



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Linking community-based animal health services

with natural resource conflict mitigation in
the Abyei Administrative Area

Building resilience through dialogue and negotiation in a contested area
between Sudan and South Sudan



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RESILIENCE PROMISING PRACTICE

Protracted crises and conflicts

Linking community-based animal health services

with natural resource conflict mitigation in
the Abyei Administrative Area

Building resilience through dialogue and negotiation in a contested area
between Sudan and South Sudan



Source: FAO

Context

The Abyei Administrative Area (AAA) is a contested zone located on the central border between South Sudan and Sudan. Its status has remained unresolved since South Sudan seceded from Sudan in 2011, and the governments failed to agree on the border division. A United Nations peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), has since monitored the situation. It is entrusted with overseeing demilitarisation and maintaining security in the area.

The AAA represents a grazing hub in which both the *Dinka Ngok* (affiliated with South Sudan) and the *Missiriya* (affiliated with Sudan) tribal communities interact, sharing natural resources such as grazing land, pastureland and water. In the past, access to natural resources was regulated by customary laws within the traditional tribal system, which helped to maintain and strengthen peaceful relations between the two groups.

However, in recent years, the AAA has been the subject of confrontation, leading to frequent outbreaks of violence. Over the past four decades, access to natural resources has been increasingly contested, drawn along ethnic lines between *Dinka* and *Missiriya* communities. The tension has been exacerbated by an ongoing power struggle at national level between and within the ruling parties of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/SPLA) and the National Congress Party (NCP) of Sudan.

Against a backdrop of decades of chronic underdevelopment, wider conflict and poverty, this protracted crisis continues to undermine livelihoods and cooperation between groups in the AAA. Furthermore, a temporary joint administration between Sudan and South Sudan, the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC), has become increasingly ineffectual, to the extent that UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are separately delivering most public services directly to *Dinka Ngok* and *Missiriya* communities.

Mistrust and lack of dialogue have been critical components of this conflict. FAO has played a key role in initiating and facilitating a process focused on dialogue and building social cohesion at grassroots level, contributing to wider sustaining peace initiatives. FAO identified a window of opportunity through the technical delivery of community-based animal health veterinary services (embedded in an agricultural livelihood support strategy), in an effort to improve inter-community relations and contribute to sustaining peace objectives.

Key facts

Geographical coverage →

Abyei Administrative Area (AAA), a contentious area situated between Sudan and South Sudan, whose joint administration by both governments was agreed in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)

Target group →

Missiriya pastoralist community who seasonally migrate (October-June) to Abyei through 3 migration routes

Multi-stakeholders →

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Secretariat of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Fishery (SAARF)
Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC Sudan)
Missiriya Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs)
United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO)
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)

Donor →

European Commission

Methodological approach

The basis of the project in the AAA was a livelihood analysis approach. This focused on the role of FAO in facilitating social dialogue between parties involved in conflict linked to natural resources, in order to promote equitable access to and sustainable management of these valuable assets. The approach is rooted in a conflict-sensitive understanding of the context, and an in-depth livelihood analysis in order to inform programming.

Key drivers of this livelihood analysis approach are: (i) promoting trust among actors, (ii) strengthening social cohesion within the territory in which all actors face environmental threats as well as growing competition over limited natural resources, and (iii) strengthening traditional/local institutions.

The long-term aim of the approach is equitable, sustainable and peaceful access to and use of the principal natural resources affecting communities' livelihoods, such as water, grazing and farmland. However, in the light of the protracted nature of the crisis, a huge gap remains between the challenging current situation and these long-term objectives. This is where identifying windows of opportunities are needed to target the livelihood needs of the concerned parties as concretely as possible. Given the importance of livestock for the livelihoods of both communities, a window of opportunity was identified in the form of providing animal health services, specifically through a vaccination campaign.

