



Strengthening Local Capacities for Conflict Prevention in the Moughaata of Bassikounou

October 2023



Duration

Start Date: **01/11/2018**
End Date: **30/10/2020**

Budget

	TOTAL:	\$3,000,000
	OHCHR:	\$ 333,500
	UNICEF:	\$ 943,500
	UNDP:	\$ 779,500
	FAO:	\$ 943,500

Implementing Agencies



Partners

Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization (MIDEC)
Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development,
Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Original Education
Ministry of Employment, Youth, and Sports
COOPI (International NGO)
SOS Desert (National NGO)
Local elected officials
Communities.

CONTEXT

Bassikounou is a moughataa (district) and town of Hodh el Chargui region in Southeastern Mauritania, almost 1,200 kilometres from the capital Nouakchott. On the border with Mali, the landscape is dominated by sand dunes. Rain and pasture have become sparser over the last few years, and yet large herds of cows, sheep, goats, donkeys and camels roam the scant grasslands. They represent the livelihoods of the mostly nomadic communities on both sides of the border. Like in many parts of the Sahel, the border here is invisible, and Mauritians and Malians are linked by family ties, religion and trade. Since the start of the conflict in Mali in 2011, Malians have crossed the border and have not yet been able to return because of ongoing instability. In 2018, over 50,000 Malians live in a refugee camp about 20 kilometres from Bassikounou, effectively doubling the population of the district and making it Mauritania's second largest urban area. Risk of escalating tensions were high because of a continuous influx of refugees due to persistent insecurity and conflict in Mali, climate shocks, and limited public services and economic opportunities. With the lack of local media and constrained telecommunications networks, the spread of rumors or misinformation could further intensify societal divisions.

OBJECTIVES

In the context of increasing external pressures on the Moughataa (increased population and livestock, regional situation, and climate shocks), this project main aim was to address the root causes of tensions to consequently reduce the risk of conflicts.

KEY IMPACT AND RESULTS

► The tensions once observed between the two community groups have reduced in an area largely affected by desertification and climate change. Training on the pastoral code and joint management of natural resources combined with investments around pastoral hydraulics and the development of an integrated management plan of natural resources, increased local conflict prevention capacity and the amicable settlement of conflicts between farmers and herders. While the project ended, the Bassikounou women's network supported has now been institutionalized with legal status and is the technical branch of the newly created Observatoire National des Droits de la Femme et de la Fille and the Bassikounou radio continues its broadcasting to promote harmony between host communities and refugees. The radio allowed journalists to raise awareness during the pandemic against the spread of COVID-19, reaching out to 25,000 people (of which 60% are women, 20% are men, and 20% are young women and men).

- ▶ The establishment of consultation frameworks has strengthened communities' capacities in conflict prevention and management, as well as in human rights education, while increasing the number of disputes settled without the intervention of authorities, effectively reducing their administrative burden.
- ▶ The creation of a dynamic women's network as a platform for dialogue allowed to identify protection cases, monitor them, and follow up until they are resolved, and to facilitate targeting of aid distributions offered by international, national, and governmental organizations. Their positive role expanded to emergency situations (e.g., COVID-19 and adverse climate events)
- ▶ Capacity building of 700 men, 1,600 youths, and 4,200 women in mediation, prevention, and conflict resolution, and to disseminate lessons learned and best practices at local, regional, and national levels.
- ▶ 1,864 out-of-school children (931 in the camp and 933 in the host community) were reintegrated or benefitted from literacy courses. 92 youths received vocational training.
- ▶ Establishment of peace clubs and girls' clubs (67 in total) to enhance children's knowledge of their rights and their contribution to the peaceful development of their communities. Support was also provided to Quranic schools.
- ▶ 240 people from the four communes of Bassikounou trained on the sustainable and inclusive natural resources management.
- ▶ 60 people (49 men and 11 women) from 4 communes in the Moughataa of Bassikounou were trained on the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan.
- ▶ 304 teachers were trained in educational methodologies for children and peace education.
- ▶ Village committees were established in the four communes of the Moughataa of Bassikounou, each one collaborating with the communal authorities. During the pandemic, they carried out awareness campaigns on preventive measures and the distribution of protection kits and food packages.

■ CATALYTIC EFFECTS

Financial:

The project enabled the mobilization of additional resources from other partners: The women's network was able to secure funding from the following partners:

- ▶ HCR/GIZ: 20,000 USD
- ▶ EUROPEAN UNION: 50,000 USD
- ▶ ECHO: 2,500,000 EUR
- ▶ Swedish Committee for UNICEF: 1,400,000 USD
- ▶ Resilience project for Education funded by BMZ Child protection: 3,500,000 EUR
- ▶ EU-Children on the move: 430,000 EUR
- ▶ UNICEF French Committee: 400,000 USD