

# Improved Livelihoods for Pastoralists

SNV Practice Brief

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This Practice Brief shares SNV's experiences in supporting pastoralists in Africa to improve their livelihoods. It brings together a wide variety of cases from across the continent that draw out a number of commonalities in pastoralist practices, for instance their management of water resources in Tanzania and Niger. But it highlights as well the diversity of the contexts within which pastoralism operates, as seen in the contrasting scales of dairy processing in Kenya, Niger and Burkina Faso, or the different roles played by local brokers in the livestock markets of Southern Sudan and Benin. Working with pastoralists has taught us that they are not the traditionalists they are often depicted to be. They are adapting to rapid change as much as any other group in Africa. This Practice Brief highlights a variety of adaptation strategies, commercialisation options and institutional arrangements that are currently in use. These diverse experiences demonstrate that SNV support has helped bring about tangible improvements in pastoralist livelihoods, whilst increasing their contribution to economic development in some of the most challenging environments in Africa today.



Livestock markets play an important role in pastoralist economies. With local governments in **Kenya** unable to fulfil their statutory role to provide market facilities, SNV has pioneered the establishment of community livestock marketing associations to revive local trading. Subsequently, SNV has facilitated co-production arrangements with local governments, empowering the communities to play an active role in managing the markets. Pastoralists can now sell their livestock locally, cutting out some middlemen and reducing transaction costs they previously incurred en route to distant markets. Producers have increased their gross margins by as much as 30 - 40% for each animal sold.

The border areas of South **Mali** and West **Burkina Faso** are rangelands embedded in a large cotton belt. Besides providing pasture for herds of cotton producers and (agro-) pastoralists, they serve as corridors for transhumance between Northern Sahel and Southern Ivory Coast. Sustainable management of this agro-ecosystem is threatened by rising population and competing claims to land. Since 2006, SNV has provided support to 16 district councils and facilitated consultations on the equitable sharing of natural resources, leading to the establishment of local management committees in both countries. Building on 'shared area mapping' exercises, the committees have demarcated rangelands and corridors and put in place rules to govern the exploitation of common pool resources. Resource-based conflicts have diminished in many areas and the credibility of the community platforms has been enhanced by successful enforcement.

## ABOUT THIS BRIEF

This is the second publication in a series of Practice Briefs published by SNV Netherlands Development Organisation. The Brief is the result of collaboration between the East and Southern Africa (ESA) and West and Central Africa (WCA) regional offices and is available in both English and French. It is based on a more extensive Working Paper, which will be available for download on the SNV website ([www.snvworld.org](http://www.snvworld.org)) in February 2012. Editors: Joost Nelen, Rinus van Klinken and Wangu Mwangi. Production: Susan Onyango Omondi (English) and Francine Obura (French).

## Pastoralism in Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to more than 25 million pastoralists (people whose livelihood is based on mobile livestock keeping) and over 200 million agro-pastoralists (people combining mobile livestock keeping with agriculture). They represent over a quarter of the total population in Africa and occupy 43% of the continent's total land mass. Moreover, livestock production is a fast-growing sector globally, due in part to changing diets as a result of increasing disposable incomes.

Despite the high economic and environmental potential of drylands, most statistics show high levels of poverty in (agro-) pastoral areas: the arid and semi-arid districts of Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Ethiopia as well as North-Ghana and -Benin are among the poorest in these countries. Mali, Burkina, Niger, Sudan, Tanzania and Ethiopia find themselves in the low ranks of the human development index (HDI).

In many countries, pastoralist communities have limited voice in policy debates compared to more settled agricultural groups and urban populations. They are therefore more likely to be marginalised and treated as second-class citizens. These patterns of inequity are also reflected within pastoralist societies, where certain groups have traditionally been excluded from decision making and where there is growing socio-economic differentiation along wealth and gender lines.

### Dryland challenges

Supporting pastoralists to improve their livelihoods is closely linked to meeting some of the challenges confronting drylands today, including:

**Climate change:** this is evidenced by more extreme oscillations between dry and wet periods and between the availability of natural resources in different areas, leading to greater variability in livestock production.

**Food insecurity:** with recurring droughts (from the Sahel in the 1980s to the Horn of Africa in 2011), there is recognition that response to cyclical droughts and famine needs to shift from a short-term focus on food aid to longer-term initiatives designed to enhance the resilience of pastoralist livelihoods.