The following steps were implemented throughout the process:

1. Assessment of stakeholders and conflict drivers within the socio-ecological system
2. Identifying a window of opportunity
3. Implementation of community-based animal health services contributing to a peace agreement
4. Strengthening a sustaining peace process

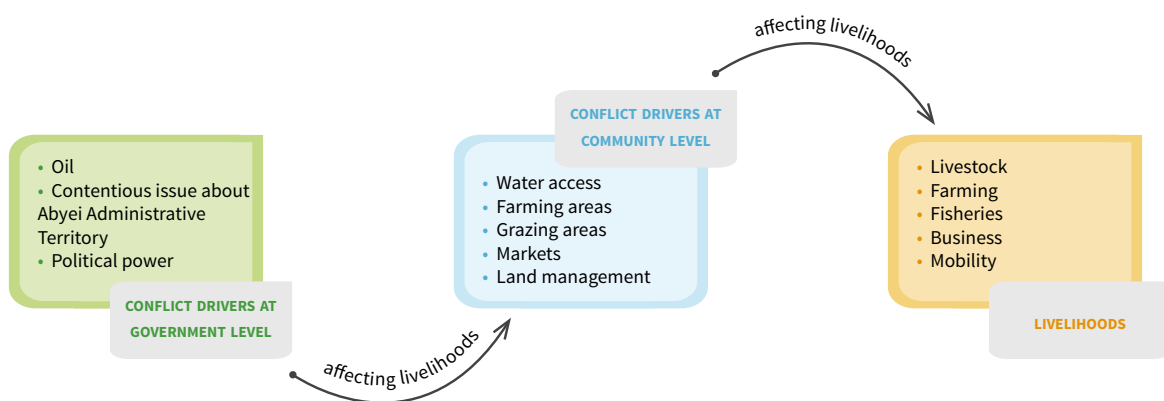


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1. Assessment of stakeholders and conflict drivers within the socio-ecological system

The first step of the methodological approach involved conducting an assessment that focused on analysing the stakeholders, as well as the power asymmetries between them, and identifying conflict drivers for governments and communities, especially those related to natural resource management. By adopting a systemic vision of the AAA, FAO was able to facilitate an open dialogue among stakeholders, in particular the *Dinka Ngok* and *Missiriya* communities.

As illustrated below, the conflict drivers at government level differ from those at community level. The former are related to political and regional issues, while the latter are linked to access to and equitable management of natural resources, which seriously affect the livelihoods of both *Dinka Ngok* and *Missiriya* communities.



2. Identifying a window of opportunity

Building on the initial assessment of actors and conflict drivers, FAO used community-based animal health services as an entry point to develop trust and generate dialogue, as well as to lay the foundations for the other livelihood interventions and strengthen the ongoing peacebuilding process led by traditional leaders of both communities. The plan to work with both communities was initially constrained due to resistance offered by the *Dinka Ngok* Secretariat of Agriculture, Animal Resources and Fishery (SAARF). FAO managed to overcome this reluctance by engaging in continuous dialogue and discussion with the Secretariat. FAO launched a dialogue and negotiation process separately with traditional leaders and local authorities of both communities, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UN-RCO). These meetings focused on the critical aspects affecting the food security and livelihoods of the entire population settled in the AAA. FAO offered to provide agricultural livelihood support. Given the political context, FAO identified a window of opportunity by offering vaccination and treatment of *Missiriya* livestock within the AAA as a tool to strengthen the ongoing peacebuilding process headed by traditional leaders of both communities.

3. Implementation of community-based animal health services contributing to a peace agreement

3.1 Veterinary training of *Missiriya* Community animal health workers (CAHWs):

Before the start of the animal vaccination campaign, 30 *Missiriya* CAHWs were trained by a veterinary team staffed by experts from FAO and SAARF. The *Missiriya* CAHWs are selected members of the community who are recognized as having experience in basic animal treatment. FAO enhanced the CAHWs' skills in animal disease control with a refresher training course lasting about one week.

Based on a cost recovery system (see below), CAHWs were paid directly by cattle owners for their services, while FAO assumed responsibility for providing vaccines, drugs and technical supervision during the vaccination campaign.

Cost recovery system

The cost recovery system aims to ensure the continuous delivery of animal health services and provision of veterinary drugs from local sources, so as to enable immediate intervention against any livestock disease outbreak. In agreement with local authorities and FAO (which provides the initial stock of veterinary drugs), CAHWs charge beneficiaries (livestock owners) in order to procure enough funds to buy further quantities of drugs from local markets.

Since Abyei livestock owners had been used to having such services free of charge, the system had to be partially adapted, and a fixed fee was agreed among CAHWs, local authorities and cattle owners. This had a twofold positive impact. Firstly, it empowered cattle owners to engage in their own development. Secondly, it allowed FAO to further improve the system (through cold chain and solar-powered refrigerator technologies) and to establish a committee responsible for collecting funds to purchase veterinary drugs available on the local market.



