*“IN SEARCH OF COMMON GROUND” FOR FARMER-GRAZER CONFLICT IN THE NORTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON*

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***EXPERT INTERVIEW REPORT***



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**Acknowledgements**

The authors are grateful to the administration (SDOs, DO, delegates, management of MBOSCUDA especially Sali Django and all the experts for their support and facilitation during the interview.

We are particularly grateful to Che Marcellus, Ijang Prescilia Epse Ngome, Chi Napoleon and Ali Aboubakar Shidiki who facilitated the expert interview process. Our gratitude also goes to the regional delegates of Agriculture and Livestock for their relentless support and mobilization in the expert interview process.

This expert interview could not have been a success without the support of key persons from Village Aid. Gratitude goes to David Drew, Dawn Harris, Joseph Toindepi, Veronica Wigley and all those who might have contributed in one way or the other. We are also grateful to MBOSCUDA resource persons especially Shei William Kanjo for the relentless effort that led to the success of this work.

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***Acronyms***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *CDENO* | *North West Livestock Development Fund* |
| *DO* | *Divisional Officer* |
| *HPI* | *Heifer International* |
| *MBOSCUDA* | *Mbororo Cultural and Development Organisation* |
| *MINEPIA* | *Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries* |
| *MINADER*  | *Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development* |
| *NW* | *North West* |
| *SDD* | *Sub Divisional Delegate* |
| *SDO* | *Senior Divisional Officer* |
| *SNV* | *Netherlands Development Organization* |

**Summary**

*This study is part of the evaluation of ‘In Search of Common Ground’. The evaluation study examines the conflict from the point of view of the farmers and grazers themselves with statistical and qualitative research over a five year period. The expert interviews are the starting point for the evaluation and the research aims were:*

* *to identify issues which will be explored in the Baseline Survey and qualitative research;*
* *to ensure that a wide range of stakeholders (including women, disabled people's groups, traditional leaders, farmers, grazers and local officials) inform both the programme and the evaluation;*
* *to ground the programme and research in local realities and context.*

*Expert interviews were conducted with 28 experts from five administrative divisions (Mezam, Momo, Bui, Boyo and Donga Mantung) of the North West Region of Cameroon. Among these experts were farmers, grazers, administrators, barristers traditional authorities and delegates of technical ministries.*

***Substantive findings***

* ***Agro-pastoral systems:*** *Food crop production and cattle rearing are carried out on separate pieces of mostly unofficially allocated land. Cattle owned by women and youths are protected in household heads’ herds. Other small ruminants (sheep and goats) are also reared and are responsible for some damages to crops leading to conflict. Female crop farmers mostly carry out agricultural activities and crops grown include beans, potato, maize and some vegetables;*
* ***Alliance farming and improved pastures:*** *Some of the Mbororos are also involved in backyard agriculture where they hire labour from the crop farmers. Cases of alliance farming were registered in some of the conflict communities of Baijong (Fundong) & Ashong (Batibo), Binshua (Nkambe) and Ngyenmbo (Mbengwi). Alliance farming is employed particularly in transhumance areas like Ngyenmbo. Success stories were also reported in Kedjom Ketingo (Mezam) where night paddocking led to significant increases in the production of vegetables (huckleberries). Yields are generally reported to be high in these situations because of the cow dung. The use of improved pastures in animal husbandry is very limited;*
* ***Causes of conflicts:*** *There are many causes. In the first place, the grazers could be held responsible for the destruction of crops by cattle and for being negligent, failure to construct cattle proof fences, the invasion of pastures by other cattle in communal grazing areas as well as having an elitist attitude. In the second place, the farmers could be held accountable for blocking or destroying water points, encroaching into grazing land, failing to construct cattle proof fences and having a dominant power attitude towards the grazers.*

*A third factor is the pressure on natural resources due to the growth in the human and cattle population. Pressure on the use of land depletes the fertility of the soil and there is a demand for more space. A fourth factor is that the policy environment is not conducive to the resolution of conflicts. The agro-pastoral commission does not perform all functions attributed to it and funds are not allocated for their functioning by the state as required by the law of 1974. The persistence of farmer-grazer conflicts, in some situations, can be an economic opportunity for the agro-pastoral commission members. In this situation, the financial burden of a settlement is borne by farmers and grazers who are unlawfully forced into making payments to commission members;*

* ***Severity of conflicts:*** *Farmer-grazer conflicts have devastating effects on humans and on the property of the disputing parties. This is characterized by instances of cattle injuries and poisoning of animals. Furthermore, some sedentary Mbororo grazers are displaced from their homes or community due to the conflicts;*
* ***Mitigation strategies:*** *In Cameroon, land is the property of the state and Mbororos as well as the farmers have no right over community land unless they are issued land certificates. Only 3% of rural land is registered. Stakeholders use Dialogue Platforms, farmer-grazer committees, traditional council, the judiciary and the agro-pastoral commission to resolve farmer-grazer conflicts in the area of study.*

*The agro-pastoral commission and the judiciary are the legal entities officially mandated to resolve farmer-grazer conflicts or examine the criminal acts resulting from such conflicts respectively. Mitigation through the agro-pastoral commission and judiciary are often very costly to the disputing parties and often inefficient.Criminal offences are tried in court but the agro-pastoral commission determines payment for property destroyed. Also, when the agro-pastoral commission is involved in disputes, the parties in dispute are often required to cover the expenses.*

*This is why other emerging conflict resolution strategies are important. Experts favour amicable settlements through the Dialogue Platforms, the farmer-grazer committees, disputing parties or the traditional councils but such settlements are not legally binding. However, amicable settlements permit disputing parties to avoid some of the challenges encountered when these conflicts are resolved officially.*

***Recommendations for the project and the evaluation***

*The purpose of the expert interviews was to identify issues to be explored in the Baseline Survey and later qualitative research. The recommendations in this respect are as follows:*

* ***Conflict measurement:*** *A firm factual basis needs to be established for the conflicts themselves, how and when they occur, how severe they are and who is affected. This should also be an opportunity for the respondents to prioritize the causes as they see them;*
* ***Livelihoods:*** *The livelihoods of grazers and farmers needs to be studied: details of when and where they graze cattle and farm, details of cattle and agricultural production and details of the ownership of land (which itself can be a cause of conflict);*
* ***Agricultural interventions****: A clear understanding is needed of how certain types of agricultural interventions (alliance farming, water protection, biogas and the use of improved pasture) are currently used. It is a premise of the whole project that competition for scarce resources is itself an important source of conflict;*
* ***Attitude measurement:*** *There is always more than one side to an argument. In this case there are at least three: the views of the farmers and the views of the grazers (and the two are sometimes at opposite extremes) and the mediating views of those in the Ministries, the DO offices and local government. The attitudes of farmers and grazers to the wider sources of conflict need to be examined and their views about the extent to which current mitigation strategies work;*
* ***Statistical analysis and indicators****: It has emerged from the expert interviews that whilst a large range of opinions were expressed there is only limited statistical evidence in many areas. This highlights the need for a range of statistical indicators which can allow consistent measurement to take place over the five years of the project;*
* ***Qualitative research:*** *This will follow the Baseline Study and will build on the statistical work and be informed by it. One important set of issues is about exclusion (which should include disability) and gender inequality. The latter was rarely mentioned in the expert interviews by respondents. But women are affected by conflicts in their communities and one clear example is fetching and carrying water which can be an onerous task for both girls and women. This needs to be further investigated. Disability issues should also be covered in the qualitative research;*
* ***Research on MBOSCUDA****: Within the Baseline Study assessment should be made of the activities and visibility of MBOSCUDA in the communities. This is needed both to provide measures over the five year project of how MBOSCUDA is perceived in the community and to help them to structure their activities in the future.*
1. **Context and justification**

Conflict between ethnic Mbororo cattle herders and non-Mbororo subsistence farmers otherwise described as Farmer-Grazer conflict is a general phenomenon around agro-pastoral areas in the world and the North West Region of Cameroon in particular. These disputes are principally due to competition over the use of land and water resources for agricultural and non-agricultural use (Rashid, 2012; Kelsey & Knox, 2012), increase in human & animal population(Gefu & Kolawole, 2002) as well as resource access rights, inadequacy of grazing resources, values, cultures & beliefs.

The Mbororo Cultural and Development Organisation (MBOSCUDA) and international partners (Village Aid, EU, Comic Relief, etc.) have been working relentlessly to mitigate this problem in Cameroon and the North West region especially. The recent initiative targets 14 communities in the North West Region of Cameroon.

