



# Conflict, Social Capital and Managing Natural Resources

*A West African  
Case Study*

Edited by Keith M. Moore



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## 8 Conflict Management Training

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Since conflict over West Africa's diminishing natural resources is impeding development efforts and perpetuating land degradation, conflict resolution is necessary to immediately diffuse disputes and avert violent clashes. Perhaps, more important in the long run, is ensuring that resource users have the skills to improve consensus building and build the social infrastructure necessary to manage conflict situations. Although current decentralization laws have allowed for natural resource management (NRM) decision-making and conflict resolution at the community level, the local populations have not received adequate training and are unprepared for these new responsibilities. Assessing the francophone civil society organizations (CSOs), Fox *et al.* (2001) state that few CSOs have had any previous experience in conflict resolution or in the related area of policy advocacy. Indeed, the successful management of conflicts requires re-empowering local institutions or creating new ones, based on the traditional practices that allow communities to address new challenges on their own (Pendzich, 1993).

In the Commune of Madiama, SANREM CRSP has introduced an Alternative Conflict Management (ACM) approach, 'Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building' (CRCB), to the newly formed CSO, the Natural Resource Management Advisory Committee

(NRMAC). This experiential training addresses specific NRM issues of contention in Madiama through a three-step process designed to complement traditional conflict management and improve decision making. This modular training programme establishes skills necessary for short-term conflict resolution and for long-term management. Though conceived under the ACM umbrella, this approach differs from many other intervention programmes, because it goes beyond negotiating the resolution of a specific conflict. Rather, the training programme empowers local leaders by providing them with skills and a process for sustainable facilitation and management of a diversity of conflicts.

The SANREM Project did not implement ACM to resolve specific conflicts, but to build 'people' skills, training trainers and training locals in the necessary skills. Key stakeholders were farmers, herders and other natural resource users from the commune, members of the NRMAC, local NGOs and extension agents, traditional leaders and government administrators. Since the initial workshops, lessons from these training sessions have been routinely transmitted to the village level. Although initially led by SANREM trainers, NRMAC trainers themselves have become increasingly involved.

This chapter introduces the three commonly used approaches to conflict resolution in the rural communities of the Niger Inland Delta Area. In light of current conflict resolution and management theories, it explains how SANREM's approach and implementation of this conflict management training in Madiama reverses the cycle of conflict and natural resource degradation. It includes building confidence among local leaders in their ability to mitigate conflict in the commune of Madiama, and establishing a successful social infrastructure for long-term consensus building that can address the underlying causes of NRM conflicts, issues associated with diversity, scarcity, power and change.

### Characterization of Conflicts

Messer *et al.* (1998) point out that food insecurity due to land degradation, scarcity and poverty is a major cause and consequence of conflict. In Madiama, this is certainly true, as the cycle of conflict and natural resource degradation perpetuates itself. In the Sahel, the most serious conflicts have generally involved resource access issues between and among farmers and herders (Cissé, 1999).

The Inland Delta of the Niger is attracting a growing concentration of herders, farmers and fisherman. Competition has come to replace more complementary and cooperative practices of resource use. The conversion of pastureland into cropland along with the expansion of cultivation into irrigated agriculture along water points has limited water and dry-season pasture access, thus disturbing traditional pastoralist movement. Meanwhile, the need for herder mobility instigates overt conflict involving the trampling and destruction of cultivated fields.

There is conflict-creating competition for access to wetlands, grazing areas and crop residues. This NRM conflict occurs not only between these different types of resource users (e.g. pastoralists and farmers) but also within user types as land degradation shrinks the resource base. Inter- and

intra-community conflicts also occur as natural resources diminish. Conflicts are interstate as well, given that nomads' and transhumants' movements traverse national borders. In these cases, traditional conflict management has not been able to cope with the current conflicts, as conflicts and violence over immediate survival and long-term livelihood have escalated.

### Conflict Resolution and Management

In response to escalating conflict around the world in recent years, there have been major developments in the management of competing interests of different natural resource stakeholders. Conflict resolution has merged with NRM to create a more specific field of conflict management, adapted to NRM issues. The methodology falls into this new field, generally referred to as ACM, which Pendzich *et al.* (1994) defines as 'a multidisciplinary field of research and action that seeks to address the question of how people can make better decisions together, particularly on difficult, contentious issues' (p. 5). Current literature tends to focus on forest conflicts, where communities are pitted against outside stakeholders such as the government or private sector companies. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Division of Forestry (2000), in reviewing this field of study, summarized three viable avenues of conflict management for local populations: Customary Conflict Management Systems, National Legal Systems, and ACM. These are described below.