**Poverty:** with economic growth in many African countries showing solid progress, there is growing concern that current poverty-reduction efforts are not reaching the poorest and most marginalised groups within underdeveloped countries, of which certain pastoralist categories form a large part.

**Peace and security:** pastoralists typically live in the most remote and inhospitable regions within countries, or in areas where the resources on which they depend on for their livelihood are encroached upon for other land uses, such as mining, environmental protection or commercialised agriculture. This gives rise to political grievances that provide fertile ground for instability.

### Commercialisation of camel milk (Kenya)

The 15 million camels in Africa are mostly found in the more arid parts of the continent. They survive in a harsh environment and are reliable milk producers during dry seasons and drought years when milk from cattle, sheep and goats is scarce. Most of the camels are kept by pastoralists in subsistence production systems.

The influx of Somalis in Nairobi following the fall of the Somali government in 1991 has contributed to a rising demand for camel milk, which is common in Somalia, but not among Kenya's pastoralist communities. This has led to a new market in the capital for camel herders in Isiolo district in North-Eastern Kenya. SNV Kenya has been supporting pastoralist women from Isiolo to set up a cooperative society, so that they can better access the market. Improvements have included negotiation on transport of approx 5,000 litres/day, better hygiene, a safer payment system by using banking by mobile phone and identification of new markets (including a potential link to a processor).

Through this intervention 100 pastoralist households have attained a sustainable income of USD 75 per month throughout the year (irrespective of season) and is an initial entry into the camel milk market.

**Morgan Siloma, SNV Kenya**



## SNV interventions in support of pastoralists

The cases discussed in this section are grouped into four thematic categories, broadly covering SNV's experience in building the capacity of pastoralist institutions and communities in relation to natural resource management, the establishment of livestock markets, marketing of dairy products and enhanced access to basic services.

### a. Resource Management

The rationale behind the management of the pastoralist resources is to maximise livestock productivity in times of abundance and minimise weight and asset loss in times of scarcity (dry season). Effective pastoralist production requires that herds are kept mobile as part of a range of responses to the uneven distribution of resources - including pastures, water, trees, salt licks - over vast areas. Since rainfall patterns vary from year to year, mobility is also a means of dealing with unreliable supplies of water and fodder that are further exacerbated by population and land pressure. A common feature of pastoralist systems is that land and its resources are subject to mixed tenure regimes combining 'individual' or private control with communal ownership. With increasing privatisation and the expansion of agricultural production to more fragile dryland areas, private claims are often privileged over common, pastoralist rights to resources.

Conflicts are inherent to all pastoral contexts, but they intensify in societies where competing claims over resources are not, or no longer, regulated by legitimate institutions that take into account interests of all users' groups. Across Africa, conflicts over pastoralist resources have become increasingly violent over the past 25 years, although the nature and intensity of conflict varies considerably (for instance the eruption of violent clashes in East Africa versus latent differences in West Africa).

Awareness that reduced access to common pool resources would not just affect one group, but could undermine an entire system, counteracts individual decisions to claim important resources. SNV support therefore focuses on facilitating consultative platforms where the different interests can be articulated and mediated, as in the border area of Burkina Faso and Mali. Similar approaches have been applied in other countries (for instance the establishment of a multi-actor platform in Cameroon and on-going negotiations to set aside corridors for transhumance in Niger and northern Benin).

However, changing power relations and additional pressure from a range of other land uses (such as urbanisation, mining or exploitation of forest resources) also have an impact on the survival of pastoral systems. Expanding pastoralists' livelihood options is therefore an important strategy in effective natural resource management. In South Sudan, SNV supports the sustainable harvesting of gum acacia as a means of bringing peace.

## ECOWAS REGULATION

One of the few regional economic communities to have given attention to cross-border movement of pastoral herds is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In the late 1990s, the regional community passed a decision to authorise cross border transhumance ('free circulation of people and goods') in its 'regulation on transhumance in the ECOWAS region' (D. A/DEC., 5/10/1998).

