

Case no. 2

Agro-pastoral conflicts in Southwest Burkina Faso (Comoé Province)

Between 1970 and 1989

Tensions over control of resources emerged with land becoming an ever more valuable asset. The Karaboro, first settlers of the Banfora plain, were pushed eastwards by the Dyula during the early 1970s.

These autochthonous migrants encounter at the same time the first wave of herders who fled the arid areas of the North and Northeast. In addition, other populations from central regions also move to the fertile lands of Comoé.

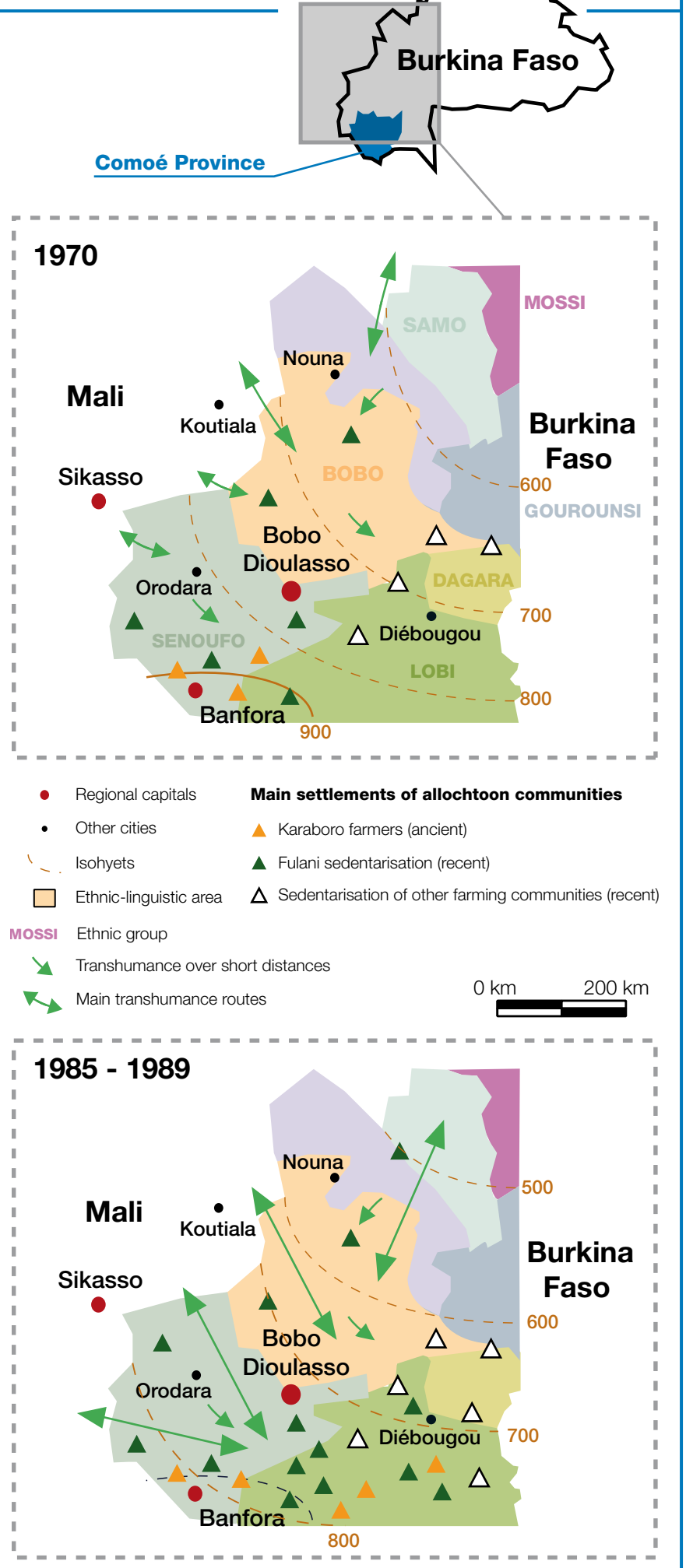
The successive droughts of the 1970's and mid-1980s (southward shift of the 500 and 600mm isohyets) and the development of cash crop agricultural on the central plateau of Burkina Faso led to a progressive deterioration in soil quality.

Fulani herders of the Sahelian zone of Mali and Burkina Faso settled in ever greater numbers in the area further increasing southward pressure.

Transhumant movements were carried out over longer distances due to higher population density and a reduction in pasture.

The sedentarisation of Fulani herders was further encouraged by the land reform of 1988. During the same time large waves of Karaboro farmers arrived on the Comoé plaine fleeing a deterioration in living conditions and progressive soil degradation in their home land. Consequently, competition between the two livelihood systems increased.

Evolution of transhumance routes from 1970 to 1989



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The events in Sidéradougou (1986) and Mangodara (1995) have been the most violent in a decade marked by repeated incidents. Various factors came together in a context of reduced rainfall and social changes motivated by economic hardship and greater ecological vulnerability.

