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

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***CONFLICTS OVER LAND AND PASTURE IN NORTH WEST CAMEROON: LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF FARMERS AND GRAZERS***

 

 

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**Groups of Individuals on front page photos**

Top left photo – *female grazers in Akum*; Top right photo - *male farmers in Akum*; Bottom left photo - *male grazers in Akum*; Bottom right photo - *female farmers in Akum*.

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**Acknowledgements**: We are very grateful to the farmers and grazers of Akum (Mezam) and Binshua (Donga Mantung) who participated in this study and gave their time and energy to the focus groups and interviews. Special thanks go to David Drew who played a leading role in supporting the design and editing of this research report. Thanks go to Veronica Wigley who was responsible for the development of the project. We are grateful to the following for comments and advice: Sali Django, Michaela Pelican, Kemal Shaheen, Charles Tah, Joseph Toindepi, Sali Usmanu and Shei William.

# **SUMMARY**

This is a report of qualitative research on the farmer grazer conflicts in NW Cameroon. It is part of the evaluation over a five year period of the Big Lottery Funded Project ‘In Search of Common Ground’. The project is managed in Cameroon by the Mbororo Cultural and Development Association (MBOSCUDA). The qualitative research was conducted in October and November 2014, in two areas, Akum and Binshua, within Mezam and Donga Mantung respectively. Data was collected using eight focus groups with 14 in-depth interviews.

**The causes of conflict**

Farmers and grazers have different views about causes. Both agree that there is competition over land. Land ownership is also an issue.

* Grazers claim that farmers encroach on grazing land, they do not adequately fence their farms and they also divert water from the water sources for their crops;
* Farmers claim that grazers frequently drive their cattle into streams and rivers to drink the water, thus polluting water which is also used for human consumption.

**The experiences of conflict**

* When cattle trample the crops of farmers they retaliate. Farmers spray the grass with chemicals in order to poison the cattle. Cows are sometimes slashed;
* Farmers claim that herdsmen direct cattle into farms to eat up corn tassel and bean flowers (which are said to influence fertility and reproduction in cattle). They claim that at times the grazers in Akum look after cattle from grazers from outside the community. The herdsmen find it difficult to control a large number of cows (sometimes as many as 500) single handed.

**The effects of conflict**

* Effects on income and livelihood: Grazers say that the conflict prevents their cattle from grazing adequately so the cows grow thin and produce little milk. This reduces the amount of milk the family itself can drink. Farmers sometimes need more than one job in order to make ends meet and life becomes difficult at times;
* Effects on family and schooling of children: Grazers have fears about lost income if cows do not produce enough milk and the lack of money to pay for children’s education. Farmers say that conflict affects their livelihood as a whole and the education of children in particular. Both communities have common difficulties and that the government needs to be solving these problems. This includes increasing employment opportunities;
* Effects of legal and other costs: There are many issues relating to land and government at various levels and this includes the Land Commission. There are also complaints about the Divisional Officers, whose task it is to help resolve disputes but instead take money and enrich themselves. Cases which go to court are very costly. The grazers complained about the punitive cost of judgements made against them. Some farmers have borrowed money to buy potato seedlings, fertilisers and cow dung for manure and destruction of crops means they are unable to pay back what they owe;
* Effects on food security: Both farmers and grazers explained that the conflict led to financial problems and this led in turn to food insecurity in their homes;
* Effects on health: The conflict affected grazers who could not afford to pay for hospital treatment. The female farmers reported high blood pressure and kwashiorkor.

**Conflict resolution**

There are a number of routes that can be taken when trying to resolve a conflict. The two parties can reach amicable agreement. This process could involve the traditional leaders including the Fon or the DO. Few people take the legal route because it is expensive and the outcome is uncertain.

Payment to officials (bribery/extortion/exploitation) is an issue on both sides. Grazers admit that bribes are sometimes given to law enforcement officials when conflicts are reported (even a whole cow) to try to ensure a successful outcome. On the other hand grazers disliked the fact that farmers report them to law enforcement officers who also receive large sums of money from the farmers. There was considerable disagreement about whether officials, the DOs, the gendarmes, or the Fons, favour farmers or grazers. The suggestion is that this depends on who is paying who.

