BACKGROUND
In February 2014, Danish Demining Group (DDG) initiated a Border Security and Management programme in the Sahel to improve border security and management in the Liptako-Gourma region, between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. The Liptako-Gourma region faces several key challenges; inter-ethnic issues and conflict over natural resources are common, but in recent years have been exacerbated by external factors, including the drug trade, a massive inflow of arms and extremist armed groups. In this volatile context, DDG’s community-driven Border Security and Management programme is building on DDG’s organisational expertise in Armed Violence Reduction to stem the flow of arms, reduce armed violence in border areas and strengthen border management capacity.

DDG BORDER SECURITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES
To inform the design and implementation of this programme, DDG carried out a Border Security Needs Assessment (BSNA) in the three countries from May-June 2014. The specific objectives of the BSNA were to:

- Provide a snapshot of the flow of goods and people (both legal and illegal) across borders;
- Identify and prioritise security risks in border areas;
- Analyse the relationships, attitudes and perceptions of security providers and border communities towards each other, and to identify factors that influence these relationships, including capacity and training of border authorities;
- Assess levels of trust and identify tensions between different communities and community-based actors in border areas;
- Provide programmatic recommendations to DDG and other actors to support comprehensive border management in the Liptako-Gourma area and facilitate improved cooperation between communities and authorities, in order to better secure porous borders in the region;
- Enhance cooperation between communities and authorities, in order to ensure improved security in response to porous borders in the region.

MAIN FINDINGS

- **Communities and authorities share similar security priorities**, e.g. resolution of natural resource-related disputes, reduction of armed violence and banditry.
- **Communities’ perception of security has not changed significantly following the intervention of Serval and MINUSMA.** The presence of foreign troops has not contributed to a change in the perception of communities regarding security in border areas.
• **Communities have high levels of trust in state forces, but this trust is being eroded.** Communities have high levels of trust in national armies, the gendarmerie and the police forces. They also tend to turn to local authorities when problems arise.

• **Locally elected chiefs provide an opportunity.** Locally elected chiefs are the only actors that are perceived with a degree of confidence from communities with regard to both security and conflict resolution.

• **Authorities face serious constraints, partly due to insufficient equipment, training and personnel.** In order to improve trust and their relations with communities, authorities need to strengthen their capacity in order to be able to fully execute their mandate in the field.

• **Communities use a variety of traditional conflict resolution systems, but these mechanisms are weak and being eroded.** This erosion is due to the additional pressure placed on traditional mechanisms as a result of population growth and limited natural resources. It is also aggravated by factors including the politicisation of traditional leadership positions and the lack of capacity to respond to external threats.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

**For Danish Demining Group**

• Establish systems to improve contact between security providers and local communities. Ensure these systems are owned by local communities and authorities.

• Strengthen the capacity of local authorities through education, local sensitisation and other measures.

• Support coordination across borders in terms of training provided to security forces, services delivered by security providers and links between civilian authorities.

**For the governments of Mali, Burkina and Niger**

• Increase the visibility of security providers in border areas, including through more frequent joint patrols in border areas.

• Lobby budget holders at the central government to ensure adequate provision of resources to communication, infrastructure and training.

• Establish a community focal point system where each border management unit has one person responsible for sharing information and liaising with local communities.

• Strengthen communication, coordination and information-sharing systems between different border security providers and local authorities.

**For international fora of cooperation**

• Assure a clear understanding between security forces of different countries, and between communities and security forces, of the mandates of each agency and particularly the difference in mandates.

• Support cross border cooperation initiatives focused on commerce and trade, in order to promote positive peaceful links between countries.

**For technical and financial partners**

• Support national authorities at national, regional and local levels to clarify the mandates of security providers in border areas, and to develop effective methods of organising security forces in the field.

• Provide funding and support to improve communication mechanisms between security providers and community members.

• Provide funding and support for initiatives aimed at curbing the demand for weapons and enhancing conflict resolution mechanisms.

• Support the provision of infrastructure and equipment to enhance communication between security forces as well as with communities.

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