### Gum for Peace (South Sudan)

The four pastoralist communities of Kimatong, the Toposa, Murle and Lopit in Eastern Equatoria State of South Sudan live in a vast savannah area and often engage in widespread conflicts resulting from cattle rustling and even theft of children. However, the tribes never attack each other at market centres, where they engage in brisk barter trade. This provided SNV with the inspiration to explore trade as a 'win-win' approach for providing an income to unemployed youth, hence reducing their involvement in cattle raids. SNV introduced the harvesting of gum acacia, the dried exudate produced from the trunk and branches of the *Acacia Senegal* and *Acacia Sahel* tree species. The gum is in great demand for industrial use in Europe and North America.

By linking the communities to an exporter, a major marketing channel for gum acacia from the area has been established. More than 400 people are now involved in the harvesting and selling of gum. However the most important outcome so far is that the communities around Kimatong have found a common reason for peaceful interaction. Over the last two years, no major conflict has occurred in the area where the communities harvest gum. There are more trade activities between the tribes and interaction between youth from different tribes has increased. This has improved overall security for the community in general.

**Justin Miteng, SNV South Sudan**

## Livestock Marketing

Pastoralists have evolved intricate strategies for using scarce resources as efficiently as possible. If possible, herds are maintained at optimal levels to enable the production of sufficient food supplies, ensure sufficient breeding stock and build up a buffer to ease restocking of herds following drought. These 'hoarding' strategies have led some to believe that pastoralists are averse to market transactions. Our practice proves otherwise. Pastoralists definitely respond to market incentives (such as better prices) and do sell surplus livestock. At the same time, the need for cash is an important trigger for sales whenever opportunities to maximise returns arise. Furthermore, producers respond quicker to price rises and access to markets when they feel safe. This is more likely to happen when they have secure access to rangelands, water points and transhumance corridors, and when there are few conflicts or violence.

From the various cases showcased in this Brief, it is clear that the pastoralist cycle of stocking, sales, reinvestment and possible herd growth is a careful planning strategy based on long experience. Maintaining large herds for status or as an insurance strategy is much more likely to be practiced by city-based, absentee owners. The withdrawal of central governments from providing market facilities as, a consequence of liberalisation and political decentralisation policies, has created the opportunity for communities to establish or maintain markets, either on their own (delegated responsibility in Benin), in collaboration with local governments (in Kenya) or with local governments assuming formal responsibility (in Zimbabwe).

SNVs focus on facilitating the exchange of goods and services (the market place) strongly resonates with the motivation of producers. By creating local markets, transaction costs are reduced. Long distance trekking leads to livestock mortalities, reduces animal/carcass value, exposes sellers and traders to exorbitant transport costs and other charges en-route, and leads to losses through theft of stock. Furthermore, as the case of Benin shows, in the 'controlled' environment of local markets, the exploitative role of middlemen can be reassessed.

### Creating honest brokers in the livestock market of Doguè (Benin)

Livestock markets in Benin have traditionally been controlled by influential local businessmen known as "dilaalis" who acted as intermediaries between livestock sellers and buyers. This brokerage role aimed, in part, at helping pastoralists to negotiate their way in the market or acting as guarantor for both seller and buyer. In some cases, however, this long-standing practice had evolved into a secretive transaction that mostly benefitted the middleman. In such markets each dilaali would define a space unique to him and implant rods called 'Tigue' on which to attach the animals of the sellers. The dilaali would then give the seller a small amount of money (around 100 FCFA) to 'buy food', or 'wait'. The bargaining position of the seller - now 'conveniently' out of the vicinity and therefore unaware of the real price negotiated for the animal - would be undermined. He would have to accept the price offered by the dilaali, who might opt to keep the balance for him. With the onset of decentralisation in 2000 the dilaalis came under increasing criticism, not only from livestock sellers but local governments as well, which were unable to collect revenues because of a lack of financial records. Since 2004 SNV has worked with livestock-keepers organisations to enhance transparency. In 2009 following a request of the organisation UCOPER in the Bassila commune in Benin, SNV began to work with local actors to improve the management of the livestock market in Doguè. As one of the stakeholders in the management committee, SNV's support has also addressed the formalisation of the dilaali role. In addition to brokering individual cattle sales, dilaalis were assigned the role of supervising market transactions in their allotted area, ensuring the traceability of all animals sold and maintaining transparent records to ensure proper revenue collection.