* The grazers said that they reported some cases to the Fon but he always favoured the indigenous farmers. Grazers said they would now prefer to have a dialogue with the farmers through a Dialogue Platform that would include their leader (the Ardo) and the Fon;
* The farmers said that they went to the houses of the cattle owners to negotiate but that the grazers rarely wanted to cooperate. That is why they went to the Fon and law enforcement agencies, although they said that nine out of ten such cases were never resolved satisfactorily.

**Agricultural innovation**

The premise of the ‘In Search of Common Ground’ project is that improvements in alliance farming, in grazing practice (improving pastures using better seeds) and in water protection plus the use of biogas will help improve the relationships between farmers and grazers in the area.

* Grazers had limited experience of both alliance farming, pasture improvement methods, watershed management of biogas but had received some training by MBOSCUDA and were very happy to know how land can be managed in this way;
* Farmers said that they do not have any experience of working together on alliance farming. They said that if they practise alliance farming the soil could become hardened and difficult for them to till. At the same they wanted to at least try the technique. Water protection was seen as important. It was noted that farmers have connected pipes that supply potable water from water catchment areas to taps located all over their communities. Existing water management committee addressed issues concerning water supply and protection.

# **INTRODUCTION**

This is a report of qualitative research on the farmer-grazer conflicts in the North West Region (NW) of Cameroon. It is part of the evaluation over a five year period of the Big Lottery Funded Project ‘In Search of Common Ground’. The project is managed in Cameroon by the Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA) and in the UK by Village Aid. This research was conducted by Valentine Asong and his colleagues at the Pan-African Institute for Development in West Africa (PAID-WA). The study builds on two previous pieces of work, both by Valentine Nchinda and colleagues. The first is an expert interview study of officials and the second is a statistical study of 800 households (Nchinda, et al., 2014a and 2014b).

That there is a problem of conflict between farmers and grazers is well-established. The Mbororo  
cattle herders and non-Mbororo subsistence farmers in the North West Region of Cameroon are at loggerheads and struggle over the use of natural resources such as land and water. The effects on families and communities are considerable. Attempts have been made to reduce conflict in two main ways. Firstly, Dialogue Platforms (committees of farmers and grazers which mediate between individuals and groups when a dispute arises) have been set up by MBOSCUDA (in collaboration with SNV) to encourage amicable settlement between those in conflict. This Project will extend these Dialogue Platforms to 14 new areas. The interventions also include the introduction of water protection methods which will ensure that clean and safe water becomes available in the communities, methods to improve pastures for cattle using better seeds, alliance farming, in which manure produced by the cattle is used to fertilise plots owned by farmers, and the use of biogas.

Analysis of papers in this area indicates that there are essentially two approaches to understanding the causes of conflict. These centre on environmental factors on the one hand and on political ecology factors on the other (see the literature reviews in Nchinda et al, 2014a and 2014b).

Majekodunmi et al. (2014) argues: ‘Environmental security scholars believe that these rural conflicts are manifestations of herder-farmer conflict based on competition for land and natural resources, fuelled by climate change such as desertification in the Sahel (Homer-Dixon 1999; Herskovits 2010). A further problem is that the movement of cattle from one place to the other as a result of low rainfall pushes crop farmers away from their farmlands. Farmers on their side block cattle routes, corridors or water points leading to cattle scourge and hence conflicts. In addition, farmers encroach onto cattle routes and sometimes on water points thereby exposing their crops to destruction by cattle (Nchinda et al, 2014b).

Political ecologists, on the other hand, argue that social, cultural and political considerations are more important than ecological factors in causing conflicts (Hartmann, 2001; Moritz, 2010). The focus from a political ecology viewpoint is on governance, emphasising that the relationship between the farmers and grazers, mediated by government officials, laws and processes are important factors contributing to conflict (Okello, 2014).

Sone (2012) attributes the reoccurrence of farmer-grazer conflicts in NW Cameroon to scarcity of land as well as the poor application of laws guaranteeing land ownership. This is the case when farmers do not have rights to control land or when wealthy grazers are favoured in legal disputes. Fonjong et al. (2010) sees this issue in terms of power relations. 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 and a system affected by bribery and corrupt practices. In one of the district areas of the NW 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’ (Kaimba, 2011).