#### Customary conflict resolution

Despite Mali having a National Domain Law and a judicial system, the Inland Delta region tends to follow traditional land allocation practices. If conflicting land claims arise after some years or in the next generation, village elders or the village head may arbitrate. Only if village authorities cannot resolve a dispute does litigation proceed to the Rural Council, and perhaps the Sous-

Prefet. Most NRM conflicts are currently resolved at the village level by the chief and his counsellors, or if they proceed further in the system the methods remain informal. However, if the conflict is not settled at this level it moves up to the Chef d'arrondissement level (pre-commune context), into the national legal system administered by the Justice Ministry at the *Cercle* level (Djenné) or the regional authorities in Mopti. Yet, at the heart of the perennial nature of most of these conflicts is the lack of a single accepted authority for the resolution of natural resource rights, and consequently tenure security (Touré, 1996; Lo *et al.*, 1996; Maïga and Diallo, 1998; Ngiado, 1996).

### National legal system

The national legal system governing NRM is based on legislation and policy decisions, including regulatory and judicial documentations. Litigation and adjudication are the main strategies for addressing conflicts (FAO, 2000). These systems tend to disregard indigenous knowledge and long-term community needs, thereby creating a winner-loser situation (FAO, 2000). While access is universal to modern courts in Mali in principle, limits still exist due to costs of transportation and a lawyer to advocate a case. National codification of French laws has restricted the flexibility of agricultural and livestock producers to adjust their production systems as needed to assure subsistence (Mortimore, 1997). In recent years, Sahelian governments have been attempting to adapt village-level customary law to the need for standardized modern law (Bohrer and Hobbs, 1996).

### Contemporary conflict management alternatives

Reviewing two theories that support recent conflict management approaches, Cousins (1996) notes that Burton and Dukes (1990) define conflict management as 'how to handle disagreements and arguments over choices and preferences that result from

interactions between parties who have common interests and goals, and who differ only on the means of achieving them' (p. 47). Cousins states that their theory rests on a typology of conflicts which determines the most effective resolution/management approach. His classification system comprises three groups:

- *Management problems*, involving arguments or differences over the choice of alternatives among persons having the same goals and interests.
- *Disputes*, involving competing but negotiable interests, and issues of gain or loss.
- *Conflicts*, involving the development and autonomy of the individual or identity group that inherently involve non-negotiable human needs and questions of identity.

Cousins (1996) goes on to explain a second theory that deals with processes and procedures including fact finding, negotiation, facilitation, conciliation, collaborative planning, arbitration and adjudication as defined by Pendzich *et al.* (1994) and Anderson *et al.* (1996). These processes provide a primary alternative to the legal and traditional systems of resolution that commonly appear in the literature on Alternative Conflict/Dispute Management. This multidisciplinary field of research and action seeks to address the question of how people can make better decisions collaboratively, particularly on difficult, contentious issues (Pendzich *et al.*, 1994). ACM techniques are often used to resolve environmental disputes worldwide and encompass a range of lesser-known methodologies. Similar methods, based on these premises include the International Model Forest Network, Adaptive Management Areas – Western USA, Zimbabwe's CAMPFIRE, India's Joint Forest Management programme and Stakeholder Analysis.

ACM refers to a variety of collaborative approaches that seek to reach a mutually acceptable resolution of conflict issues through a voluntary process that has been developed as an alternative to adversarial or non-consensual methods, such as judicial

or legal recourse, etc. (FAO, 2000). ACM's three main premises are: (i) it is assumed that conflict is a normal process in society; (ii) successful alternative conflict management relies on constructive communication between all legitimate parties or 'stakeholders' in a dispute; and (iii) power imbalances are nearly always an issue in negotiations, and problems that result from negotiating in situations of unequal power can seriously undermine efforts at reaching a lasting accord (Pendzich, 1995). Within this general ACM approach lies the SANREM methodology used in training the Madiama Commune stakeholders. This methodology framework is based on the fundamental elements of Alternative Conflict/Dispute Management, including fact finding, facilitation and collaborative planning, and negotiation.

The available literature on AMC and its approaches indicates a lack of case studies that articulate the actual methods used. The SANREM ACM approach emphasizes long-term consensus building and addresses the conflict resolution process itself, instead of facilitating resolution of a particular conflict. The following method incorporates these basic premises and fundamental elements of ACM, and was adapted to fit the dynamic context of natural resource conflicts in the Commune of Madiama.

## **Methodology**

### **Alternative conflict resolution/management training – creating facilitators**

This section describes a method for training facilitators in ACM. The SANREM project did not implement ACM to resolve particular conflicts; rather the team trained members of the NRMAC in the basic elements of ACM, including communication, confidence-building, and other 'people' skills in order for them to engage in ACM, and in facilitation, thereby creating trainers to implement ACM and further disseminate the necessary skills. The conflict management process engages all conflicting parties in a secure, power-equalizing atmosphere of

respectful listening, while allowing opportunities for confrontation and expression of concerns. It is the process itself that fosters the desired outcomes. The training workshops were designed around conflict management within the context of Madiama's NRM disputes and were associated with various situations such as resource scarcity and issues associated with power, control, change and diversity. Key stakeholders were farmers, herders and other natural resource users from the commune, local NGOs and extension agents, traditional leaders and government administrators.