**Albert Houedassou, SNV Benin**

### Dairy sector

Milk plays a strong role in food security and subsistence for pastoralists, but changing production systems (higher milk yields), the increase of local demand due to growing urbanisation and the greater need for cash in pastoralist societies - and probably even more so among (agro-) pastoralists - is creating new opportunities. Despite the relative abundance of livestock in Africa, production and consumption of milk products is low in non-pastoral areas. Sub-Saharan Africa remains a net milk importer, with only few countries producing sufficient for export (such as Kenya, Egypt, South Africa).

In the countries where SNV is active there is a discernable trend towards commercialisation of milk production. This is partly due to a shift in its geographical focus, with SNV gradually starting to work more in the 'better off' areas due to higher prospects for marketing of production. But it is also partly due to the emergence of middle classes and urbanisation. SNV interventions respond

to these increased opportunities in different ways, as in supporting (women) producers to organise themselves in dairy cooperatives to establish micro-processing units for localised marketing of milk (as in the case below from Burkina Faso). Elsewhere, a more differentiated approach is followed, with SNV supporting farmer groups to link up with commercial processors through milk collection centres (close to urban conglomerates), as in Uganda or Niger. Sometimes, the milk collection centres are seen as a step towards the establishment of medium-sized processing units, such as in the Kenya 'commercial hub' model.

### **Houndé Dairy Producers Cooperative (Burkina Faso)**

In the Houndé area of west Burkina Faso, the agro-pastoral system is based on annual migration of most of the herd, coupled with a permanent presence on village land of a smaller stock of dairy animals. During the dry season (November-April) in particular, production levels of cow milk are quite low and irregular. The Dairy Producers' Cooperative ("SOCOPROLAIT") is responsible for milk production, marketing and coordination of the dairy processing unit in Houndé. The challenge is to establish a reliable supply to the unit, especially during the dry season, improve processing quality and so expand the presence on the market. Beginning in 2010, the cooperative has taken up this challenge, in collaboration with SNV. The first step was to improve the management of dairy cattle herds with local resources, natural pasture (dry fodder) with supplements of bran and oil cakes. After the first rise in production levels (to 36,665 litres in 2010/11), producers adopted better processing techniques, which encouraged the Regional Development Agency to finance a part of the business plan. At every step in the process, efforts were made to safeguard the role of women as strategic actors in the proper functioning of the milk value chain. Household incomes as a result of the increased supply rose by 44.5% to around €280 per year per member. The boost given to production and the mini dairy plant under SOCOPROLAIT's management has been a powerful factor in support of improving the local milk sector and assuring women's participation in decision making.

**Brigitte Ouedraogo, SNV Burkina Faso**

### **Provision of support services**

One of the significant contributions made by SNV in the livestock sector is supporting communities to engage with local governments in the (co-) management and co-production of services. In the past, government provided many services, whether in the form of water facilities, cattle dipping against tick-borne diseases or livestock auctions and markets. Often initiated in colonial times, post-independence governments in many African countries continued to both construct such facilities and finance their operations and maintenance at subsidised prices. With the onset of structural adjustment and the collapse of state services, a vacuum often emerged in pastoralist areas. In the more settled, urban and agricultural environments, communities or the private sector filled the void. With their more remote location and scarce technical and managerial capacities, pastoralist communities often had to make do with lesser services, or resorted to improvising or reassessing traditional options.

Over the past few years, SNV has started to support the self-organisation of diverse pastoralist communities in the provision of services. In Kenya communities are supported to form Livestock Marketing Associations in order to engage local governments in the establishment and operations of local livestock markets. In Tanzania cattle dip committees are being re-established and linked with local government to manage cattle dip services. In Benin the facilitation of community self-organisation (such as by ANOPER, a national association of livestock keepers, has helped to engage local governments and other stakeholders in the provision of stock corridors and pasture areas. In Zimbabwe, community leaders are lobbying their local governments to ensure security at market places. In all these, and similar cases, SNV's key role is not limited to helping communities to organise themselves, but also the creation of links between communities and local governments. The following two cases highlight how a focus on local governance helps to enhance the availability of water services in the deepest Sahel of Niger and cattle dips in Tanzania.