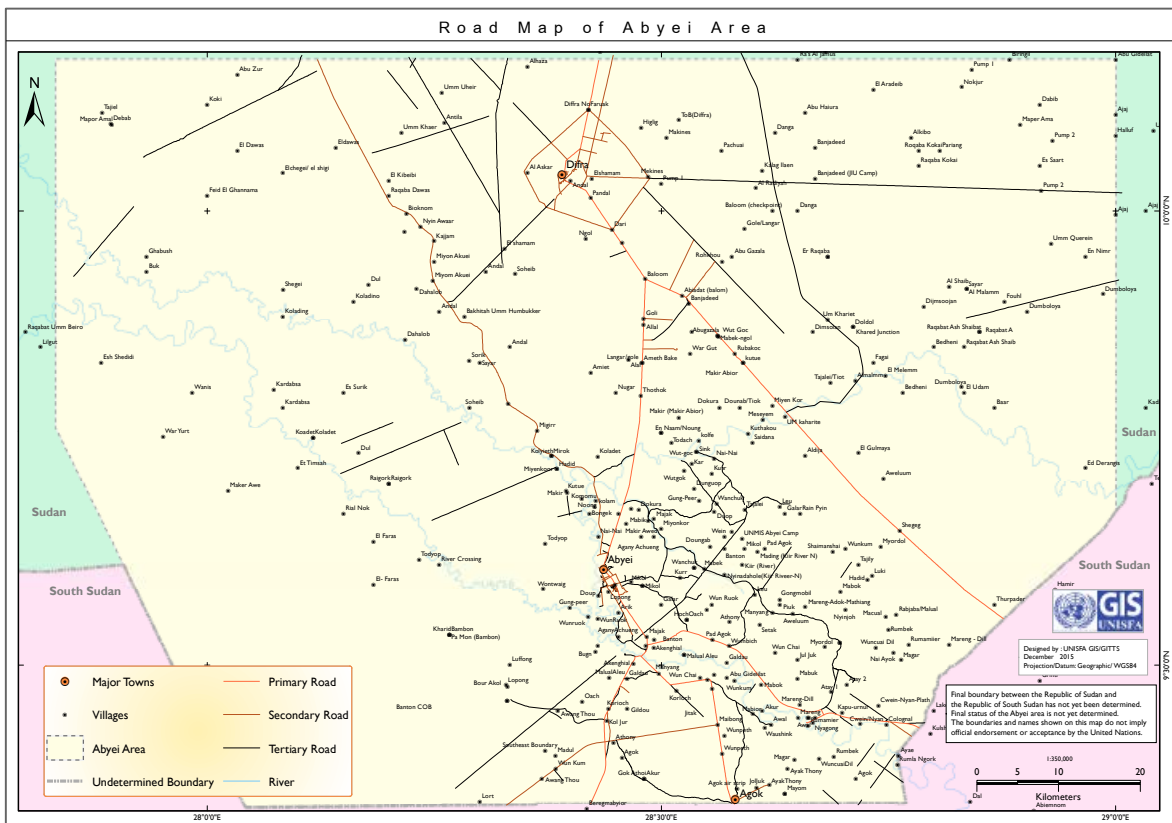
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3.2 Vaccination campaign(s) and agriculture livelihoods support:

In order to implement the first vaccination campaign, *Missiriya* CAHWs identified:

- The vaccination points in collaboration with cattle herders;
- The main diseases to target for cattle vaccination;
- Cattle herders; and
- Cattle crushes to facilitate and speed up vaccinations by CAHWs.

Mobility restrictions challenged the effective implementation of this initial planned vaccination campaign in 2015. The movements of South Sudanese and Sudanese citizens in the AAA were restricted by UNISFA in order to reduce the risk of interaction and conflict between the two communities. Pending an agreement between the communities, which were separated by the disengagement line drawn up in the central part of the AAA, FAO implemented its planned veterinary services separately for each of them, in the northern and southern AAA respectively:



Source: UNISFA GIS/GITTS Unit

- **Southern AAA:** FAO South Sudan field staff, in collaboration with SAARF, supported *Dinka Ngok* communities within the planned multi-sector agricultural livelihood support in three main areas: livestock (vaccination), vegetable production (training and seeds/tools distribution), and fisheries (training in post-harvest management and distribution of fishing kits).