This training model consists of a three step process that fosters conflict management and successful resolution. The first two steps incorporate different sets of exercise tools to help the NRMAC become successful in resolving internal and external conflicts. This approach complements traditional conflict management and is adapted to local circumstances. In Madiama, the tools used in the first step set the stage for the workshop and provide the lead facilitator the information needed to choose a specific path of training. The second step's tool set includes the basic conflict resolution process. The third step is a series of modules chosen specifically to address the participating community's issues and conflicts. After explaining each technique, the technique's rationale and the exercises used to teach it are discussed. Training sessions follow a set pattern consisting of an overview of the training modules and their objectives, the teaching/training techniques and finally, a review of the exercises comprising the consensus building and conflict resolution training modules.

### **Overview of workshop training objectives**

Since SANREM's conflict resolution training workshops were considered a training of trainers (TOT) for ACM, the objectives were participatory in nature and focused on introducing new skills and strategies to Madiama that would complement traditional conflict management. The primary objectives were to:

1. Increase each participant's capacity to communicate effectively regarding emotionally charged issues, and demonstrate new communication skills.
2. Increase participants' confidence in dealing with confrontation and develop a sense of empowerment.
3. Train participants in the art of facilitation and recognition of its value in conflict resolution.
4. Become aware and understand the physiological and behavioural responses in various conflict situations.

The participatory training process aims to increase participants' knowledge of ACM, and to raise their self-confidence in addressing difficult issues (FAO, 2000).

#### *Teaching techniques – training of trainers*

These TOT workshops used real life situations to achieve the goal of transferring skills directly to participants, while simultaneously building their capacity for future community dissemination and guidance of the conflict management process. Training participants to implement conflict management means training *facilitators* to guide the process. Facilitation training is more than an exercise in learning 'people skills' and conflict management practice itself, because it also teaches vital teaching techniques. Good facilitation skills are best learned through observation of other trained facilitators and through experience. During the first workshop in Madiama, participants observed the lead facilitator and rotated into the facilitator position themselves, developing their empathy and building functional skills.

#### *Lead facilitator*

The lead facilitator's role is to guide the process towards the desired consensual outcomes of the group. Three levels of facilitation occur during these workshops. The lead facilitator, who is conducting the training workshops, carries out the highest level of facilitation. The other two levels are discussed below as part of the teaching techniques and workshop exercises.

The lead facilitator is the external/outside implementer of the workshop and the training sessions. Early on in the workshop programme this facilitator hands over the task of routine daily facilitation, and acts as a 'guide on the side, not a sage on the stage'. Nevertheless, he or she opens the training session each day, determines which modules are needed to tailor the workshops to the local context, oversees the sessions, and ensures that the workshops run smoothly and remain focused.

The lead facilitator uses a training module called 'The Interview Process' in order to gather information and contextualize the workshop. Usually done on the first day, this process helps the lead facilitator determine vital facts about the situation, such as what the issues are, who the players are, and what behaviours, powers, resources and stakes are involved. A key responsibility of the lead facilitator is to ask effective questions and observe the group processing *their* understanding of the questions and answers. The lead facilitator ensures there is the opportunity for 100% participation.

#### *Facilitation: roles of the successful facilitator and recorder*

Within the first day of workshops, the other two levels of facilitation are initiated. Once the workshop commences each day, a facilitator (not a mediator, but often one of low positional power in the group) is chosen to take on traditional facilitation roles and lead activities. Facilitators are also chosen for all small group conflict resolution exercises.

At the beginning of a workshop, the participants are requested to define successful roles. Staying in a circle, one at a time, the participants answer the following questions: (i) What is the role of a successful facilitator? and (ii) What is the role of a successful recorder? The recorder, who was the facilitator for the previous activity, records their responses on newsprint. Throughout the workshop, all small group activities begin by selecting a group facilitator who then becomes the recorder for the next activity.

This process ingrains a sense of empowerment within the group as the facilitators model power-sharing behaviours throughout the workshop. Facilitator behaviours, such as allowing the participants to direct themselves, selecting participants to co-facilitate with the facilitator, and facilitating while not directly participating (from outside the circle), create a sense of equity within the group and further demonstrate the importance of empowerment. By defining the roles of facilitator and recorder, the participants gain a sense of self-direction. This importance of balance is illustrated through shifting between the roles of powerful facilitator and submissive recorder. The recorder's role is to develop the trust of groups in conflict by accurately listening and recording what each individual says.

