

# USING ROLE CARDS

## MALI - CONFLICT BETWEEN A HERDER AND A FARMER

### Role card 1. The herder

“Our nomadic way of life is perfectly suited to the environment here. There is always the danger of drought, so the land needs time to recover once it has been used by people and animals. We allow our animals to graze, but then move on to allow new grass to grow once more. We do not return for many months. In this way we do not over use the land.

The farmers, on the other hand, clear the land for their fields. They cut down the trees so that there is no competition for their plants, and then plough up the earth. They plant their seeds just before the rains and harvest the crop about five months later. In the dry season their fields

are bare and the winds blow away most of the top soil. The ground becomes hardened by the sun so that when the rain returns it washes straight over it, taking away even more soil. In the end, the soil is too poor to grow crops, and the original grass has disappeared completely.”



### Role card 2. The farmer



“The nomads lead their animals to every bit of green pasture, encouraging them to eat what is there. Their hoofs trample on and kill young shoots, and they eat the bark and leaves of trees. This stops the trees growing properly. The animals’ hooves pack the ground hard when it is wet so that it dries as a solid crust during the dry season.

New plants cannot get their roots into the hard earth and so there is little new growth of grass or other plants. The nomads return again and again to the same spots. They go to the areas where there is water, usually a well or a waterhole. In the end, there is a ring of bare land around every

waterhole. This grows wider and wider each year. In some areas these rings have met and we are left with a wide stretch of sandy desert.”