As a result of the vaccination campaign between November and December 2015, FAO South Sudan, working together with SAARF, vaccinated 37 434 small and large ruminants belonging to the *Dinka Ngok* community in the southern areas of Abyei. In February 2016, a second round of vaccinations targeted 15 007 small and large ruminants belonging to the *Dinka Ngok* community.

- **Northern AAA:** In collaboration with FAO Sudan field staff based in El Fula, and with the contribution of Sudanese authorities, an initial vaccination campaign, targeting 230 775 large and small ruminants, was implemented between November and December 2015 for *Missiriya* livestock. These animals were vaccinated along the three migration routes on the border with Southern Kordofan State.

Recognising that FAO gained trust and credibility among the *Dinka Ngok* community following the delivery of agricultural, livestock and fisheries services, SAARF agreed to FAO South Sudan delivering veterinary services to the *Missiriya* community (in accordance with some members of AJOC Sudan deployed in Diffra) and engaged both communities in a grassroots dialogue over issues of concern. Accordingly, FAO was the first and only organization that was able to work with both communities providing animal health services connected to free movement of animals towards southern Abyei.

Following the peace agreement between the two communities, a second vaccination campaign preceded by a refresher training course for 30 CAHWs was organized by FAO South Sudan. This campaign targeted livestock belonging to *Missiriya* communities and, for the first time since the conflict started, involved veterinarians belonging to the *Dinka Ngok* SAARF. Between May and June 2016, 55 180 small and large ruminants belonging to the *Missiriya* pastoralist/nomad community were vaccinated in the southern and northern areas of Abyei. A third vaccination campaign took place in early 2017, protecting 118 000 cattle against hemorrhagic septicemia (HS), black leg (BQ) and anthrax to date, and 215 600 small ruminants against peste des petits ruminants (PPR), contagious caprine pleuropneumonia (CCPP) and sheep and goat pox (SGP).

4. Strengthening a sustaining peace process

Building on the development of trust among both communities, and their confidence in FAO, the final step of the methodology involved direct implementation of the project's sustaining peace component. Eight workshops (four for each community), and a joint workshop involving key leaders, were organized in collaboration with Partners in Development Services. The eight workshops sought to address the main conflict drivers that were strictly related to natural resource management and access:

- 4 workshops were conducted with groups of *Missiriya* women, youth, traditional leaders and pastoralists;
- 4 other workshops with groups of *Dinka Ngok* youth, traditional leaders, peace spoilers¹ and agropastoralists.

Following these workshops, a final initiative was organized for members from both communities. The aim was to recap the main topics previously discussed and train all participants in tools to sustain peace and equitable natural resource management. The main objectives of these workshops, convened by FAO, were to:

- Increase and enhance participants' dialogue and negotiating skills,
- Raise awareness about equitable sharing of the main natural resources in the area provoking conflicts at grassroots level, and
- Highlight the role of providing livelihood services as a tool to strengthen dialogue and negotiation processes.

² Peace spoilers are people that spread rumors about the other parties, increase tension, and reinforce existing divisions if negative consequences arise.



Cattle crushes are strongly built stalls or cages for holding cattle, horses or other livestock safely while they are examined, marked or given veterinary treatment. These structures are extremely important for FAO because their construction demonstrates the community's engagement and its contribution to the activity as a whole. In the future, FAO is planning to build permanent metal cattle crushes to avoid deforestation and increase the quality and efficacy of the service.

Impact

- **Improving livestock health:** The delivery of veterinary services provided immediate results, improving the health of both communities' livestock and reducing the risk of disease outbreak, especially for *Missiriya* animals coming from other regions. Particularly strong was the impact of vaccines used against HS (usually unavailable in *Missiriya* areas), which were kept in a cold chain. As a result of the vaccination campaign against all five identified common local diseases, livestock health improved and was protected from often fatal conditions.
- **Strengthened beneficiary livelihoods:** Given communities' strong reliance on livestock for dairy products, the animal health services offered by FAO protected their most important assets. This had a positive impact not only on the health of livestock, but on beneficiaries' livelihoods, income and food security.
- **Improved conflict-sensitive programming:** The dialogue-based approach helped to build confidence with both communities, thereby reaching a deeper understanding of the root causes of the conflict, to better inform programming aimed at building long-term sustainable peace.
- **Sustaining peace between parties in conflict:** As a result of the peace agreement, *Missiriya* pastoralists were able to cross the buffer zone and access grazing areas in the southern AAA controlled by the *Dinka Ngok* community. This led to grazing opportunities being extended, benefiting both animal health and milk production.