Balance of power is encouraged throughout the workshop and is modelled in behaviours such as having a representative from one ethnic group begin the workshop and a representative from another ethnic group close the workshop, or having a farmer, a herder, Mayor or NRMAC President serve on a panel. Panels are formed to begin a dialogue about specific conflict issues. Selecting powerful representatives or spokespeople from a variety of perspectives allows for an open sharing of perceptions. These activities develop listening skills and foster the importance of respectful listening and allow participants to have a sense of being heard. Grounding, Adaptive Learning, Defining Successful Roles and Defining the Worst/Best Possible Outcomes provide ample opportunities to practice listening exercises.

#### *Repetition and imitation*

Since repetition and imitation are fundamental training tools used throughout training workshops, this participatory instructional model also uses these tools as primary pedagogic strategies for teaching techniques and allowing natural, successful learning. Imitation ensures that skills are highly transferable. The process of imitation is most effectively learned through an

*experiential process* and through *repetition*. People will observe others in order to learn what is and is not effective. Consequently, the facilitator must model the desired behaviour. A great deal of thought goes into the actions and interactions of the facilitator with the group, because the participants are keenly observing the actions and interactions. The purpose of every action should focus on fostering the desired outcomes of the workshop. Repetition allows participants to observe the facilitator's behaviour and thus experience a consistent pattern of conflict resolution and consensus building.

#### *Small group organization*

People have a tendency to coalesce with others similar to themselves. The old adage 'birds of a feather flock together', describes this behaviour. One challenge with 'like thinking' or 'group think' is that new ideas are seldom created. Small group activities must include a diverse cross-section of participants. New ideas to facilitate old problems can frequently come from the introduction of new perspectives and new ways of seeing things.

When working with groups in conflict, it is important for them to exchange perspectives. A stalemate indicates that current thinking, or perception, is not providing the group with workable solutions for unresolved conflicts. The opportunity for people to express their assessment of a present situation, their concerns and fears about addressing the situation, and their best hopes for the situation in a setting, where respectful listening occurs, allows new perspectives to be formed. This group organization gives people the opportunity to change their 'point of view' to a 'viewing point'. It is more difficult to create new solutions to gridlock if groups are using the same base of information, and if the groups are made up of people who think alike. For this reason, diversity tends to foster a level of insights not produced by homogeneous groups.

### Alternative conflict management training exercises

#### Step one: Tools for empowerment

Since the first step is designed to introduce the workshops, gather information for the direction the workshop will take and develop a safe venue for conflict resolution, step one tools model effective behaviour when striving for conflict resolution by creating a sense of potential equity and respectful listening. The process includes but is not limited to fact finding, balancing power and facilitation. This step involves participants in a generic set of activities in which self-awareness and participant interaction create an open-mindedness that makes them receptive to the workshop's next steps. In step one, they neither process issues, nor are they in the process of conflict resolution *per se*; rather they are gaining confidence, mutual trust and facilitation skills to engage fully in the workshop.

**THE 'GROUNDING'** In this opening tool, participants sit in a circle and answer three questions, one person at a time, going around the circle. The three questions are:

(i) Who are you and what is your relationship to the topic of the session?; (ii) What are your expectations of this workshop? and (iii) How do you feel about being here? Participants are free to say as much as or as little as they want, but usually follow the lead of the first person to speak.

The *rationale* is that this participatory process models listening with respect and establishes 'verbal territory' for all participants. It engages the whole brain through thinking and feelings questions, gets people rooted in the 'here and now', allows the expression of hidden agendas, shared hopes and apprehensions for the meeting, and provides initial information to the facilitator. Someone besides the lead trainer usually facilitates this, demonstrating a willingness to share power as a facilitator and allowing participants to realize they can facilitate the process themselves.

**THE 'GREETING CIRCLE'** The greeting circle, an American Indian adaptation exercise, allows participants to introduce themselves individually to each other. The participants stand and the greeting circle activity begins with a designated leader. The



Fig. 8.1. NRMAC trainers lead session on conflict resolution.

lead person moves into the centre of the circle, turns to the person next to him or her and greets them. The lead person then moves to the next person and so on around the circle. Meanwhile, the person first greeted also steps into the centre of the circle, and, following the lead person, greets the next person in the circular line and continues greeting people around the circle. This continues until each person has gone around the inside of the circle greeting others, and the outside of the circle, being greeted.

The rationale is that the circle is a design of shared power, a theme continually reinforced throughout the conflict resolution process. It is a turn-taking exercise and again, is usually led by someone in the community. This activity breaks down intimidations and levels power. Greeting is one of the oldest ways of connecting for humans. From past experience, many conflicts, particularly ones dealing with power and intimidation, are resolved through the greeting. The perspective of village participants was that the greeting circle allows conflicting parties to build a friendship and that it allows them to put the conflict in the centre of the circle where it can be resolved. Malian custom has its own greeting circle, usually done at the end of a conflict resolution process.