### Management of water facilities in Tillia (Niger)

In the (semi-) arid areas control over water determines access to all natural productive resources. Tillia, Niger, is a huge pastoral area, gathering each year thousands of herds from different countries to exploit its abundant rangelands. People and animals depend on deep wells and pumping stations for water delivery. Since state transfer of management to local management committees in the 1990s pastoralists have to pay for this water delivery, with the idea to use the revenues for maintenance and equipment. These committees are accountable to regional state authorities. The first bottleneck encountered is that responsibilities have been divided between two agents, wherein management was decentralised but revenues returned to a regional state authority, which hardly reports back how revenues are allocated. Secondly the new committees are 'superimposed' on a community in which customary clan authorities not necessarily sanction the statutory rules. It resulted in a vicious circle of arbitrary use and payment, few revenues, dysfunctional equipment. Since 2009 SNV has organised a series of consultations around the wells and at district level between the key stakeholders of waters user representatives, customary authorities, decentralised management committees and regional state authorities. The following actions drew them out of the impasse: reinvestment in water equipment, rehabilitation of water delivery, transparent user rules, which provided the incentives for the population to pay for the services. Most of the wells nowadays generate enough revenues to finance the maintenance of the stations, though the situation remains fragile. The accumulation of considerable amounts of money in the accounts and the absence of external control could 'wake up the old demons'.

**Nata Traoré, SNV Niger**

### African Union policy framework on pastoral development

The African Union recently issued a *Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa* (October 2010). The policy framework addresses the interrelated goals of sustainable pastoral resource management, equitable and secured access to pastoral resources, and peace and security. The framework also emphasises the need to support and harmonise policies across the Regional Economic Communities and Member States as a prerequisite for ensuring action at the required scale. The policy framework includes two core objectives. It aims to secure and protect the lives, livelihoods and rights of pastoral peoples and to reinforce the contribution of pastoral livestock to the economy.

The framework was formally adopted by the Executive Council of the African Union at its Eighteenth Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2011 (see [http://au.int/en/summit/sites/default/files/EXCL%20Dec600-643\\_e-2.pdf](http://au.int/en/summit/sites/default/files/EXCL%20Dec600-643_e-2.pdf)). In recognition of the many cross-border issues affecting pastoralism, the framework "...encourages pastoral networks and groups to initiate regional and continental forums to facilitate engagement with the (African Union) Commission and the Regional Economic Communities".

### Bringing cattle dips back into service (Tanzania)

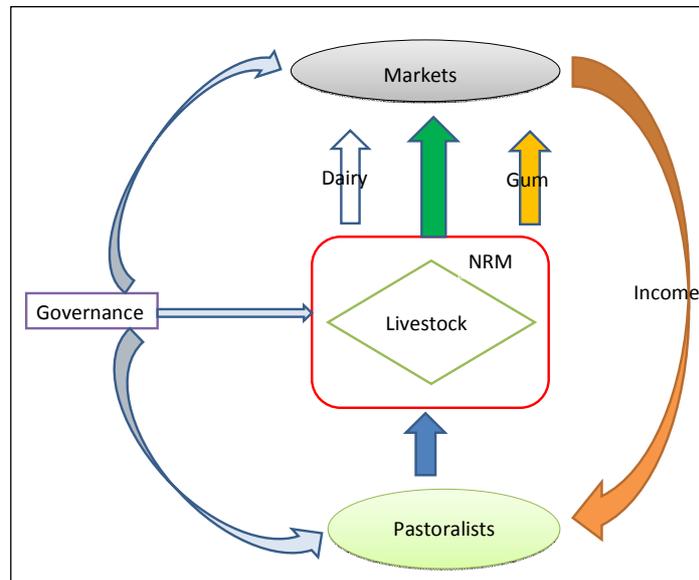
Livestock diseases seriously affect productivity of herds and pose an impediment to improved livelihoods. Out of these, tick borne diseases particularly cause high losses due to high mortality rates, loss of milk, meat, hides, oxen-power, manure and cost of treatment and control. Cattle dip tanks are an effective means of killing ticks and the Tanzania government, in line with international practice, has invested heavily in building cattle dips. However, a national survey recently found that only 6 % of the 2,014 cattle dips in the country were actually operating. Of the remaining 94 %, only 14 % were not operating due to technical reasons (e.g. broken or damaged) while 80 % were functional but were simply not being used.

