

# **End of project popular science description**

## **Access-Authority Nexus in Farmer-Herder Conflicts (AAN Project)**

### **Introduction**

Farmer-herder conflicts constitute a major area of natural resource conflicts in Ghana and the West African sub-region, particularly in Ghana and Nigeria. The AAN Project investigated the dynamic formation and erosion processes of access, identities and authority from spatial and historical perspectives. It had the developmental objective of building well-functioning and legitimate institutions for Ghana's peace, stability and well-being. More specifically, the project sought to:

1. Analyze the processes of frontier and territoriality in the formation and erosion of access and authority and the livelihood consequences of farmer-herder conflicts.
2. Enhance capacity for research, dissemination and teaching on access, authority, conflict and livelihood.
3. Disseminate and discuss project findings within the scientific community and at the local community, district and national levels for policy impact.

The project combined political ecology with the theories of *frontiers* and *territorialization* to study the process of state building. It employed mixed method research design involving both quantitative analyses of the impacts of the conflicts on livelihoods and the coping strategies of actors, and qualitative analyses of how land access mechanisms predispose farmers and herders to clashes, the impacts of the conflicts on the authorities of politico-legal institutions and the policies that have been employed to address the conflicts. The field data collection combined questionnaire surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis and personal observation by the researchers.

### **Results**

The key findings of the AAN Research Project are listed below:

1. The conflict has its roots in the absence of clear operational guidelines for cattle herding in the study areas and also on what to do in the event of crop damage by cattle.
2. The conflicts have impacted the authority of local governance institutions (traditional authorities and local government), reducing the ability to exercise powers assigned to them in state-building. This has created a kind of authority "gap". Regarding impacts on poverty and well-being, the farmer-herder conflicts have increased households' poverty. Large numbers of cattle have been killed. Farms have been burnt. Human lives have been lost. In some places, farms and entire farming communities have been abandoned due to the conflicts. Farmer-herder conflicts have reduced the well-being of households, as measured by happiness, life satisfaction, leisure and anxiousness.
3. Because of pasture and water availability during the dry season, transhuman herders are not ready to stop migrating to the study areas despite the increasing threat of losing cattle and human life. They would rather lose some cattle to the conflicts than risk losing their entire herds when water and food are unavailable at their original herding locations in other parts of Ghana or outside Ghana.

4. Most households are willing to use dialogue to address crop destruction and cattle-killing issues and prefer peaceful coexistence.
5. The conflicting actors use diverse strategies to influence policies on farmer-herder conflicts in their favour. Farmers have dominated the policy process more than herders and influenced the policies more.

The project has built capacity in farmer-herder conflict research, teaching and dissemination and the access theory through three PhD outputs (two successfully graduated and the last one in the finishing phase), two postdoc outputs and eleven Master thesis outputs. The project has produced 10 journal publications, 4 book chapter publications, 5 journal manuscripts accepted for publication, 10 journal manuscripts submitted and under review, 8 journal manuscripts under preparation, 1 policy brief finalized and 2 policy briefs under preparation. The project has organized three national and five district-level stakeholder forums to share the research findings and obtain stakeholder inputs. Additionally, the project has produced three video documentaries to communicate the key research findings.

### **Conclusions**

The research concludes that "frontiers", in the sense of lack of clear regulations and operational guidelines on cattle herding and what to do in the event of crop damage by cattle or cattle killing by crop farmers, is a major proximate causes of violent farmer-herder conflicts. People take matters into their own hands to seek justice when cattle damage their crops or when their cattle are killed. This escalates the conflicts, ultimately resulting in human deaths. The conflicts have caused loss of lives and property, negatively affected livelihoods, and negatively impacted on the authorities of politico-legal institutions. The violent clashes between farmers and herders can be avoided if clear rules for cattle herding are made and if both farmers and herders are confident that they will be compensated in the event of crop damage by cattle or cattle killing by crop farmers.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the research findings and the consensus achieved from the multi-stakeholder dialogue, we recommend the following actions.

- (i) In areas where herding has not been banned, local governments in partnership with relevant stakeholders should enact by laws to regulate cattle herding and specify what to do in the event of crop damage by cattle or cattle killing by farmers.
- (ii) In areas where herding is outlawed, the local government should create grazing corridors to enable the safe migration of cattle through their areas of jurisdiction to other areas with available pasture and water during the dry season without being harrassed by civilian vigilante or security forces.
- (iii) In the Sekyere Afram Plains District the local government should carry through its promise of maintaining the multistakeholder dialogue platform established by the project for the continuous engagement of stakeholders and generation of fresh ideas for the peaceful co-existence of farmers and herders. Similar platforms should be established by other local governments.
- (iv) The capacities of both statutory (local government) and customary authorities must be strengthened to resolve farmer-herder conflicts at the local level.