This current initiative under the caption *‘In Search of Common Ground’* is a project to reduce conflict between Mbororo cattle herders and subsistence crop farmers in the region. It intends to set up and encourage agricultural interventions (alliance farming) that can help reduce conflict and the scramble over scarce resources. It hopes to address two fundamental gaps in existing services: the exclusion of marginalized Mbororos in poverty reduction strategies in Cameroon and failure to recognize their collective rights to access land, security of persons and property and the improvement of grazing conditions. This has created barriers to accessing vital services and resources like land and water.

Secondly, existing service provision for addressing farmer/grazer conflict (the agro-pastoral commission established by the Farmer/Grazer Act of 1978) is known to be inefficient. It does not address the root causes of farmer/grazer conflicts but rather increases competition and conflict between farmers and grazers through the encouragement of litigation and compensation. Several mitigation practices have been adopted across the globe and even in some communities of the North West Region of Cameroon to mitigate farmer-grazer conflicts (see literature review annexed).

The present expert interview carried out under the leadership of a consultant (Nchinda Valentine), following a competitive selection process undertaken by MBOSCUDA and village aid, hopes to lay down the groundwork for the successful implementation of the project “*In Search of Common Grounds”.*  The objectives set forth for the expert interviews are presented below.

**1.1 Objectives of Expert Interview**

The goal of the expert interview was to inform the development of the project/indicators and an increase in the validity of the baseline survey through the generation of complementary, reliable and in-depth data from a wide range of stakeholders (including the under privileged) at regional, (sub-)divisional, local and community levels.

The specific objectives of the expert Interviews would be to:

* Identify key issues (climate, economic, social, legal, demographic and political) accounting for the severity of farmer/grazer conflict on alliance farming, equitable access to clean and safe water, water conservation and the livelihood of herders and farmers in the project catchment area;
* Identify stakeholders’, (farmers, grazers, administration, traditional leaders, Ardo’s) behaviour and agro-pastoral system practices in conflict prone situations in the project area
* Identify current stakeholder practices in mitigating farmer/grazer conflicts, sustainable natural resource management, equitable access to clean and safe water in the project catchment areas
* identify inclusive (gender equity and under privilege considerations) and empowerment practices or lapses under farmer/ grazer conflict prone areas for better gender mainstreaming and analysis of gender disaggregated data
* Identify the strengths, weaknesses of stakeholders, opportunities and threats in Mitigating farmer/grazer conflicts, access to clean and safe water and sustainable management of natural resources for improved livelihood of farmers and herders in the project area

**1.2 Expected Output of expert interview**

It is expected that upon completion of the expert interviews the following outputs would have been achieved:

* A two page summary of the main findings of the expert interviews;
* Knowledge acquired through expert interviews would be documented in a report with highlights on the causes and effects of conflict on livelihood or Key indicators (climate, economic, social, legal, demographic and political) accounting for the severity of farmer/grazer conflict on alliance farming, equitable access to clean and safe water, water conservation and the livelihood of herders and farmers in the project catchment area;
* Key indicators required to measure project implementation progress, outcome and impact are available and used by the principal evaluator in designing baseline survey questionnaires;
* Stakeholders behaviour, practices and agro-pastoral systems in the context of farmer-grazer conflicts documented;
* Stakeholder coping practices in mitigating farmer/grazer conflicts, sustainable natural resource management, equitable access to clean and safe water documented;
* Inclusive and empowerment practices or lapses under farmer/ grazer conflict prone areas documented for better gender and equality mainstreaming;
* The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of major stakeholders involved in mitigating farmer/grazer conflicts, access to sustainable natural resource, equitable access to clean and safe water documented, empowerment of the beneficiaries identified.
1. **Methodology**

**2.1 Areas covered and experts interviewed**

The expert interviews were conducted with 28 knowledgeable experts in the subject matter drawn from five (5) administrative divisions (Mezam, Momo, Bui, Boyo and Donga Mantung) or sub-divisions of Santa, Mbengwi Central, Bamenda central, Nkambe, Mbven, Jakiri, Batibo, Fundong and Bamenda Central. Some of the experts were farmers and/or grazers drawn from some of the project communities such as Baba II, Baijong, Nkambe central (Konchep, Bih, Binshua) and Barare. The choices of experts from the administration, traditional authorities, grazers, crop farmers and communities (annex 3) were made to capture the scope and breadth of the research questions. The study was carried out over a period of six weeks running from November 18 to December 31, 2013.

**2.2 Topics discussed during the expert interviews**

The topics discussed with the experts during the interview could be grouped into four: agro-pastoral system practices in the conflict-prone areas; causes of conflict in the retained areas; mitigation practices or strategies used by the stakeholders in the resolution or limiting of farmer-grazer conflicts. The last point on the guide (annex 2) focused on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats surrounding the mitigation of-farmer grazer conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon. A Review of secondary literature and field observations during the study were included in this last section of the interview guide.

**2.3 Analysis of expert interviews**

Data gathered from 28 experts were documented in the form of transcripts following the format of the interview guide. The interviews recorded were also replayed to capture some key issues raised by the experts in question. The data from all the experts concerning each of the thematic area discussed were then analyzed qualitatively with the help of Nvivo 10. The analysis was also enriched with literature reviewed. The analysis focused on key issues discussed with the experts such as the agro-pastoral system, causes, severity, policy environment and a SWOT analysis of the farmer-grazer conflict in the North West Region of Cameroon.

**2.4 Limitations of the expert interview**

Generally, the expert interviews went on excellently well as planned without major incidences recorded. However, a few experts earlier identified were unable to receive the research team because they were busy with official assignments. This was the case with some Senior Divisional Officers and traditional authorities that were committed at the time of the interview. Nevertheless, such appointments were re-scheduled or the said authorities delegated their subordinates to entertain the research team.

The interviews were intended to be captured using audio recorders. However, some of the experts interviewed declined for the interview to be captured with an audio recorder. The risk of this refusal could have been loss of important detailed information from the experts. However, in situations where the experts declined recording during the interview, everything discussed was noted with all the necessary details.

1. **Findings of expert interviews**
	1. **Agro-pastoral system in conflict prone areas of the North West Region of Cameroon**

A range of crops are cultivated essentially by crop farmers in the conflict areas such as maize, cocoyam, yams, plantains, solanum potato, beans, sweet potato, cassava and vegetable. Livestock production covers a range of animals that happen to be responsible for the destruction of crops leading to conflicts. Cattle, sheep and horses are reared principally by the Mbororos. Other small ruminants including goats, pigs and fowls are reared. Though cattle are essentially responsible for most of the crop destruction registered, small ruminants were also held accountable for some of the destructions recorded.

Cattle rearing activities are principally carried out by the sedentary pastoralist called the Mbororos on the hillsides in communities where they are settled. Livestock production is principally extensive (free range). Women subsistence crop farmers carry out agricultural activities essentially. Some of the Mbororos on their side are also involved in backyard agriculture where they hire labour from the camp of crop farmers for agricultural activities. On the other hand, cases of alliance farming were registered in Baijong & Ashong (Batibo), Binshua (Nkambe) and Ngyenmbo (Mbengwi). This is particularly so in transhumance areas like Ngyenmbo where farmers and grazers agree for a win-win situation over the use of natural resources especially land and water. The outcome is largely beneficial to both farmers and cattle rearers because cow dung fertilizes crop production and cattle graze on plant residues thereby permitting the optimization of the use of resources and increase productivity.

*“…at times there is agreement between farmers and the grazers over the use of the same piece of land for grazing and cultivation. When this happens, the farmers cultivate and harvest before the cattle are brought in for grazing. The agreement is officiated by the administration through the Divisional Officer who indicates the grazing period and that of farming. During transhumance, the cattle are taken to Bonkisu, Itung and Baisung [transhumace communities]. Fencing of concessions with barbed wire, difficulties in accessing water and improving pasture for cattle remains a great problem to the grazers. Dialogue with farmers has been initiated and is often rewarding to both parties.*

On the other side, night paddocking followed by farming on the premises around the habitats of Mbororo grazers are other cases where livestock and crop production are associated. Yields are very high in this situation and the crops grown are basically beans, potato, maize and some vegetables. Success stories were reported in Kedjom Ketingo where night paddocking led to significant increases in the production of vegetable (huckleberries) as well as contributing significantly in reducing farmers-grazers conflict.

The use of improved pastures in animal husbandry is very limited though isolated cases were reported in Baijong, Baba II and Binshua. These techniques of pasture improvement were introduced to the grazers by different institutions including MBOSCUDA, Heifer International Cameroon and the Netherlands Development Organization among others found in literature. The MINEPIA service also promote the use of improved pastures.