In a participatory process, SNV Tanzania brought this situation to the attention of stakeholders, by carrying out a cattle dip mapping in one district, also finding out reasons for non-functionality. The mapping results confirmed that management was a key reason, e.g. absence of contracts, conflicts within the responsible committee or village government, sometimes due to corruption, political interference and lack of guidance from extension staff, as well as unclear ownership. Indeed, there was a lot of confusion and contradictions in the way the dips were operated even within one local government authority. Bringing stakeholders together created a momentum for district extension staff to go around the communities and provide support for these management problems. By creating this link between communities and (local) government, cattle dip services are now available in many communities. The experiences gained in one district are being up-scaled to the province, before targeting national level.

**John Mlay, SNV Tanzania**

## Conclusion

SNV's interventions in the pastoralist areas in Africa cover a wide variety of countries and conditions, from the Sahel in West Africa to the savannah zones of East and Southern Africa. Despite operating in such different contexts, the cases collected in preparation of this Practice Brief fit within a systematic approach. Reflecting on the different dimensions of our work, the following scheme emerged.



Firstly, SNV supports (agro-) pastoralist communities in the management of natural resources (mainly in West Africa). Secondly, SNV connects pastoralists to various markets, ranging from small-scale dairy processors to the commercial dairy value chain, and from (primary) livestock markets to marketing of Gum Acacia. A key feature of SNV is its **governance** approach, which is applied in markets (governance of the chain), in livestock and natural resource management and in the co-production of services for pastoralist communities.

The described interventions support pastoralists in two income strategies. Firstly, it helps them to *diversify* their incomes by a variety of options and activities. Diversification is probably the most accessible strategy for the majority of households: composition of herds changes and new markets are targeted. Livestock and farm by-products (dairy) get a more prominent place next to livestock chains. This implies a more sedentary lifestyle of part of the family, though mobile livestock remains a key asset. But it also helps pastoralists to *move up* the chain. That is, getting bigger herds or going to more commercial systems, which target higher value markets including exports. This strategy requires assets, specialised labour and inputs.

SNV interventions remain relevant for the overall majority of pastoralists. Our experience so far reveals that there are very few examples of pastoralists and livestock keepers that succeed in moving up the chain and pursuing strong commercialisation options. Most (agro-) pastoralists manage to gradually raise their incomes by pursuing a range of diversification strategies and it is this group that is mostly reached by SNV interventions: from providing access to markets to introduction of dairy micro-processing, and from support to management of the resource base to community mobilisation for provision of services.

In conclusion, debates on pastoralism in Africa are often dominated by two contrasting views: it is either seen as an anachronistic system (with 'inefficient', 'outdated' or even 'destructive' practices) that is unsuitable for current market demands, or it is considered as an eminently adapted system, but which needs a protective environment to meet market demands and food security needs. It is clear from the collection of cases presented here, that SNV's position in this debate tends towards the latter view. Pastoralists are changing with the times and engaging with the market. SNV's approach is to improve the livelihoods of the various (agro-) pastoralist groups by strengthening their voice in debates, supporting their engagement with markets and improving service provision and resource management.

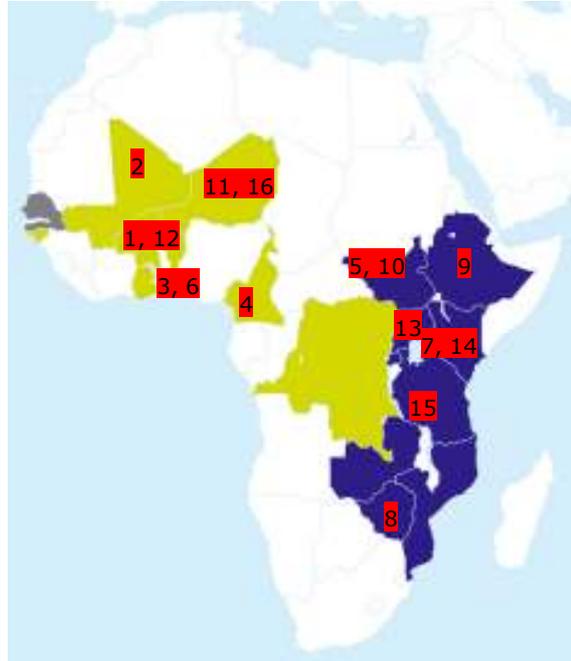
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