Moritz (2006) came to the same conclusion arguing that traditional and administrative authorities shy away from resolving farmer-grazer conflicts in Northern Cameroon because officials have an economic interest in seeing that conflicts continue. These findings echo those in Nigeria. The use of police and courts to resolve conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers by the Nigerian government has been ineffective and only contributed to the frequency of the clashes (Alhassan, 2013). This has exacerbated insecurity and encouraged the conflicting parties to take responsibility for their own security and to defend themselves.

Gender inequality is also an important issue (Odora 1993). Women farmers perform almost all the arduous agricultural labour (tilling, planting, weeding and harvesting) which in combination requires their year round attention, whilst the primary (and often only) involvement of male farmers is to perform heavy tasks such as clearing fields, construction of fence around farms and building of farm barn. On the other hand, the female grazers perform mainly child care and household duties (cooking, cleaning, fetching wood and water and collection of cow milking) while the male grazers perform the heavier tasks. Most of the confrontations are between female crop farmers and herdsmen. In contrast, face to face financial arrangements rarely include women and, in general, women are not allowed to take part in decisions about conflict resolution.

The conflicts also have an effect on food security (Fonjong, 2010). Farmers reported that the money spent on the farm on seeds and manure to grow beans, maize, potatoes and yams is wasted. Loans that the farmers had taken out to fund their farming still have to be repaid even if the crops have been destroyed. A large number of people depend on relief food provided by their neighbours within the community and from outside the community. Malnutrition levels have increased, with women and children being most vulnerable.

Labour movement and migration (both inward and outward) is also a consequence of conflict (Ngoufo, 1992). As a result of high unemployment rates young people including university graduates from the farming communities return home and become involved in self-employment in agriculture. These young people usually cultivate crops to take care of their elderly relatives but conflicts with grazers make life difficult.

**Figure 1: Map showing location of the two study areas**

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= Conflict study areas

**Note: The study areas for the qualitative research were in the Divisions of Mezam and Donga Mantung**

It has been suggested that the government should intervene in conflicts through the Agro-pastoral Commission which is charged with the distribution of land and resolution of conflict (Nformi et al., 2014). This includes the legal redefinition and practical demarcation of the boundaries between grazing and farm lands and could be achieved through the use of law enforcement agents to ensure that these boundaries are respected. The issue of land reform is as yet unresolved.

# **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The main objective of the research is to establish the underlying beliefs, values and cultural practices of both farmers and grazers, to understand how each group view the other and how this may lead to conflict.

The research objectives are:

* To explore how different groups of people are differently affected; ensuring that views are sought from residents of high and low conflict areas;
* To explore how the attitudes and beliefs of herders and grazers are affected by their knowledge and experience of Alliance Farming, Dialogue Platforms, water catchment areas and biogas, and whether men and women experience these activities and approaches differently;
* To explore what beliefs, practices and embedded cultural tenets help or hinder the wider uptake of innovation in alliance farming, Dialogue Platforms, water catchment areas and biogas;
* To identify how, where and by what means people and communities feel conflict can be resolved.

The project ‘In Search of Common Ground’ started in August 2013 in 14 communities in five administrative divisions: Mezam, Momo, Bui, Boyo and Donga Mantung. Approximately 14,000 people live in these communities (Figure 1). The qualitative research was conducted at the end of the first year of the project in October and November 2014. This was in two areas, Akum and Binshua, within Mezam and Donga Mantung Divisions respectively. These areas were chosen primarily because the first area, Akum, is one of the richest communities in the area and is already a conflict hotspot whilst the other area, Binshua is one of the poorest communities and is an area of low conflict.

Data was collected using eight focus groups (female farmers, male farmers, female grazers, and male grazers in both Akum and Binshua) with 14 in-depth interviews to include the perspectives of older people, youths and people with disabilities. In the following sections the focus is on the causes of conflict, the experience of conflict, the effects of conflict, conflict resolution and finally agricultural innovation. The results of the focus group analysis and the semi structured interviews are reported together.