**AN ADAPTIVE LEARNING PROCESS** Adaptive learning occurs at the end of any enriching experience such as the greeting circle, or at the end of the day. Again going around the circle, one person at a time speaks, answering two questions: (i) How do you feel about the experience or situation? and (ii) What did you learn from it that will make you successful, resolve the conflict, overcome the impasse, etc.?

The rationale is that there are three main reasons for asking these adaptive learning process questions. First, asking reinforces topics covered during the session and brings out individual insights concerning these topics. Having others introduce what was experienced during the session is a strong method of reinforcing learning. Second, asking provides feedback to the group and the facilitator about what did and

what did not work in the session. This feedback allows participants to improve their abilities as facilitators and provides the lead facilitator with ideas for continual improvement. Finally, asking provides direction for upcoming experiences. The adaptive learning process at the session's end provides direction for future sessions because of the emphasis on addressing fears and focusing on best outcomes. The human mind wants to find a solution.

**'HONOURING'** Honouring is a process of formally recognizing individuals who have benefited the group in some way, such as people who facilitated, prepared meals, made contributions to the group in other venues, etc. The group is asked to stand in a circle and the individual(s) being honoured are asked to come to the centre of the circle. Someone in the outside circle states why the people in the centre are being honoured. The group applauds once the words are spoken.

The rationale is that honouring people builds community. After modelling the process of honouring, the facilitator often uses it to resolve conflicts between parties by asking one side to speak to the other by saying something respectful or explaining why one party appreciates the presence of the other in its community. The people being honoured in the centre of the circle are often very self-conscious. Again, conflict resolution is about awareness; self-consciousness, or self-awareness, is an important first step towards change. When people are aware of their internal feelings in a given situation, they can then make a conscious decision to take action and change behaviour to what is consistent with their desired outcomes.

#### *Step two: A process for coping with conflict*

This is where the actual process of alternative conflict resolution begins. Step two tools continue to allow participants to explore and understand the natural human response to potentially threatening situations and issues. The progression of questions noted below moves from developing a common

understanding of the situation and the associated feelings to putting the situation in an emotional context. The second question explores the 'worst possible outcomes' imagined of confronting the situation. These imagined results are why confronting the issue is 'dangerous', because they often paralyse individuals and groups into inaction. Should this occur, it is important to ask the other side of the question: What is the worst possible outcome of *not* confronting the situation?, because this question allows groups to recognize the hopelessness of either side of the question.

Step two tools allow participants to successfully move from a focus on worst possible outcomes to a focus on best possible outcomes as a distinct possibility. Often, allowing the group to explore conflict resolution at a generic level, before confronting real and potentially threatening issues, provides the group with an understanding of the human behaviour surrounding conflict resolution. As a result, they are more capable of successfully focusing on the issue. These tools also help in developing a more complete understanding of the issue, particularly if diverse perspectives are involved. With this understanding and clarity of the best possible outcomes, the human mind works to solve the problem of moving to the desired outcomes of the group.

**THE BASIC PROCESS QUESTIONS** The following set of questions are asked of the participants in order to develop an understanding of the conflict, gather concerns the participants have about confronting the situation, define their best outcomes and foster the best outcomes of the situation. These questions are directed to the individuals or groups.

- What is the situation? (Define the conflict. What is the evidence of this conflict in your environment?) How do you feel about it?
- What are the worst outcomes of confronting/not confronting unresolved conflict?
- What are the best outcomes of confronting unresolved conflict?

- What beliefs/behaviours/strategies/actions will foster the best outcomes?

**WORST/BEST POSSIBILITY** The worst/best possibility exercise allows the participants to explore and understand the importance of worst and best outcomes as well as possibilities. The following two questions are asked: (i) What are the worst possible outcomes of the workshop? and (ii) What are the best possible outcomes of the workshop? Understanding these possibilities is important, particularly if the group is confronting a serious conflict. Also, allowing the group to express the worst/best outcomes at the workshop level helps the group begin to understand the physiological patterns of individuals who confront potentially threatening situations or issues.

*Worst outcomes* are feared *future* outcomes, often based on *past* experience, with a *presently* experienced emotion and physical reaction. When believed, they affect people's perceptions, beliefs, values, and strategies and, consequently, tend to be self-fulfilling prophecies. (Outcomes are automatic and based in the lower brain stem).

In contrast, *best outcomes* are hoped for *future* outcomes, sometimes not *previously* experienced, but intensely imagined, with a *presently* experienced emotion and physical response. When believed, they affect people's perceptions, beliefs, values and strategies. And, consequently, tend to be self-fulfilling prophecies. (Unlike the fear of worst outcomes, the hope for best outcomes is not automatic and originates in the neo-cortex part of the brain that is seeking the good of community.)

*Possibility thinking* is the acknowledgement that both worst and best outcomes are inherently present in each moment, up to, and often after the event. This *balanced* view allows movement towards desired outcomes, because it is based both on negative and positive thinking. A simple analogy can help with this explanation. It is a fact that the sun will rise (or the earth will turn towards it). However, there is a possibility of not seeing the sun rise because of cloud cover in the sky or some other impediment such as a windowless room, even though it



Fig. 8.2. Conflict resolution through the village theatre.

has risen. The worst possible outcome is believing the sun has failed to rise, even though it always rises. Possibility thinking in conflict resolution approach acknowledges the balance of a focus on both worst and best possible outcomes.

An example of this possibility thinking occurred at a workshop in the village of Tatia Nouna when the villagers and participants in a group were asked to identify the worst possible outcomes that could result from confronting the conflicts between farmers and herders. The answer was violent confrontation and death. If the mind imagined this as *the* future, then why would anyone take any action to resolve the situation if any attempt to resolve the issue would result in death? In a second worst possible outcomes question, the participants were asked to name the worst possible outcome of *not* confronting the conflicts between farmers and herders. Again, the answer was death. This created a difficult problem for the mind to solve. If confronting the problem led to death, and not confronting it also led to death, and no one wants to die, then what is to be done? At this point, there is a third possibility that asks

the participants to identify the best possible outcome of confronting the conflicts between herders and farmers. The answer was that people would learn to live in harmony with each other and foster actions and behaviours that are consistent with that outcome. The group from Tatia Nouna liked this alternative and decided to focus their actions towards this outcome. Throughout the process of moving towards peaceful co-existence, any of the three outcomes are possible, and by acknowledging these possibilities, the community is able to choose to move towards their desired outcome.

The process also changes behaviour concerning creating desired outcomes because beliefs change as people learn from each other in a respectful environment. Because the human brain is a problem solving organ, when it is presented with a problem, as when the space between a present situation and best possible outcome are created, the mind goes to work to seek resolution to the problem. Sometimes, because the answer is difficult to determine, the way the mind finds resolution is to say 'I don't know' or 'It is impossible to solve'. Once a person acknowledges the possibility of not

knowing or the impossibility of finding a resolution, restating the question in terms of possibility (i.e. 'if you did know?' or 'if it were possible, what would you say?') recharges the mind to examine the problem again, but with a different emphasis. The mind has a very difficult time leaving an unresolved issue alone and, therefore, continues to search for a solution so that it can be at peace.

Because of the power of the human brain to focus and the limitations of the brain to gather all relevant information for problem solving, the mind often confuses fact with possibility. The mind tends to project potential outcomes as real due to past experience, when, in fact, the future has not happened yet. This sets the body up to take appropriate action based on the 'perceived' outcome. Human beings are often quite different if there is a perceived positive outcome instead of a negative outcome. These actions and behaviours can have the effect of creating the outcome most focused on. This reaction is based on the automatically 'hard-wired' system for self-preservation generated from the lower brainstem that protects us from the physical and emotional damage created from worst outcomes. A less powerful force in the mind is the ability to imagine best outcomes generated by the neo-cortex part of the brain.

The 'worst possible outcomes' response allows the exploration of the possibilities of best possible outcomes in confronting a situation or issue. Because most people are paralysed with the fear of confronting an issue, the potential for fostering best possible outcomes of confronting a situation never arises. When people are allowed the opportunity to explore best possible outcomes, they begin to imagine ways to encourage these outcomes. Two questions arising from the determination of the best possible outcome engage the problem solving nature of the human mind: (i) What beliefs and behaviours will foster the best possible outcomes? and (ii) What strategies and actions will foster the best possible outcomes? Beliefs and behaviours focus on a fundamental transformational change within people. Strategies and actions are

focused on modification as change. Usually in conflict resolution, transformational change is required to move people to foster the best possible outcomes of confronting conflict. This process is about modifications and transformations. The participants were shown the Change model diagram (Fig. 8.3) with results being either the Worst Possible Outcomes or Best Possible Outcomes. The diagram demonstrates that if change at a basic level is desired, someone must modify strategies and actions. If change at a fundamental level is desired, someone must transform beliefs and behaviours. If natural resource users want to change the Sahel, that change will have to be at the fundamental level, because the underlying cause of these conflicts is the perception of a scarcity of degrading resources. Hence, in order to resolve these conflicts, it is necessary to have more than conflict resolution strategies and good communication; rather, it is necessary to change the management of these resources. This is where conflict resolution methodology becomes linked to the underlying issues of these disputes and brings in holistic management (HM).

#### *Step three: Module tools for contextual adaptations*

The third step in the conflict resolution workshop is tailored to the particular local context. A series of modules are chosen and adapted to the specific issues and conflicts facing the participating community. Each module uses a set of questions, adapted to the issues at stake, to guide people through specific conflicts. The modules are: one-on-one conflicts, managing scarcity, managing power, managing change, managing diversity and conducting interviews.

### **Discussion**

The CRCB training workshops conducted in Madiama have demonstrated the success of an ACM programme in Mali. The methodology was tailored to the Commune of Madiama and specific NRM conflicts that are occurring across West Africa. As both a

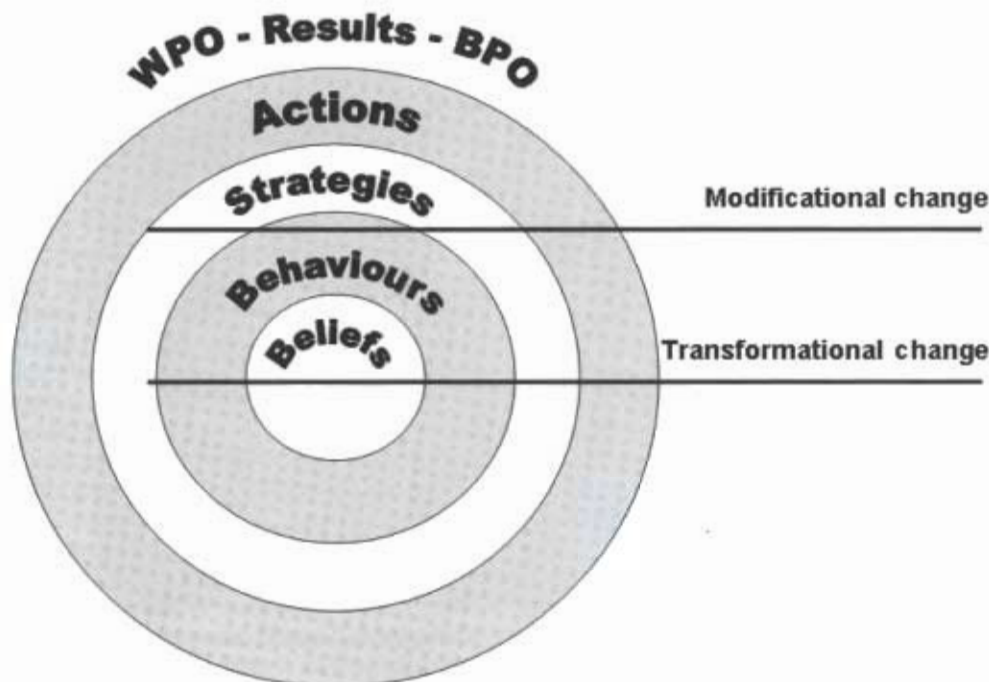


Fig. 8.3. Change model.

short- and long-term approach to manage conflict, the SANREM programme has led to considerable changes in the ways that conflicts and NRM decision-making are handled within the community. In this sense, its method has developed into a more participatory approach to ACM by engaging participants themselves to lead the conflict management process and ultimately resolve their own conflicts and build consensus in management decisions. In training community members and the NRMAC in sustainable ACM methods of conflict management, SANREM has built the communities' capacity to manage conflict more successfully, independent of outside intervention.

Conflict resolution rests on a handful of premises about conflict, change and power (Pendzich, 1993). The training method is flexible enough to be adapted to different cultural contexts in order to build sustainable community capacities to resolve conflicts and reach consensus. The process of conflict management engages all conflicting parties in a secure, power-equalizing at-

phere of respectful listening that allows for the confrontation and expression of concerns to foster desired outcomes. The workshops in Madiama were designed around conflict within the context of NRM disputes and included modules covering concepts such as scarcity, power, control, change and diversity. SANREM's approach to CRCB has led to changes in the community's perceptions of conflict and local power struggles.

#### Equalizing power

Creating an atmosphere of respect and equality is essential to this process and promotes potential power equalizing. Exercises like 'greeting circles' enable each individual of differing status and power to interact on a level playing field, creating an increased level of confidence and a sense of empowerment for participating farmers and herders. Power tends to equalize itself, especially when using such techniques as rotating facilitators, balancing gender and power in

group settings, and having the lead facilitator on the side rather than centre stage. When each person is expected to engage in the same exercises and interact as stakeholders during workshop exercises, individuals feel less intimidated and more empowered to collaborate as equal stakeholders and resource users with diverse interests. These transferable techniques allow for a more open forum and an awareness of how to best cope with issues of intimidation and power.