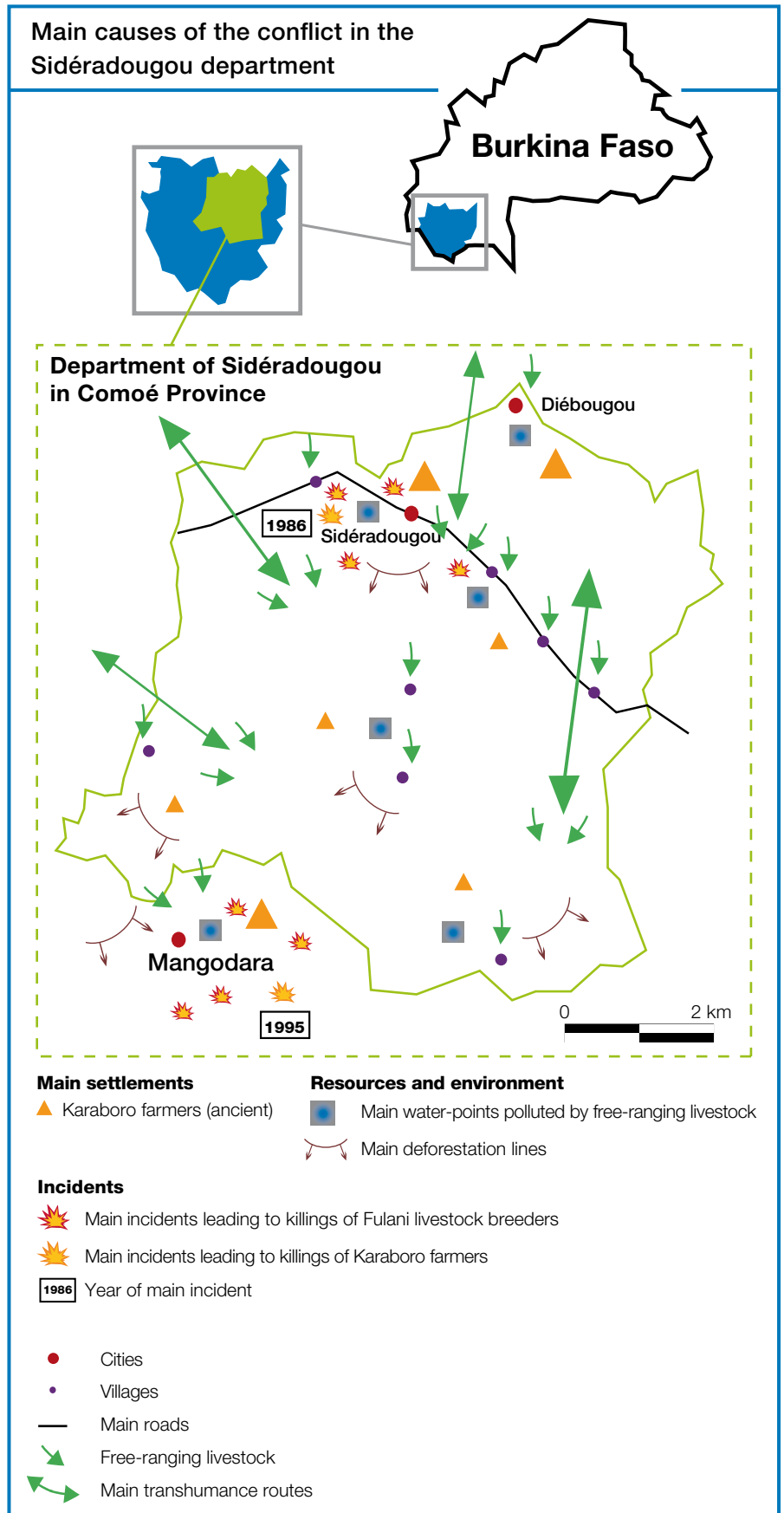
These were built-up resentments between farming and livestock breeding communities, with previous incidents in 1987 and 1994 in the Lobi area.

However, the cleavage between Fulani and Karaboro and between farmers and herders over this “front pionnier” can not on its own explain the causes of the crisis. Social transformations as well as the degradation in living conditions weakened traditional social structures and competition for control over resources became more intense. The intensity of conflicts is heightened by the appearance of arms smuggled from Ghana.

Both events occurred during the dry season when coexistence of communities is rendered more difficult due to a more precarious food security and heightened competition over land. Repeated cattle thefts seem also to have contributed to triggering the conflict.

The continuous overgrazing led to a shortening of the fallow period and thereby impeding natural soil regeneration. **Comoé province witnessed strong deforestation under the effect of land clearing for agricultural production. Furthermore, water-points, predominantly used for human consumption, were polluted by more frequent livestock passages.**

Main causes of the conflict in the Sidéradougou department



Transhumance routes were less respected and illegal grazing practices increased. The sedentarisation of livestock breeders offered the opportunity to engage in agricultural activities rescinding commercial activities with autochthonous farmers further adding to the frustrations.



Le Seine Saint-Germain
12 bd des Iles
F-92130 Issy-les-Moulineaux

Contact philipp.heinrigs@oecd.org
Mailing Address 2 rue André Pascal
F-75775 Paris
Cedex 16
Phone +33 (0)1 45 24 89 87
Fax +33 (0)1 45 24 90 31
E-mail swac.contact@oecd.org

www.oecd.org/swac