From a logistical standpoint, the peace agreement enabled FAO to cease depending on UNIFSA for service delivery. In addition, it enabled FAO South Sudanese staff, as well as the *Dinka Ngok* (SAARF) veterinary officers/team to (i) cross the buffer zone for the first time since the conflict began; (ii) access *Missiriya* communities in the north of Abyei; and (iii) deliver livestock veterinary services. This had a significant impact on levels of trust and confidence between the two ethnic groups, which in turn had a positive effect on the livelihoods of both communities.

- **Free movement of people:** *Missiriya* cattle herders were finally allowed to cross towards the *Dinka Ngok* controlled southern territory in search of water points and grazing. In addition, South Sudanese citizens were allowed to enter the northern side of the AAA. Lastly, travel was made possible towards Khartoum, allowing South Sudanese citizens to join relatives or access medical treatment.

Sustainability

In order to ensure sustainability for this type of dialogue-based intervention among all stakeholders in conflict, the following key factors are essential:

- a stable presence of staff on the ground;
- a continuous assessment of the political context; and
- a careful analysis to understand the varying perceptions of the conflict by different stakeholders;

In addition, the facilitating institution (in this case FAO) has a major role to play in initiating dialogue at grassroots level and facilitating peacebuilding activities by bringing the two communities together through their common livelihood interests. Strengthening livelihoods is crucial for sustaining peace processes.

In May, FAO planned a 17-day training initiative in animal health control, targeting 49 *Missiriya* and *Dinka Ngok* youth interested in delivering animal health services and engaging in income generating activities. The training focused on the cost recovery system recently introduced by FAO in the AAA. The activities further increased trust among the communities and helped to underpin sustaining peace processes.

In addition, the agricultural livelihood programme will be reinforced through the support of (i) a *Dinka Ngok* women's group engaged in vegetable production on land plots, and (ii) local market infrastructure to strengthen business and income generating activities. An agreement with *Dinka Ngok* local authorities has also been signed to provide fisheries services to *Missiriya* communities.



Replicability and upscaling

For this practice to be replicable in other contexts, it is important to identify a window of opportunity or a livelihood activity that is common to the parties in conflict, as a basis on which to build trust between the communities.

Aside from the continued presence of FAO staff on the ground (to the greatest extent possible), additional preconditions needed for this approach to be replicated in other contexts include the following:

- Inputs for service delivery should be prepositioned for immediate delivery;
- The communities must be willing to consider engaging in dialogue and negotiation processes; and
- The main implementing partner (e.g. FAO) must be recognized as a key mediating actor based on its delivery of technical services.

Some aspects of a negotiation-based methodology called the GreeNTD approach² could be combined with this form of livelihood analysis in other protracted crisis contexts. The five-phase GreeNTD process seeks to facilitate interaction between different stakeholders involved in land disputes, in order to find solutions to problems of competition for access to land and limited natural resources. It also aims to promote better understanding of the relationship between humans and nature, and can be adapted to different scales of intervention. This combination of approaches would complement each other and reinforce the trust-building exercises sought between stakeholders involved.

Conclusion

Led by FAO, the approach brought two communities in conflict together through their common assets and source of livelihoods, using livestock as an entry point to addressing tensions and improving peace. The effectiveness of this strategy was strengthened by the fact that the conflict was jeopardizing community livelihoods, including mobility for people and livestock. Following successful FAO-led dialogue and negotiation processes, which further strengthened the trust between community leaders and resulted in a peace agreement, effective veterinary services could be provided to both communities.

From a technical viewpoint, the delivery of veterinary services reduced the risk of livestock disease outbreaks, increased the quality and quantity of milk production and improved pastoralists' mobility and livelihoods.

From a conflict mitigation perspective, the delivery of veterinary services contributed to reinforcing the credibility of FAO, especially with *Dinka Ngok* local authorities (SAARF), who initially challenged FAO's approach. As a whole, confidence was boosted among FAO field staff, local authorities and communities, ultimately strengthening the resilience of beneficiaries' livelihoods.

² FAO. 2016. *Green Negotiated Territorial Development (GreeNTD). Negotiation, environment and territorial development. More than a methodology- an approach for improving equitable access and sustainable management of territories*. Rome. [Online]. Retrieved from: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6603e.pdf>



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