### **New skills, perspectives and behaviours**

Based on general principles of conventional conflict resolution and ACM, the participatory workshops helped to develop a sense of trust vital to conflict management and the consensus building that is fundamental to effectively applying newly formed human capital. Facilitation skills empowered every participant to become a part of the process. Each workshop had a purpose, and each exercise was done with a purpose. Through repetition and imitation, the participants come to understand the purpose that the 'adaptive learning process', completed after the workshop exercises, reinforces. The skills demonstrated in each exercise are transferred directly to the participants; consequently, while the group was creating, individual consensus-building *skills* were learned during each workshop. Ultimately participants learned to alter the ways in which they communicate and engage in social relationships. The conflict management process created new perspectives and brought diverse views to the table. By creating willingness to explore, communal solutions became a more viable option. Consequently, the learned and applied CRCB skills have allowed best possible outcomes to emerge from NRM disputes in the commune.

A local observer noted that the conflict management training workshops demonstrated that conflict resolution was 'everyone's business'; someone did not need to be a village chief to have such facilitative skills and capacities. The workshops have shown

the community that any individual or group of individuals can create a secure forum to discuss conflicts and their reasons, and serve as a mechanism for change. The training workshops enabled individuals to rethink their views of resolution processes by using skills such as listening, recording and facilitating. Success was not measured in negotiated agreements and resolution of specific conflicts, but was defined by enthusiastic participants engaging in training sessions and sharing their experience with the villagers. Most of the participants continue to use facilitation and conflict resolution techniques in various roles and settings beyond major NRM conflicts. These settings include a women's cooperative and individual households, where behaviour has been modified. This illustrates the adaptability and sustainability of the approach, as well as the skill-building dimension of the workshops. Participating community members have learned to use ACM for larger community conflicts, and they have used individual ACM skills and approaches in other settings, as well.

### **From conflict to consensus**

SANREM's CRCB approach to helping communities cope with conflicts over NRM and extend their learned skills beyond present conflict is an important addition to the field of ACM. This ACM process complements other aspects of the SANREM project, thereby increasing the success of current research designed to transform the cumulative underlying biophysical and social causes of conflict. As previously mentioned, there is a void in the literature concerning consensus building approaches and ACM training methods, where the purpose is to develop the community's capacity to manage conflicts as they arise, not merely to solve one specific conflict. Disseminating ACM approaches and different experiences will change community-level capacity to manage natural resource conflicts in the region and beyond. To bring change to their land and community, NRMAC members are changing their views on confronting and

managing conflicts, and consequently are adapting their traditional methods of conflict resolution via alternative processes and newly learned individual 'people' skills. Beyond the cases in which empowered participants have applied new skills, there is a broader recognition in the community of behaviours that lead to and increase conflict and, as a result, behaviour is becoming more positive and respectful. This shift in behaviour creates a more peaceful tone in communities when confrontations between disputing land users occur.

Movement is occurring in the region to expand conflict management training to more communes in surrounding areas. As the process proves adaptable and effective with the transhumant population, the opportunity exists for this process to extend across national borders. The initiation of activities to regenerate natural resources (i.e. holistically managed *bourgoutière* and rangelands) exemplifies the consensus-building aspect of these conflict management workshops aimed at natural resource decision-making. NRMAC members have shared their CRCB workshop experiences with villagers. Using alternative methods to confront disputes and resolve conflicts is leading to a more open community with beliefs that confronting NRM disputes can potentially create positive outcomes. There is a greater sense of security regarding negotiations and agreements. Compared to customary and legal mechanisms of conflict resolution, this ACM approach transcends important gate-keeping issues found in both. CRCB creates a forum empowering all NRM actors, including herders and women, which tend to become marginalized during traditional conflict resolution. CRCB builds relationships across traditionally divided ethnic and production system communities working towards mutually beneficial outcomes and avoiding winner-take-all legal system resolutions.

National and regional governmental support is needed to continue the use of ACM strategies to manage widespread NRM conflicts. The cyclical nature of conflict and natural resource use requires a multi-levelled approach in order to mitigate both short- and

long-term sources and perpetrators of conflict. One-time negotiated resolutions and static legal agreements are not always a viable or sustainable option for rural communities given the dynamic, ever-changing nature of NRM. Initial facilitation along with consensus building/decision-making skills and mechanisms, in sync with local traditions, will allow local Malian and West African communities to successfully manage their resources within the context of decentralization. Consensus building skills are an essential form of human capital for reaching agreements on NRM. Capacity building for conflict resolution creates a critical mass of human capital necessary to change social behaviours and relationships that can lead to more effective decision-making and management of natural resources. Efforts should be made from governments and NGOs to support ACM interventions, using consensus building skills to improve decentralized, community-based NRM.

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