# **THE CAUSES OF CONFLICT**

***What the grazers said about the causes of problems***

In this section the causes of the conflicts are outlined. Some of these are long term causes, for example climate change, and others are more immediate triggers of conflict or violence. The long term causes and the triggers are discussed together here because this is the way that the respondents discussed them.

Environmental factors, political ecology factors and land ownership were discussed a great deal here. Grazers explained that there was competition over land, that both the human and cattle population had increased and that there was a demand for new space both for farms and for pasture. The result was that farmers encroached onto grazing land and farmers even moved into grazing communities to farm around grazers’ homes and paddocks.

Whilst farming is usually restricted to valleys and grazing land is restricted to hill tops, it is now the case that new farms are sometimes located in upland areas. Climate change also plays part in this. The recent changes in climatic conditions have caused pasture scarcity due to periods of prolonged high temperatures with less frequent precipitation. To get pasture, grazers need to travel to distant places and in some cases they are left with no choice but to pass through farms:

*‘The cattle track down here has been blocked and now we are obliged to be passing through the main town exposing our cows to risky accidents and we are spending money on bribes to police/gendarme check points on the way’. Male grazer Akum*

Grazers added that water shortages are also due to deforestation by farmers and the effect of planting Eucalyptus trees which use a great deal of ground water around the water catchment area. They claim that farmers are to blame for competition over water. Water is diverted by farmers from the water sources through pipes to their farms to irrigate their crops and this deprives cattle of drinking water.

Land ownership is also an issue.The Ardos of both Akum and Binshua said that it was difficult to obtain land certificates and that the farmers have encroached into grazing land with their newly established farms. Obtaining land certificate was difficult for grazers because government officials request large sums of money for them. Grazers claim that farmers do not adequately fence their farms and the result is that cows trespass on them. The lack of cooperation between farmers and grazers to construct fences around farms especially those located along cattle tracks and near grazing land is a major concern.

*‘When cattle tracks are blocked the cows are forced to pass through the farms and then destroy the crops. However we try to plead with the farmers or negotiate with them’ Male grazer, Akum*

*‘We know we are supposed to keep our cows in fences but they are supposed to protect their farms with fences too so that cows should not enter their farms’. Male grazer, Binshua*

Issues relating to Ardos, Fons and government officials also come into play here. In Akum, the grazers claim that farmers have preferential treatment. Although the government’s recent focus has been on agriculture, more emphasis has been placed on crop production than animal production, and grazers are not happy about this.

*‘Many problems are caused between farmers and grazers but we follow up with the DO and gendarme officers to solve the problem though they keep asking for more money afterwards.’ Female grazer, Akum*

***What the farmers said about the causes of problems***

Farmers see land ownership as a major issue and competition over water is also a challenge. They expressed the view that grazers frequently drive their cattle into streams and rivers to drink the water, thus polluting water which is also used for human consumption. Farmers further explained that during the dry seasons they now experience unusually severe dry spells due to changing climatic conditions. This results in them having to look for water for the crops in their farms. They spend a great deal of money laying pipes to their farms for irrigation purposes but grazers come and destroy them.

Land rights are an important issue because the farmers and grazers do not always have land certificates and the ownership of land then becomes contested. The farmers claim that nowadays grazers claim ownership of land by planting eucalyptus trees on land that was leased to them by the ancestors of the farmers, but for grazing purpose only. Farmers say they are convinced that the trees are responsible for the water shortages.

As far as education is concerned, the farmers claim that they are more educated than the grazers and that there is a language barrier because the female grazers often do not speak even Pidgin. The fact that grazers do not send their children to school and lack education is a factor, farmers say, in understanding and resolving disputes. This view is despite evidence that farmers themselves commonly do not have very high levels of education. Only 16% have secondary education or above compared to 7% of grazers (Nchinda, 2014b).

At the start of the focus groups grazers were asked about farmers and vice-versa and the words that they would use to describe them, stereotypical as that might be. Farmers were seen to have both negative and positive attributes. Words like ‘jealous, wickedness and aggression’ were used. At the same time positive words were also used like ