

# ADULT EDUCATION AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT



**Laya Boni** was born in 1973 in Perma, Commune of Natitingou to a family of modest agro-breeders with eight children. He studied at the University of Abomey-Calavi and holds Master's degrees in Risk and Disaster Management, and Geography and Environmental Management.

Laya Boni, like the children of his pastoral background, has learned to lead the herds to pasture while reconciling this with his studies. With the difficulties of schooling in a pastoral environment, he was housed by the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Augustine. This allowed him to progress in his studies.

Since 2004, employed at the NGO POTAL MEN, he works in conflict prevention, social cohesion and peace building.

*Conflicts between farmers and herders in Benin have escalated over the past decade. But now, literacy and adult education are being used effectively to reduce conflicts between people who share natural resources and to establish a sustainable peace within communities.*

Since 2011, POTAL MEN has been working in the field of conflict prevention and management in relation to pastoral mobility. The organisation has undertaken several actions to revitalise existing mechanisms, including setting up committees to regulate transhumance (the action or practice of moving livestock from one grazing ground to another in a seasonal cycle, typically to lowlands in winter and highlands in summer). To this end, frameworks for dialogue, sensitisation at village level, and capacity building on pastoralism have been carried out using several tools such as posters and practical advice guides.

Since 2014, POTAL MEN (with the technical support of PAMOJA following the REFLECT literacy approach) has opened 12 literacy circles with approximately 360 learners in the border areas of northern Benin. The programme was carried out within the framework of the implementation of the Regional Program of Education/Training of Pastoral Populations (PREPP) and the Support Program to Pastoral Organizations and Populations (PAO2P), with co-financing from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (DDC), the operators and the communities. These literacy circles

have been used to popularise legal texts on pastoralism and non-violent conflict management. The results today show that literacy is an effective tool that contributes to social cohesion and peace between communities.

## How do these literacy circles contribute to social cohesion and peace?

In the process, the facilitators who supervise the learners are first trained in the different themes related to the prevention and non-violent management of conflicts using the tools developed for this purpose. Once trained, they in turn train the learners in facilitating dialogue with other communities in conflict situations. The circles constitute the melting pots for the wide dissemination of the content of the pastoral code, allowing pastoral populations to know their rights and duties in the field of pastoralism and mechanisms for conflict prevention and management. This considerably reduces the occurrence of conflicts in these areas.



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Training of facilitators on conflict prevention and management image boxes

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The contents of these image boxes on conflict prevention and management are used by the facilitators to produce teaching/learning units on legislation, social cohesion, peace, and conflict prevention and management. These units are then taught in basic education circles and vocational training areas. The ownership of these conflict prevention and management mechanisms by the learners makes them ambassadors of peace and social cohesion in their environment. Thus, the learners participate in consultations with other communities and peacefully make their point of view heard in conflict situations. Benin's defense and security forces

(FDS) are also involved in the attempt to encourage peaceful collaboration in the resolution of conflicts.

Today, we can say that these learners have mastered conflict-sensitive communication, which has strengthened peaceful collaboration.

**In conclusion**, the training given on mechanisms of conflict prevention and management in these circles have equipped learners with essential knowledge, skills and attitudes enabling them to understand and interact with their environment and to participate more effectively in conflict prevention and management.

