

## Lobbying for land rights of pastoralists in Niger

### Background



Photo: Jim Loring/Tearfund

Niger has many pastoralist communities and one of **Tearfund's partners, Jeunesse en Mission Entreaide et Développement (JEMED)** is committed to working with them in the Abalak province. JEMED has provided wells, schools and natural resource management for the past 20 years. But pastoralists don't have access to secure land rights which threatens their food security and livelihoods. Often there is conflict between herders, and herders and farmers, because of competition for the same pasture, farmland and water.

### Research on the national law

When the Niger Parliament announced a new law, known as a Pastoral Code, JEMED decided to take action. JEMED asked Tearfund for help and Tearfund put them in touch with Advocates for International Development (A4ID). A4ID were able to connect JEMED with a French law firm, who provided free legal advice about the repercussions of the new law. The consensus was that the new law would severely restrict the land rights of nomadic communities.

### Awareness raising and speaking out

In response, JEMED decided to raise awareness amongst pastoralists about their land rights and about who had responsibility to uphold those rights. Community meetings were well attended. At the same time, they met with local and national government officials to explain the problem with the proposed law. They presented the research that had been done by the law firm and suggested recommendations on how the law could be improved. For example, they suggested setting up land committees which could resolve disputes between people.

### Land management committees

As a result of JEMED's work, a land tenure commission was set up in Abalak commune and 5 local land management committees have been established. These committees now ensure the right to priority use of the pasture and water rights for 5 local communities, and resolve disputes between pastoralists and farmers over land and natural resources generally.

### Influencing the national law

Accordingly, after lobbying at the national level, the government officials agreed to stop the new law being passed. The government threatened to overturn this decision, so JEMED engaged in crucial dialogue with them again. This time they highlighted the need for pastoralist communities to be consulted, so that their needs and rights could be fully considered before the law is re-submitted for approval by the Parliament.

The approval of the Pastoral Code was delayed, pending full consultation with those who are going to be most directly affected by it. More recently, JEMED organised a local seminar to come up with a revised text for the Pastoral Code on land rights as the newly elected Government gets into action.