable the rebels to go back to civilian life and allow the people of Casamance to return for good to their normal daily existence. It should also address the grievances that made them take up arms in the first place. A reconciliation process is also needed to heal the wounds of the past and prevent any resurgence of violence.

Cementing the negotiation process

Since 2014, HD has been striving to create the necessary conditions for the continuation of political negotiations between the Government and the MFDC's three Southern Front groups. HD has established contact with all of the parties involved in the conflict and all relevant stakeholders (the state and the armed groups, as well as the diaspora and civil society), and is now concentrating its efforts on establishing an inclusive, legitimate negotiating platform that will allow the three Southern Front groups to develop a coherent negotiation strategy. HD's primary objectives are to:

- Promote the implementation of inclusive political dialogue between the parties, by encouraging the involvement of any stakeholders who could influence the conflict so that any proposed solutions are acceptable to everyone;
- Support negotiations between the Senegalese state and the MFDC's three Southern Front groups, both upstream and downstream of the official mediation, in order to strengthen the latter, by helping parties to the conflict to formulate their grievances, demands and non-negotiable positions.



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