Generally, grazers that do not have access to improved pasture, or, are exposed to dry season shock move out of the community grazing areas in search for grazing premises in what is described as transhumance[[1]](#footnote-1). Transhumance periods range from the last week of December to April as the case may be. This consists of moving cattle to lowland areas where there is access to grazing fields and water. Cattle move to the areas where agricultural activities were carried out previously. Agricultural activities (except those in lowland areas) are generally carried out between March and December after which room is given for transhumance activities.

* 1. **Youths and women in farmer-grazer conflicts of the North West Region of Cameroon**

The analysis of the agro-pastoral system and practices of livestock and crop production activities show that men, women and youths carry out these activities differently. However, the fundamental gender issues surrounding farmer-grazer conflict landscape in the North West Region of Cameroon would be to show how the practices empower women and youths in areas prone to farmer-grazer conflicts.

Fundamentally, cattle production is essentially owned and carried out by men with youths and children serving as herdsmen. The role of women in cattle rearing is only limited to milking of the cows. However, it must be noted that where women own cattle, they are included in the herd of the male household heads. The case argued by Baba II expert describes the prevailing situation as to how youths and women are protected among the Mbororo communities. For instance, one of the experts puts it that:

*“… cattle owned by youths and women are included in the herds of household heads. It is estimated that in 80 cows, 30 are for the youths and women. Girls are given a cow (or cows) at marriage provided the- would be husband is of good moral standing. However, the elderly take the lead to ensure that youths have access to land and exploit on same piece of land as the other Mbororos. However, there are no consensus strategies accepted to both Mbororos and crop farmers to permit youths have access to land resources”.* Furthermore, another expert felt that “t*he rules aimed at protecting youths and women are general and no special measures are taken. With us in our community, we have regulations to protect women and youths. Their property is usually joined with ours until they get mature. At that time we grant them independence to stay on their own or to unite their property with those of their husbands.*

The inclusion of the cattle owned by youths and women in those of the household heads is done to protect and ensure sustainability and proper management of the cattle. This could be considered as part of their culture that targets to protect the interest of the women and youths as well as the valuable asset (cattle). Cattle is “everything” they have got to pass on from one generation to the other. This is one of the reasons why the cattle would be passed on to a girl at marriage whose husband is supposedly “responsible”. Meanwhile, communal grazing is a common practice among the Mbororo grazers and each of the grown-ups is given the possibility to graze.

On the other hand, the laws regulating agro-pastoral activities are not tailored to give special preference to youths and women. This is particularly the case with the law of 1978 regulating agro-pastoral activities. Furthermore, the law regulating the acquisition of land does not favour the youths as

*“the 1974 national law on lands states that all who occupied land before 1974, have the right to apply for land certificates. The law as of now deprives youths from owning landed property because they were not born before 1974. However, there are provisions in the law to apply for concession based on a well elaborated project” (Barrister Fon).*

However, capacity-building programs are provided by public and private institutions to improve on the technical know-how of youths and women in the region. Special pastures improvement programs are being promoted to improve milking in cows by SNV (Menchum, Ngoketunjia and Donga Mantung divisions). MBOSCUDA on their side has trained and empowered women in livelihood improvement activities including show-case drama.

* 1. **Causes of farmer-grazer conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon**

The North West region is known for conflicts resulting from friction between the grazers and crop farmers of the region. These farmer-grazer conflicts are characterized by violence, abuses, threats, power dominance with all the consequences that it has on the population and disputing parties. Discussions held with experts including farmers, grazers and the divisional /sub-divisional delegate of agriculture, livestock, and administrators revealed that farmer/grazer conflicts in the North-West Region in general and in particular, the conflict hotspots of (Mezam, Bui, Momo, Boyo and Donga-Mantung divisions) emanate from the following sources:

* **Destruction of crops by cattle**: Cattle generally graze extensively or in paddocks. Extensive grazing is usually left in the hands of youths who serve as herdsmen. Negligence on the side of herdsmen, sometimes, lead to cattle moving out of track into crop farms thereby destroying crops. This negligence on the side of herdsmen also happens when they are hired to accompany cattle to the market or transhumance areas. For instance, conveying cattle from Donga Mantung Division to Bamenda (Mezam, Division) where the major regional cattle market is located. As they move along cattle corridors and road, the cattle destroy crops on their part if not controlled. In some situations, the cattle break through fences into the crop fields where they feed on crops.
* **Negligence of herdsmen:** Herdsmen who are generally youths are responsible for taking care and directing cattle as they graze on grazing fields, are transported to the market, move to transhumance communities. These hired workers sometimes fail to take their responsibility thereby permitting cattle who cannot control themselves to break bounds into farmland thereby destroying crops as earlier explained.
* **Demographic pressure** and an increase in the demand for food, meat and water: Competition over the use of land and water is meant to meet the demand for the needs of inhabitants of the communities and beyond. Farmers and grazers compete to use these resources to produce crops or rear animals in order to generate income required to meet their own basic needs. Where one party steps on the toes of the other, it becomes a source of conflict
* **Encroachment by farmers into grazing land:** Demographic pressure and competition over the use of land both for habitation and farming accounts for the encroachment of farmers into grazing land. This is further explained by the need for more grazing land as the population of cattle has also increased over the years. There is the need for more space for grazing and farming alike. Though this problem is seen from the perspective of farmers encroaching into grazing land, it is just a consequence of the farmer-grazer conflicts failing to map out these lands to meet the needs of the population as required by the law of 1978 regulating farming and grazing activities in Cameroon and the North West Region in particular.
* **Failure to construct cattle-proof fences:** Some farmers and grazers fail to construct cattle proof fences thereby exposing farmlands to cattle or allowing these cattle to step out of grazing land to feed on crops. When this happens, it may provoke conflict.
* **Blockage or destruction of water points/catchment:** Farmers also compete with the grazers over the use of water for farming and grazing. In some communities, farmers carry on farming activities around water points where grazing activities also take place. In some situations, water points are blocked, hence conflict.
* **In search for fertile ground:** Our analysis following interviews with experts shows that the encroachment of farmers into grazing land can also be explained by the fact that the fertility of farmlands have dropped over the years. They then seek to move to grazing areas where the soil is more fertile as a result of grazing activities carried out in such locations over the years.
* **Retaliation:** When cattle destroy crops, the crop farmers in some circumstances and out of frustration, retaliate by *poisoning, injuring or even killing the cattle*. In Baba II for instance, the crop farmers destroyed a water catchment that was constructed for the Mbororo community from own contribution and external funding. Retaliation also occurs when the decision of the agro-pastoral commission does not favour the crop farmers, either where influenced financially by the herders or out of subjective judgment. These are all retaliatory actions that are criminal and not recommended.
* **Economic interest:** The members of some of the agro-pastoral commission are reported to have economic interest in the sustained existence of farmer-grazer conflicts especially as their functioning is supported financially by the parties in dispute. One of the DOs [name withheld] described the situation as follows:

“*There are situations where some* DOs *take upon themselves to go to the field without being accompanied by the other members of the agro-pastoral commission. There is the situation of a farmer whose crops valued at 1,000,000fcfa were destroyed by cattle and a DO went to the field single handedly and got a cow from the grazer in question. He then bullied the farmer and cared less about the event because he had already collected a bribe.*

*On the other hand, lawyers come in to cause grazers to file complaints because of financial interest even when amicable settlements have been agreed upon. They give the impression that the agro-pastoral commission is out to extort money through amicable settlement. Consider this example: A grazer’s sheep destroyed the crops of eleven (11) farmers and the farmers ushered the cattle/sheep to the DO’s office. Upon discussing with the disputing parties, the grazer agreed to pay the farmers 712,900fcfa. When the date for settlement was reached, instead of the grazer settling the farmers the said amount, he brought a petition written by a lawyer. The matter was taken up to the SDO who examined the report of the agro-pastoral commission just to realize that the grazer had earlier agreed for an amicable settlement. When asked why he could not settle the issue as earlier agreed rather than follow what the lawyer is vying for, the grazer had this to say: “when those lawyers write, does one read again?”. Behold, the lawyers do not do a job like this for free. The grazer paid for the services and in significant sums of money. In the situation cited, the SDO ordered the grazer to compensate for the crops. You see how much time and resources were wasted!”*

The services of the judiciary are not free of charge indeed. The barrister interviewed agreed with this as he declared that justice, though meant to be free, is not for the poor. This is the reason why amicable settlement was highly encouraged by all the experts including the legal person interviewed.

**Dominance attitude and Power relation:** The relationship between the crop farmers and the grazers (Mbororo) range from a very cordial one as is the case in the transhumance community of Ngyenmbo to a strained one in Nkambe central. Where this relationship is strained, one of the experts declared that the *“…natives have nascent hatred for grazers [Mbororos]. “They are seen as second hand citizens, the reason why they [Natives] keep on chasing them [Mbororos] out of the grazing land they occupy”.* **The attitudes of some of the Mbororo-grazers are not also appreciated by the farmers as declared:**

*“The pastoralist are very stubborn and don’t like to take care of their animals. When the animals destroy crops few of them are willing to negotiate with us the farmers. The act occurs repeatedly because they are stubborn and don’t care about food crop production. Some of them prefer to go and pay greater amount of money to the government administration instead of compensating the farmer whose crops have been destroyed”.*

On the other hand, some grazers use their financial powers to influence decisions of the agro-pastoral commissions in their favour as expressed by the expert quoted above. When this happens, it strains the relationship between the grazers and the farmers.

* **Elite farmers/grazers:** Some of these elites are big farmers and when land is allocated to them, they use it for other reasons and then encroach into areas that are not theirs. These elite somehow count on their financial or political powers to claim large pieces of land against the interest of the poor farmers.
* **Nonchalant attitude of some pastoralists:** This category of herders feel they cannot negotiate with farmers and rather think of bribing the administration or the judiciary as the way forward. These are those who count on their financial powers over the crop farmers who are reported to be economically weak to challenge the latter. Some experts from the administration describe the atmosphere that reigns between the grazers and farmers as follows:

*“The relationship between the grazers and crop farmers is friendly but becomes very complicated in some situations when conflict exists over the use of land”.* Another expert feels *“…there are some grazers that are good and are working amicably with farmers. They even go to report themselves to the farmer when their animals destroy crops to seek for an amicable solution. They are in the minority but a majority of grazers still feel they will use the administration to subjugate the farmers. Farmers are cordial towards the grazers and are willing to work with them”.*

* **Land tenure system and land ownership claims** by the non-Mbororo “natives” farmers/grazers who claim that all the hills around their villages are owned by the community and can cultivate where and whenever they want.
* **Invasion of improved pasture paddock within community grazing land:** Conflict is not only between the farmers and the grazers. A few cases of conflict were recorded among the Mboror-grazers themselves over the use of community grazing resources. This was particularly the case in situations whereby cattle of one grazer break through into an improved paddock of another fellow Mbororo grazer. This also happens between the crop farmers that happened to be grazers and/or farmers.
* **Wrong application of the law:** Some experts hold that the wrong application of the law in itself is the persistent cause of conflict in the region. The agro-pastoral commission is reported to have neglected two of its functions to dwell only on farmer-grazer conflicts. *“Addressing the first two functions would completely limit or eradicate farmer grazer-conflicts”,* one of the experts claimed.

The causes of farmer-grazer conflicts enumerated above are responsible for the numerous effects that the farmers like the grazers have on their livelihood. The section that follows captures the severity of these conflicts on the household and community at large.

* 1. **Severity of farmer-grazer conflicts on livelihood of disputing parties in the North West Region of Cameroon**

Though most of the experts interviewed reported a drop in the number of conflicts reported in their areas, the situation is still critical in others. For instance, the Livestock department of Donga Mantung registered over 500 conflict cases for the last three years. The severity or impact of these conflicts on the livelihood could be very devastating. The section below provides some effects on livelihood emanating from farmer-grazer conflicts. The effects of these conflicts range from social to economic as presented below.

**Economic impact:** The economic effects on households could be traced from the loss of crops and animals that are worth much money to the disputing parties. In situations where the agro-pastoral commissions must intervene in the resolution of conflicts, disputing parties are charged for the services to assess damages caused to the crops and animal. The transportation of members of the agro-pastoral commission to the field, depending on the distance and accessibility, ranges between fcfa 15,000 to 100,000. All the parties concerned pay the said amount and in cases where farmers are unable to pay their own share of the commissions’ charges, the grazer bears the entire burden. These charges by the commission are normally supposed to be borne by the state budget.

The victims of farmer-grazer conflicts also incur property losses or damages. In Batibo for instance, it was noted that goats destroyed crops which were evaluated by the agro-pastoral commission to be worth a million francs (1,000,000 fcfa). In Ashong (one of the targeted communities), two (2) cattle valued at 600,000Frs were killed in 2010 as a result of farmer-grazer conflicts. In Akum, a grazer compensated farmers for crop destruction valued at 712,900fcfa even after spending money and time following the intervention of the lawyers.

**Social impact:** Although the relationship between farmers and grazers in areas where no conflicts exist might be cordial, some dominance relationship exists in most of the communities. The crop farmers consider the grazers (Mbororos) to be visitors and exercise their dominance powers on them. In other situations, the Mbororos are bound to pay allegiance to the Fons or chiefs as the case may be. For instance, in Baba II Mbororo-grazers claim to pay the sum of one hundred and fifty thousands (150,000) fcfa to village chief annually. In addition, a young grazer in the same community claimed to have paid the a sum of five hundred thousand (500,000) francs cfa before he was allowed to use an area of 600m2 as a starting point for his own home. This is a piece of land that was used by his family for over 50 years.

Furthermore, grazers collectively pay allegiance to village chief in transhumant areas such as in Ngyenmbo, Ashong and Njati zones respectively. Another example of extortion is seen in Nkambe central sub-division where cattle grazers make double allegiance payment to two village heads in Bih and Binshua respectively.

**Forced displacement:** The aftermaths of these farmers/grazers conflicts in some cases is that many families lose their homes and are forced to move out to a new environment. The affected parties end up becoming refugees in their own communities. An example is a recent farmers/grazer conflict situation in Baijong (Boyo, division) where some Mbororo grazers’ compounds were destroyed by a mob of neighboring farming community. In *Mamba* Kungi in Nkambe central sub-division, the Mbororos were chased out of their compounds and the community at large. Only the non-Mbororo grazers were allowed to graze in that community. However, this did not address the prevailing farmer-grazer conflict as the expert states that “*Although pastoralist Mbororos have been sent away from the village by native farmers, the relationship between natives’ pastoralists and farmers is far from cordial. There are only four local pastoralists but they are always in conflict with farmers”.*

 **Neighborhood conflict:** Border and inter-village conflicts emanate as a result of farmer-grazer conflicts. This was the situation that happened between the grazers and crop farmers from Baba II and *Alateneng* in Santa sub-division. In *Nkambe* area, grazers from neighbouring Nigeria cross over to graze in Cameroon. This sometimes leads to tension especially when conflict emanates. It therefore put the neighbouring grazers and their Cameroon counterparts at loggerheads.

**Food security concerns:** Farmers who are essentially women are scared to grow crops in conflict areas. This reduces the volume of crops produced. This affects women mostly since agriculture is an issue of women in the region. The destruction of crops and displacement of grazers goes to raise food insecurity concerns. Crop and livestock productivity is hampered by recurrent conflicts between farmers and grazers as a result of competition over the use of land and water, natural resource depletion, non-demarcation of grazing land from farmland, misunderstanding and lack of dialogue between farmers and grazers, etc.

* 1. **Policy environment of farmer-grazer conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon**

**Acquisition of land:** In Cameroon unlike in Burkina Faso, land is state property unless one acquires a titled deed for it, permit or concession as the case may be. Every Cameroon without exception has the right to acquire land following the official procedure. In some communities, the Mbororos are perceived as outsiders and do not have right over what is described as community land. On the other hand, the traditional authority and the so-called “*grafee*” claim over land ownership is also illegal. The Mbororos on their side do not also attempt to acquire this land following the procedures in place.

Nevertheless, the land tenure system in Cameroon is considered somehow cumbersome for private individuals to acquire title deeds because it is a costly process and has long administrative procedures that only the wealthy can afford. According to a United States Agency for International Development country profile on Cameroon’s property rights, titled “Property Rights and Resource Governance”, “only approximately 3% of rural land is registered, mostly in the names of owners of large commercial farms”(Nfor, 2013). This is not too far from the 5% of registered land in the North West reported by one of the experts interviewed.

**Legality of conflict resolution strategies adopted:** The experts from the administration, law, private institutions, farmers and grazers unanimously agree that amicable settlement should be highly considered in a situation of conflict. Unfortunately, amicable settlement is not legally binding. The only “officially” recognized body mandated to resolve farmer-grazer conflicts is the agro-pastoral commission. Furthermore, the services of the court are also recognized when criminal acts are associated with conflicts in question. In the case of farmer-grazer conflict, there might be property destruction. This becomes a criminal offence that can be tried by the court. However, it must be noted that the criminal court tries only criminal offences and the agro-pastoral commission is responsible for determining payments related to property destroyed. The use of dialogue platforms, traditional councils or specialised committees is considered an **attempt for amicable settlement** that is highly encouraged by all the parties involved including the legal expert who concludes that:

*“The intervention of traditional councils in the settlement of farmer-grazer conflicts have no jurisdiction in the entertainment of the conflicts. If they do so, it can be considered as an attempt to amicably resolve the matter within the community but not that they are legally justified to do that. The chiefs and Ardos are members of the agro-pastoral commissions so they cannot go and set up their own commission again to settle land matters. The setting up and functioning of dialogue platforms to mediate in farmer grazer conflict situations is laudable initiative to resolve their conflicts. In fact, this initiative may be coming up because the system in place cannot properly solve their problem”.*

It is important to note that in the conflict resolution process referred to by the legal expert, local arrangements are made to resolve farmer-grazing conflicts at the community level. These problems are taken up to the agro-pastoral commission only when local initiatives fail. The expert consider these initiatives laudable but not legal as the law of 1978 recognises only the agro-pastoral commission as the entity eligible to intervene in case of farmer-grazer conflicts.

**Challenges in the application of the law:** The law regulating agro-pastoral activities in Cameroon provides for mapping-out of grazing and farm lands. Consequently, a*n area is called a grazing area or farmland only when it has been allocated by the agro-pastoral commission. Unfortunately in all the subdivisions of the North West region there are no well-defined grazing areas with maps as required by the law. These are the responsibilities of the ministry of lands that happens to be a member of the commission. Furthermore,* the agro-pastoral commissions do not have running budgets due to the fact that the ministry of lands fails to budget for these activities as stipulated by the law of 1978 regulating the functioning of the commission. The commission tends to unlawfully shift the financial burden to the disputing parties.

**Unlawful extortion of funds from disputing parties:** Funds are extorted by the different stakeholders from the farmers and grazers in situations of conflicts. For instance, one of the experts from the technical ministry puts it this way:

“*…the use of the agro-pastoral commission in conflict resolution can be very expensive. The parties in dispute have the responsibility to cover the expenses of the commission. The DO decides how much the parties have to pay. When this happens, each service head is given between fcfa 10,000 to 15,000 each for the appraisal mission”.* Another grazer among others, stated that they *“…spend money in resolving these cases. We have to pay various charges and often travel long distances. Resolving these conflicts really deplete our resources,” he continued.*

This is unlawful! This is also one of the reasons why amicable settlements are encouraged because failure to settle matters amicably would require a lot of resources and time especially when the matter goes to the court. The justice system is normally associated with little or no cost. However, because of the prevailing situation of the police, investigators and lawyers, complainants are often required to pay a service fee for the matter to be examined.

* 1. **Farmer-Grazer conflict mitigation strategies in the North West Region of Cameroon**

The following five farmer-grazer conflict mitigation practices were identified to abate conflicts;

* Dialogue platforms
* Farmer-grazer committees
* Traditional council
* Agro-pastoral commission
* Judiciary

The **Dialogue Platform (DP)** was identified as an alternative to the agro-pastoral commission. The promoters or advocates of this platform or forum deemed it necessary because of the argument that agro-pastoral commission was inefficient in the way farmer-grazer conflicts were handled. Institutions that have experimented this approach include MBOSCUDA and the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV). The latter instituted the DP after reflecting on the prevailing farmer-grazer conflict in the North West Region. The Dialogue Platform is defined by one of the experts as *“…a forum where farmers and grazers exchange on issues or problems of farmer-grazer conflicts in order to come out with amicable settlements”*. Despite some challenges reported (resistance of the administration to accept the role of DPs), the approach has been successfully used in mitigating conflicts between 2006 and 2010. Studies carried out by SNV for instance, reveal that this approach has led to a 40% decrease in farmer-grazer conflicts in Donga Mantung, Ngoketunjia and Menchum divisions respectively. In addition to resolving farmer-grazer conflicts, the DP also takes preventive measures as it is a forum where the principal parties in conflict meet to seek solutions to their problems. The experts consider this to be an opportunity to sustainably solve conflicts. One of the experts actively involved in promoting dialogue platforms as a means to mitigate conflicts shared his experience as stated below:

*“When there is dialogue, farmers and grazers start seeing themselves as complementary. The output of dialogue platform leads them to alliance farming. Grazers see farmers as those they can benefit from in terms of access to crop residues after harvest. Farmers equally see grazers as those from whom they can benefit in terms of access to cattle manure. Organic crop production can therefore be enhanced through this system of integrated crop-livestock farming generated from the dialogue platform”.*

Another local initiative identified in Bui division was a constituted **farmer-grazer committee** by the youth wing of the village Development Association in one of the project conflict areas (Barare, in Jakiri Sub Division). The idea to constitute this committee stems from the sustained prevalence of farmer-grazer conflicts in the community. The youths constituted the committee that organizes sensitisation campaigns as well as resolves some farmer-grazer conflicts. This plausible initiative was recorded only in Barare and was initiated because of the magnitude of farmer-grazer conflicts in the area. In Baijong, that happens to be one of the targeted communities, the farmers, grazers, Ardo, Chief and the administration agreed over the use of a conflict area alternately for grazing and farming. This is what can be described as “communal alliance farming”. This arrangement curbs the conflict that often occurs on the piece of land.

The **traditional councils** in various conflict-prone communities are other forums through which conflicts are handled. It is made up the Village Head, some traditional notables and the representatives of the pastoralist community, in some situations, as was the case in *Baijong*. It has no judicial premise and therefore is considered as an attempt to resolve conflicts amicably. However, the results are not generally satisfactory to all parties, especially the pastoralists in Baba II and Baijong, just to mention a few. In Baijong, the expert declared that

*“the traditional council meets to settle farmer-grazer disputes and ensures that justice is done. Both farmers and grazers are represented in this council that works to set up a minimum acceptable balance in decision making. The administration is equally advocates for peaceful settlement amongst the litigants. By so doing, conflict cases are settled by the traditional council and in situations where the defendant is not satisfy or does abide by the decision of the traditional council, the matter is taken up to the Divisional Officer. When the case is taken up to DO, the fines levied are increased. For instance, it may be moved from fcfa 20,000 to 30,000. Alternatively, the parties may be asked to go and settle the matter amicably”.*

The officially recognized medium for the resolution of farmer-grazer conflict is the **agro-pastoral commission** set up in each (sub-)division as per the law of 1978 regulating farmer-grazer activities in Cameroon. The commission is made up of the Senior Divisional officer or the Divisional officer, the delegates of lands, technical ministries (agriculture, livestock), the Village Head (Fons) and the head of pastoralist communities (*Ardos*). The commission has three main functions as summarized by Barrister Fon: allocation of grazing land, permanent control over farming and grazing activities and lastly resolution of farmer-grazer conflicts. The commission has some limits in their functioning. Two experts, like others, concluded from experience that

*“The agro-pastoral commission is the official medium through which farmer-grazer conflicts are managed. The commission encourages amicable settlements as much as possible. Farming and grazing can and should cohabitate. This is the reason why the commission always encourages amicable settlement. The agro-pastoral commission, headed by the DO is made up of a representative of land tenure system, sub-delegates of livestock and agriculture, chiefs and Ardos of the communities concerned and notables as the situation may be”.* Meanwhile another expert holds that “…*the agro-pastoral commission concentrates or focuses only in carrying out the last function that has to do with the resolution of farmer-grazer conflicts. They fail to carry out the first two functions whereas if those functions were properly carried out, farmer-grazer conflicts would be minimal or completely inexisting”.* “*…the parties in conflict therefore bear the burden of sponsoring all expenses of the agro-pastoral commission geared at resolving reported farmer-grazer conflicts. In some situations, the farmer may not even have the money to pay for the intervention of the commission. Most often, the grazer would want to pay for his own and that of the farmer concerned. Of course, if this happens the farmer will be un-comfortable and the decision of the commission may be tilted towards the grazers who support most of the expenses”.*

The fact that the agro-pastoral commissions do not have running budgets is pure negligence on the side of the ministry of lands that is expected to budget for these activities as stipulated by the law of 1978 regulating the functioning of the commission.

The agro-pastoral commissions exist at the sub-divisional and divisional levels headed by the senior divisional and the divisional officers respectively. The decisions of the agro-pastoral commission are also rendered enforceable by prefectoral orders following reports forwarded to the SDO by the head of the agro-pastoral commission at the divisional level. However, it must be noted that some of the decisions taken by the administration are not implemented by the parties as a result of limited resources for follow-up.

The SDO renders enforceable the decisions of the agro-pastoral commission. A prefectoral order cannot be challenged. These orders include injunctions on disputed farming or grazing land, injunction to decease from farming or grazing activities, or injunction to construct cattle proof-fences, or may be to ask grazers to pay damages caused by stray animals.

The final conflict mitigation opening is the **judiciary** that handles **only** criminal aspects resulting from farmer-grazer conflicts**.** This is not considered the best option to follow by all the experts interviewed including a legal expert who advises as follows:

*“In all conflict situations, mediation should be the first thing despite the fact that we may hold different legal positions The worst scenario case in court or the best scenario case in court is worse off than the worse amicable settlement that we have. So, the best decision in court is worse off than the worse amicable settlement that we have. So, amicable settlements are better than legal settlement. This is particularly so because in our system, the legal environment is very complicated. In fact, it can even said that justice is for the rich. So, amicable settlements are highly encouraged”.*

* 1. **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for farmer-grazer conflict mitigation in the North West Region of Cameroon**

**Strengths**

* MBOSCUDA has well-trained paralegals in the project areas who could be very instrumental in the delivery of field activities especially as concerns the search for common grounds for grazers and farmers;
* Some projects with related activities were earlier implemented in the past by institutions such as SNV, HPI and Mboscuda. These experiences include pasture improvement programs and dialogue platforms. Building on past experiences would enhance the implementation of the on-going project;
* Previous experiences of pasture fields exist in some of the communities. Some grazers have been trained on techniques of setting up pastures. CDENO, MBOSCUDA, SNV among others provided this training even setting up pastures in communities such as Ashong, Acha Tugi, Baba II, Baijong and Binshua. Building on this experience, coupled with judicious exploitation of year round water sources, could enhance the setting up of pastures;
* Constructing fences is a practice adopted by both the Mbororos and indigenous population in conflict-prone areas.

**Weaknesses**

* The agro-pastoral commission does not have a running budget allocated. This is why the costs of supporting the functioning of the commission have been passed on to the disputing parties. The amount varies depending on the distance, and commission’s demands. This is an irregular situation as the law of 1978 regulating its functioning clearly state that the running budget of the agro-pastoral commission should be introduced in the state budget. This in itself is a coping mechanism developed by the administration because they fail to put this on state budget. The financial handicap also makes it difficult to implement decisions taken by the agro-pastoral commission or prefectural orders.
* Inability to manage pastures. Previous pasture fields introduced in some Mbororo communities were abandoned because of the simple reason that cattle break into the field. This is probably a management issue that needs to be checked and rectified.
* No evidence has been established from literature and field experience where year round natural water sources have been exploited for pasture improvements as a way to mitigate farmer-grazer conflict
* The technical ministries and the administration do not monitor and report the incidence of farmer-grazer conflicts for better management. The complaints submitted by complainants are not analysed for better conflict management

**Opportunities**

* There is a policy environment conducive to challenging the causes of conflict in Cameroon and the North West Region in particular. The freedom to get involved by participating in the politics could be an opportunity to build on, in order to face vexing problems of farmer-grazer.
* On-going and documented experience in the area of mitigating farmer-grazer conflicts exist. These experiences could be sourced to drive the project and development agenda. Some of these institutions include (but not limited to) SNV, Heifer, MBOSCUDA, Tugi Silvopastoral project, etc;
* Human right groups and legal advisers operate in the areas of the project that could be used to fight for the interest of the Mbororos when need be.
* Water points and water catchments exist in some communities that could be used for pasture improvement especially given that some of the water points do not dry up during the dry season or periods of transhumance
* The Mbororos under-utilize the cow-dung. Experience from previous projects notably the “*Pilot Project on Domestic Biogas in the Western Highlands of Cameroon*” executed by HPI shows how this resource is used for generating cooking gas, manure for agriculture through the slurry as well as electricity for charging of phones and energy supply in poor households
* Some initiatives have already been taken towards the construction and use of biogas plants in the North West region of Cameroon. SNV and HPI have both undertaken such initiatives already. Consequently, the accrued experience of SNV and HPI could be sourced. The use of trained biogas plant construction and maintenance technicians could be used for the implementation of this program.
* The climate has somehow favoured the grazers at least in a few of the communities where rainfall was prolonged until late November over the past three years. For instance, it rained until 15 December this year (2013). This left the fields green until January. Grazers went on transhumance later in January instead of December. Rainfall in these areas also started earlier than usual in February.
* There is some experience of alliance farming between farmers and grazers especially in transhumance areas. Capitalizing on this experience will go to enhance agricultural productivity and livestock production.
* There are ongoing reforms [at least on paper] of the Cameroon land ordinances and agro-pastoral code. A more acceptable and definite definition of grazing land may come out of these reforms as a result of civil society participation.
* Pasture improvement can be carried out on vast land available.
* There are technical services in the ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industry responsible for the extension of pasture improvement technologies. The technical service of MINPIA is competent and can be used for the development of pastures in the project areas. CDENO for instance is a specialized public institution whose mission includes contributing to the conservation and improvement of pastures and development of basic grazing infrastructure such as the drinking trough, cattle dips, etc.
* All experts interviewed advocate for dialogue and amicable settlement between the farmers and grazers. They sensitize farmers and grazers to opt for an amicable settlement in case of crop destruction or attack on cattle. The grazers and farmers generally accept amicable settlements of disputes. The willingness to settle disputes outside the administrative and traditional cycles is an opportunity to build on for conflict mitigation

**Threats**

* The shift of power relation from the traditional council, agro-pastoral commission to the Dialogue Platforms could be perceived as a threat because of the economic interest that the former has in situations of conflict. This should be tactfully handled with the participation of the traditional and agro-pastoral commission.
* Unpredictable climatology raises doubts over some of the transhumance and grazing periods ordered for in some of the communities. This experience was shared by some of the experts who witness changing periods of rainfall in the last two years that have completely distorted the transhumance period in the Momo division of the North West Region of Cameroon.
* The perception by most crop farmers generally described as villagers or indigenes that Mbororos are strangers and have no right to own land.
* Insufficient availability of wood for the construction of fences and pressure on wood for firewood is a threat to promotion of the construction of fences
* There is the misuse of powers by the traditional authorities (Fons and Ardos). The Fons claim ownership of land whereas it is known that all land belongs to the state unless a title is issued. Some Ardos on their side tend to hire out land for grazing.
* The use of political powers sometimes by ‘important’ people might be a threat to the mitigation of conflict and its re-occurrence.
* Dependence on the farmer-grazer commission and judiciary that are highly costly to the disputing parties.
* Dialogue platforms perceived as a threat under situations where the agro-pastoral commissions’ economic interest is at stake.
1. **Conclusion and way forward**

This study is part of the evaluation of ‘In Search of Common Ground’. This evaluation is the first empirical research of its kind, examining the conflict from the point of view of the farmers and grazers themselves with statistical and qualitative research over five years. The expert interviews are the starting point for the evaluation and the specific research aims are:

* to identify issues which will be explored in the survey to establish a statistical baseline and to identify issues for the qualitative research;
* to ensure that a wide range of stakeholders (including women, disabled people's groups, traditional leaders, farmers, grazers and local officials) inform both the programme and the evaluation;
* to ground the programme and research in local realities and context.

A wide range of stakeholders was included in the study, a larger number than originally planned. Their voices, which were not necessarily in agreement, can be seen in the report. There is already a strong empirical base for monitoring the conflicts themselves from a previous Comic Relief funded project (a paralegal database with nearly 700 entries over more than six years). The purpose of this report thus is to pave the way for a new set of empirical studies, both qualitative and statistical, and ground the issues in a local historical and policy context in order that outbreaks of violence can be more fully understood.

Farmer-grazer conflicts have devastating effects on humans and particularly the property of the disputing parties. This is characterized by events which include injuries to cattle, the poisoning of animals, the destruction of crops and the breakdown of relationships between crop farmers and grazers. The result can be that some Mbororos are displaced from their homes and communities. The causes of these conflicts are many. The farmers are responsible in some way on one side and the grazers on the other side and the policy and local government environment in which the conflicts take place can also be unhelpful.

The agro-pastoral commission and the judiciary are the legal entities mandated to resolve farmer-grazer conflicts and examine the criminal acts resulting from such conflicts. This process is often costly to the disputing parties and can be ineffective. Other emerging conflict-resolution strategies include the use of Dialogue Platforms and farmer-grazer committees. The traditional council also intervenes in the resolution of conflicts at community level. Amicable settlement of conflict was highly encouraged by all the experts interviewed.

Alliance farming and improved pasture are now practised in some communities as a way to limit farmer-grazer conflicts. Several strengths (e.g. past experiences) and opportunities exist that could be used to develop conflict mitigation strategies. Improving on the weaknesses identified would also go a long way to enhance conflict resolution in the North West and in the study areas in particular.

The use of the agro-pastoral commission as a conflict-resolution mechanism, has not been entirely successful in resolving farmer-grazer conflicts in the region. The interviewees said some government administrators who are supposed to resolve conflicts have rather used them as means to exploit farmers and grazers often fuelling conflicts in many circumstances. This has certainly contributed to rendering the grazers and farmers (especially women who constitute the bulk of crop farmers) poorer, more divided and less able to cohabit peacefully than they were before.

The land tenure law of 1974 deprives youths from having access rights to land. The law of 1974 allows only those who occupied the land before then to apply for land certificates. Moreover, even if you were born before 1974, you need to show evidence that you occupied the land before 1974. This is why it is expected that any new land law should be flexible enough to also allow youths to have access right to land.

Discussions with the expert interviewees suggested a number of ways in which the project itself could be successfully implemented. This includes:

* The organisation of exchange visits to learn about the functioning of Dialogue Platforms and pasture improvement programmes in communities where these exist. It may also pay to share the experience in Baijong where stakeholders agreed to use land in what can be described as communal alliance farming;
* The organisation of sensitization campaigns to create awareness on the consequences of conflict and encourage mutual existence and equal right over natural resources;
* Arguing for the smooth functioning of the Agro-pastoral commission with emphasis on budgeting their running cost in the state budget of the ministry of lands as required by the law;

This report indicates that a wide range of stakeholders were interviewed in order to ground future research in local realities, two of the major aims. The other aim was to identify issues to be explored in future work, that is, to influence the design of the Baseline Survey questionnaire and later qualitative research. The recommendations in this respect are as follows:

* Conflict measurement: A firm factual basis needs to be established for the conflicts themselves, how and when they occur, how severe they are and who is affected. This should also be an opportunity for the respondents to prioritize the causes as they see them. It was not possible in the Expert Interviews (and not the intention) to assess the size of the problem and the number of victims of conflicts. This is one of the purposes of the statistical research. The paralegal database provides important triangulation in this respect but the data is only partial because only events which come to the attention of the paralegals are included in it. It may be useful to provide information on the severity of the conflict as well as to research how the conflict was managed;
* Livelihoods: A firm factual basis needs to be established about the livelihoods of grazers and farmers, details of when and where they graze cattle and farm, details of cattle and agricultural production for the average household and details of the ownership of land (which itself can be a cause of conflict);
* Agricultural interventions: The Baseline Study is the first part of a five year evaluation and we need a clear understanding of how certain types of agricultural interventions (alliance farming, water protection, biogas and the use of improved pasture) are currently used. It is a premise of the whole project that competition for scarce resources is itself an important source of conflict. The Baseline Survey should gather detailed information on the extent and benefits that alliance farming brings to grazers and farmers alike. The knowledge and use of plant residues in grazing activities and cow dung for biogas and manure should also be quantified to show the number of farmers and grazers using these methods;
* Attitude measurement: There is always more than one side to an argument. In this case there are at least three: the views of the farmers and the views of the grazers (and the two are sometimes at opposite extremes) and the mediating views of those in the Ministries, the DO offices and local government. The attitudes of farmers and grazers to the wider sources of conflict need to be examined and their views about the extent to which current solutions work. This will provide a counterpoint to the views of officials within the expert interviews;
* Statistical analysis and indicators: What has emerged from the expert interviews is that whilst a large range of attitudes and opinions were expressed there is only limited statistical evidence in many areas. This highlights the need for a range of statistical indicators which can allow consistent measurement to take place over the five years of the project. It is imperative that more quantitative information be provided on key policy issues. Emphasis should also be laid on the land tenure system and the extent of extortion from parties in conflict (where this exists);
* Qualitative research: This will follow the Baseline Study and will build on the statistical work and be informed by it. It will examine the effect of conflicts on households and communities using case studies, interviews and focus groups. There are lessons to be learned here from the expert interviews. For example, one important set of issues is about exclusion (which should include disability) and gender inequality. The latter was rarely mentioned in the expert interviews by respondents which may suggest it is not seen as a particularly important issue. But women are obviously affected by conflicts in their communities and one clear example is fetching and carrying water which can be an onerous task for both girls and women. This needs to be further investigated in future qualitative research. It is also the case that women are heavily involved in the farming side, and on the grazer side women may own livestock and bring them into the family when they marry. This needs to be studied. Disability issues should also be covered in the qualitative research;
* Research on MBOSCUDA: Within the Baseline Study assessment should be made of the activities and visibility of MBOSCUDA in the communities. This is needed both to provide measures over the five year project of how MBOSCUDA is perceived in the community and to help them to structure their activities in the future.

The Expert Interviews have thus both increased our understanding of the causes and severity of the conflicts and provided a clear direction for the development of the Baseline Survey and later qualitative research.

**Annexes**

**Annex 1: Literature Review**

***Problem and causes of farmer-grazer conflict***

The competition over the use of natural resources such as land & water is at the centre of sustained conflict between ethnic Mbororo cattle herders and non-Mbororo subsistence farmers around the world and the North West Region of Cameroon in particular. These disputes are principally due to competition over the use of land and water resources for agricultural and non-agricultural use (Rashid, 2012; Kelsey & Knox, 2012), increase in human & animal population(Gefu & Kolawole, 2002) as well as resource access rights, inadequacy of grazing resources, values, cultures & beliefs. Disputes over ownership of resources and climate change are also responsible for farmer-grazer conflicts (Sone, 2012; Arias and Ibanez, 2012; Ajuwon, 2004; Fasona and Omojola, 2005). For instance, the migration of the Fulbes to the South due to drought in some countries like Mali and Nigeria resulted in farmer-grazer conflicts (Fonjong *et al.,* 2010). Davidheiser et al. (2002), Aredo (2005) and Gefu (2008) concluded that farmer-grazer clashes are due to the destruction of farmlands following seasonal movements of pastoralists and their flocks. This is especially serious in areas with high cattle and human populations, ecological and climate changes. Most causes of conflicts in the North West Region of Cameroon, particularly around Mechum and Donga Mantung administrative areas were attributed to the latter.

Sone (2012) attributes the re-occurrence of farmer-grazer conflicts in the North West region of Cameroon to scarcity of land, climate change and the ‘poor’ application of statutory laws guaranteeing landownership. This is the case when farmers’ cannot have their right to control land during contention or wealthy grazers are favoured against the law.

On the other hand, the relationship between the two categories of persons is also important. The dominant relationship characterized by power and authority within and between the Mbororos and farmers also cause conflict. Fonjong et *al*. (2010) see this issue in terms of power relations whereby the farmers have no financial power to influence administrative decisions, nor do the herdsmen in what is described as the rent-seeking habit of the administration or a system marred by bribery and corruption. In one of the district areas of the North West Region Menjo (2002) reaffirms this by concluding that *“…public officials continue to take advantage of the ignorance of the local population to perpetuate their rent-seeking behaviour”.*

Moritz (2013) came to the same conclusion following the fact that traditional and administrative authorities shy away from resolving farmer-grazer conflicts in Northern Cameroon because of economic interest.

The production system of both grazers and farmers, the allocation of economic rights over resources and the beliefs, especially given the difference in religious beliefs and culture, are other major causes of these conflicts (Blench, 1984).

Others attribute farmer-grazer tension to the absence of fair compensation framework in situations where crops mostly grown by women are damaged by herds (Davidheiser et *al.* 2008). The fact that female crop farmers do not have land rights obliges the grazers not only to move with their cattle because of scattered rains, but also try to displace these women. Farmers on their side block cattle routes, corridors or water points leading to cattle scourge, hence conflicts. Farmers on the other hand encroach onto cattle routes and sometimes on water points thereby exposing their crops to cattle destruction (Fonjong et al., 2010). Yet, poor pasture management is also seen as the principal cause of conflict (Harsbarger and Nji, 1991). These conflicts are particularly rampant in the dry season between December to March.

The administrative policies are also blamed for causing conflict especially in the North West Region of Cameroon. Mbah (undated) examined the roots of conflict from a historic perspective and concluded that land/boundary disputes in the region have their roots in colonial administrative policies that were disruptive on inter-village boundaries as well as failures of post-colonial administrative policies to judiciously address the problem of inter village boundaries.

