

Promoting conflict sensitive reform in the livestock sector.

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Federal Ministry of Livestock Development (FMLD)

(A Case Study)

Overview

SPRiNG's technical assistance to the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development (FMLD) provides ongoing support for addressing one of the core drivers of conflict in Nigeria, which is the competition over scarce natural resources such as land and water. This approach to improving peace has facilitated a policy upgrade that addresses longstanding policy and institutional loopholes in government's response to emerging conflict dynamics in Nigeria. It also addresses some of the economic disruptions and supply chain shocks caused by resource driven conflicts in parts of the country.



Source: SPRiNG

Across Nigeria's North-Central and North-West regions, livestock management is a way of life just as it is an economic and livelihood activity – it represents cultural identity, income, food, and security against climate shocks and stresses. However, weak livestock governance policy frameworks, climate stresses, and the perennial resource-based conflicts between farmers and herders impacted the livestock sector, turning this livelihood system into a flashpoint for violence. It is within this context that SPRiNG provides targeted technical assistance to support the FMLD's development of vital national policy initiatives and capacities for the purpose of enabling sectoral transformation.

Context

The establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development in July 2024 provided a rare opportunity to reform the livestock sector – moving away from weak and reactive sectoral management to proactive, conflict sensitive livestock governance that could simultaneously drive growth and modernise systems. In furtherance of the reorganisation, the Ministry's operations required the development of policies and institutional frameworks that would effectively grow Nigeria's livestock economy while reducing violent conflicts and addressing the trust deficits between agropastoral communities, citizens, and the state.

Specific challenges such as weak and fragmented livestock data systems, lack of trust between government and relevant stakeholders, weak Federal/State coordination as well as institutional capacity deficits at government levels have undermined well intentioned policy reforms in the past. The SPRiNG approach is a direct response to these situational issues.

Approach and Activities

SPRiNG provides embedded Technical Assistance (TA) at the FMLD which is helping to bridge the gap between specialised knowledge around livestock management and a pastoral approach to peacebuilding. This TA covers support for institutional reform engagements, policy review, and mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity into the development and implementation of policy frameworks.

The technical assistance extends to supporting the development of a Peacebuilding, Security & Social Cohesion sub-strategy for The National Livestock Growth Acceleration Strategy (NL-GAS) as well as the design of a National Livestock Digital Public Infrastructure (NLDPI) for livestock identification, tagging, and traceability, reflecting the programme's interest in institutional systems strengthening.

In furtherance of its objective of promoting conflict sensitive policy reform, SPRiNG facilitated a stakeholder engagement meeting between the Ministry and Pastoralist associations. The forum offered the platform for the FMLD to share reform measures to key the main stakeholders in order to gain their buy in and ownership. SPRiNG supported capacity-building training for 62 management staff of FMLD and 42 media partners on Conflict Sensitive Communications. Finally, SPRiNG supported the development of a Conflict Sensitive Communication Strategy for the Ministry.



Source: SPRiNG

Results

The SPRiNG programme support is helping the Ministry and the Government of Nigeria to develop actionable roadmaps (such as the NL-GAS and NLDPI) for implementing inclusive natural resource governance and by extension, promote peaceful coexistence in communities dependent on agro-pastoral livelihoods.

This strengthens institutional legitimacy and links livestock productivity, conflict prevention, and resilience to broader national agendas around development, security and climate change mitigation. The foundational design of the NLDPI establishes a national pathway for nationwide livestock identification, traceability, and data-driven policymaking, further reinforcing the Ministry's role in leading livestock development in Nigeria.

As a result of the training and the conflict sensitive communications strategy, FMLD has improved institutional capacity to communicate its policies and initiatives clearly, consistently, and sensitively across diverse stakeholders.

“Engaging every voice makes solutions more inclusive and sustainable... When we choose to engage appropriately, we are a step closer to developing a robust livestock sector, promoting peace and resilience.”
Alhaji Idi Mukhtar Maiha,
Honorable Minister for Livestock Development

Lessons

One of the key learnings from this process is that it is critical to build synergy between formal and informal systems to address the causes and consequences of conflict at community level. Also, the sustainability and effectiveness of peace and resilience initiatives depend on a combination of developing relevant policy frameworks and the institutionalising practice through stakeholder-owned and stakeholder-driven processes.

Another learning is that policy design for the livestock sector should be people- and systems-centred, reflecting lived realities, including pastoral mobility, climate stresses, market demands, and livelihood pressures. Acknowledging these preconditions increases the likelihood that it would gain public acceptance. Linked to this is the fact that livestock tagging, and traceability is as much a social process as it is a technical one. Therefore, implementing digital systems require trust-building and sustained consultations across vertical and horizontal stakeholders before operationalising technology.

Finally, technical assistance to public institutions is most effective when it is institution-focused, rather than transactional or prescriptive. When policymakers are supported to co-create and lead processes that solve local problems, this enhances prospects for policy implementation and sustainability of reforms.

About the SPRiNG Programme

Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria (SPRiNG) is a UK-funded initiative designed to support a more peaceful and climate-resilient Nigeria. By addressing the root causes of conflict and vulnerability, SPRiNG works to reduce violence, strengthen local systems, and promote inclusive governance across conflict-affected areas in North-West and North-Central Nigeria.

SPRiNG is grounded in a politically informed, evidence-based approach that integrates environmental science, political economy, and conflict analysis. Our goal is to create a more stable and peaceful Nigeria where citizens benefit from reduced violence and increased resilience to the pressures of climate change.



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