Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)

Contribute to the stabilization of border communities in the regions of Tillabéri and Tahoua in Niger

Located in southwestern Niger, the regions of Tillabéri and Tahoua are characterized by a general state of turmoil and social instability, following the crises in neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso. This condition of inner-state precarity has urged governmental actors in finding adequate solutions to stabilize national borders and their resident communities.

**Search for Common Ground** (Search) is leading an 18-months project, funded by the EU, laying the foundations for long-term stabilization of border communities in the regions of Tillabéri and Tahoua. Our action is built around three specific objectives:

- Strengthen trust between defense and security forces, authorities and populations;
- Strengthen vertical cohesion between civil authorities, customary authorities and populations;
- Strengthen horizontal inter- and intra-community cohesion.

Thanks to the EU Delegation in Niger, Expertise France, Enabel and the Haute Autorité à la Consolidation de la Paix (HACP), our initiative in Tillabéri and Tahoua is operative in the most remote and inaccessible areas, where rivalries and conflictual behaviour exacerbate the condition of local livelihoods. Our objective consists of fostering social cohesion and infra societal unity by advancing conflict transformation procedures through dialogue, mediation and negotiation.
TRUST BETWEEN AUTHORITIES AND CIVILIANS

To foster group trust we are holding dialogue brainstorming workshops that provide a safe environment where sensitive topics can be discussed and properly addressed by participants. We are recruiting members of this engaging platform at commune level within representatives of national security forces, civil and traditional authorities, and local CSOs/CBOs, represented by members of youth councils and associations of herders and farmers. Training sessions are organized as well by our experts to enhance collaboration, overcome mistrust and challenge misunderstanding situations. Following these activities, a series of forums for popular expression are organized every two months in each commune. They aim to offer local stakeholders the opportunity to boost and spread the discussions held during previous meetings. Emphasis is placed on actions that involve local institutions, civil society actors and communities to foster collaboration.

REINFORCING VERTICAL COHESION

Key to this process are the peace ambassadors identified within community figures, elected officials (mayors), traditional and religious leaders, and representatives of CSOs and CBOs (including youth and women’s organizations). These mediators, selected based on their impartiality and their ability to play a crucial role in preventing and managing community conflict, are trained by our experts to carry out conflict snapshots in their respective communes and provide a detailed frame of affecting dynamics needing urge solutions. This mapping process allows local authorities to easily identify and analyze conflicts’ grassroots. A communication campaign is being carried out, as well, within the framework of interactive radio programs produced by our or by partner radio stations. These broadcasting formats are documenting the activities of local actors and authorities about the successes and the lessons learned in local initiatives. Round tables, radio series, magazines and spots are produced in local languages to broaden the content offer and audience ratings.

HORIZONTAL DIALOGUE

Similarly to the vertical cohesion initiative, peace ambassadors are responsible for organizing dialogue sessions to strengthen intra- and inter-community relations, to exchange views and perspectives on existing conflicts and to establish or strengthen existing community monitoring systems. As part of their training in conflict transformation techniques, peace ambassadors are participating, as well, at the creation of a Center of Peace in Tillabéri. In support of material engagement, media coverage is an essential factor. Our cultural initiatives are organized to promote inter- and intra-community rapprochement. Participatory theater performances in local languages are held in partnership with local theater troupes in those areas where radio broadcasting services are difficult to outreach. These engaging displays help public audiences in difficult trauma management situations where conflict transformation procedures are still developing.