**The effects of farmer-grazer conflicts**

The effects of these conflicts can be very devastating and range from loss of assets (physical, economic, social, lives), insecurity, food crises to sustained poverty. Conflict also limits the integrative capacity of crop farmers and their neighbouring grazers (Pelican, 2012). Rashid (2012) also reported that conflict has far-reaching economic, production and socio-psychological effects on the households. In Nigeria words such as *‘settler’, ‘native’, ‘non-native’, ‘host community’, ‘foreigner’, ‘native foreigner’, ‘stranger element’, ‘squatter’, ‘non-squatter’, ‘immigrant’, ‘migrant’, ‘indigene’, ‘non-indigene’* are used daily to describe, stigmatise or stereotype the “other” as a category who “does not belong” (Umar, undated)

Also, it even limits milk production (Ndambi et al., 2008) that happens to be an activity principally carried out by Mbororo women. This is why Fonjong *et al.* (2010) argue that sustained farmer-grazer conflicts undermine women’s ability to ensure household food security.

In fact, it was shown that farmer-grazer conflict in Bauchi state of Nigeria had negative effects on the families involved and the nation as a whole. The income of families exposed to conflict was significantly (P<0.05) lower than those in non-conflict areas. Significant losses in monetary terms, reduction in production, social insecurity and children not going to school are some of the consequences of farmer-grazer conflicts in Bauchi state (Sulaiman and Ja’afar-Furo, 2010). The farmers and the grazers also lose financial resources as they are required to pay a fee of US $40. Different practices were adopted to curb farmer-grazer conflicts in Cameroon and around the world. These remedies have proven their worth as far as mitigating farmer-grazer conflict is concern.

**Watershed management:** Amidst competition over the use of water and conflict resulting thereof, there is degradation of water quality (World Bank, 2012). In some areas it becomes scarce and continues to deteriorate in both quality and quantity and may soon become a critical limiting factor for economic development, food security, and basic health and hygiene services for a steady growing population. Water shortages and quality deterioration due to degraded watersheds are among the problems which require greater attention (Global Water Partnership TAC, 2000) especially in the management of watersheds.

**Mitigation practices and benefits**

In one of the conflict prone areas of the North West region of Cameroon, the use of fodder banks to supplement grazing and the rehabilitation of pastures reduced the age at which animals reach the market (500kg Body Weight) from 7.2 years to 4.1 years (World Bank, 2012). On the other hand, Ndikintum (2008)found out thatadopted*Night Paddock Manuring* system contributed positively by reducing conflicts between farmers and grazers in Small Babanki of the North West region of Cameroon. The study also concluded that night paddock manuring benefits both crop farmers and grazers households by means of improving productivity and reducing poverty. Dry season grazing on farm fields followed by crop production in the rainy season (Gefu *et al.,* 2002) is an example of a win-win agreement between grazers and farmers to mitigate conflict. This arrangement was also made in the rice fields of Ngoketunjia division of the North West region of Cameroon. Farmers / grazers under the supervision of the traditional and administrative authorities adopted this win-win agro-pastoral system.

Other coping mechanism involves the clear distinction between grazing and farmland. Reduction of herds size and fencing by herdsmen are some of the mitigation practices. For instance, the building of fences and instituting controlled rotational grazing in Tugi community in the NW region of Cameroon (World Bank, 2012). Furthermore, the integration of animals, crops and trees (agro-silvopastoral system) is a sustainable way for land use and diversification of farm produce hence improvement in food security and alleviating poverty (Ibrahim *et al*. 2011).

The benefits of these practices are real. Production per hectare for growing animals would increase up to six times if animals had access to rehabilitated pastures and up to ten times if fodder banks were used to supplement grazing in the rehabilitated pastures during the dry season. This also yielded a positive internal rate of returns (World Bank, 2012). The World bank innovation transfer initiative funded project in Tugi of the North West region of Cameroon was complemented by capacity building based on a Farmer Field School approach.

Sone (2012) recommends that the “*government of Cameroon needs to establish structures that ensure the equitable management and ownership of this vital resource, including, if necessary, further amendment of its laws. Gaps in the law and between legal institutions should be filled through reforms that will lead to the rational allocation of land. In addition, the adoption of dialogue, mediation, and conciliation by all stakeholders in landownership disputes is vital for conflict resolution, prevention, and management*”.

Efforts are also being made to create a conducive policy environment to challenge the causes of conflict in Cameroon and the North West Region in particular. This is why Ibrahim (2011) considers the democratization and the political participation of the Mbororos in the Western Highlands regions of Cameroon to be a step towards facing the problem of conflict and fighting for the interest of the marginalized groups like the Mbororos. These advances among others were also documented in over seventeen countries around the world (IUCN, 2011). Nevertheless, some authors still consider the Mbororos in Cameroon to be a politically marginalized and economically exploited minority.

In order to encourage co-existence in North West region of Cameroon, grazing areas are distinguished from farmland, transhumance tracks and areas are identified and demarcated. Dates of cattle movement are set and announced widely in the North West Region (Dafinger and Pelican, 2002).

Though land rights is in the hands of the state in Cameroon, participatory rights-based approach was adopted in the North West Region of Cameroon to empower pastoralists and create a conducive environment for them to fight for their right over land (Duni et *al.,* 2009). It must also be noted that the initiative to acquire land is the prerogative of the farmer or grazer who is in need.

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**Annex 2: Expert Interview guide**

FARMER-GRAZER CONFLICT IN THE NORTH WEST OF CAMEROON:

IN SEARCH OF COMMON GROUND

**EXPERT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Name of Expert: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Main occupation: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Division: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Subdivision: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Village: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time started: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time completed:

Interviewer(s): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **AGRO-PASTORAL SYSTEM PRACTICES IN CONFLICT PRONE AREAS**

What can you tell me about the **Livestock and agricultural systems** in conflict prone area in your community? Can you please describe [Probe: e.g., about the community in general]

* 1. What major or kinds of **crops and animals** are grown or reared in conflict prone areas?
	2. Explain any **association** between **crops grown and animals** reared with respect to the use of natural resources (land & watersheds) in conflict area? (probe for seasonality of crop and livestock production systems)
	3. Any **prefectoral orders** imposing a kind of system for **use of resource**s in farming and animal husbandry? Explain. What **approaches/ measures** are adopted towards a rational and equitable use of resources (watersheds & land) in conflict prone areas, **Transhumance**
	4. Any specific behavior of stakeholders (farmers, grazers, Ardos, leaders, administration) about agro-pastoral system and conflict outbreaks in the concerned areas
	5. Land ownership: How is land acquired by the grazers and farmers (right over land)
1. **HISTORY, DESCRIPTION AND CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN YOUR COMMUNITY**
2. What can you say about the relationship between the cattle rearers and crop producers in conflict community referred to?
3. Can you give me a **comprehensive history of farmer-grazer conflict** in your community? Nature, periods, frequency of occurrence, role of influential persons (cattle rearers, leaders & big farmers)
4. What were the immediate **causes of each** of the **conflicts** that occurred? **(**probe for **natural resources contested, climate, economic, social, legal, demographic and political causes)**
5. Can you tell us how **severe the conflicts** were? (**Effects on livelihood** of farmers and Mbororos: loss of property and lives, Value of losses (**provide** **statistics** where possible)). How did these conflicts affect women and youths?
6. **CONFLICT MITIGATION PRACTICES**
7. What **strategies or practices** are/were adopted or instituted for **stakeholders to mitigate** farmer/grazer conflicts, (intervention of SDO, justice, ministerial departments, Innovation platforms (**IP**),
8. Are the mitigation practices working? If not, what are the **limits of these measures**? [bribery and corruption, rent seeking habits, power relationship between and within the Mbororos and farmers]
9. What measures have been taken to ensure the rational and equitable **use of natural resource, equitable access to clean and safe water** in the project catchment areas
10. Are there special measures taken in facilitate the **access of** **women and youths** to natural resources or **limit effects of conflict on their livelihood**?
11. **SWOT ANALYSIS OF FARMER-GRAZER CONFLICT ENVIRONMENT FOR LIVELIHOOD IMPROVEMENT**
12. CONFLICT MITIGATION ENVIRONMENT (Observe, prob and gather from literature)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **STRENGTH** | **OPPORTUNITY** |
| **WEAKNESSES** | **THREATS** |

1. **MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN CONFLICT PRONE AREAS** (Observe, probe **(water & land management committees)** and gather from literature)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **STRENGTH** | **OPPORTUNITY** |
| **WEAKNESSES** | **THREATS** |

1. Some transhumance communities identified include Ngyenmbo, Mbaw plain, Ako plain, Ndumbu, Baisong, Bonkisong, Babungo, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)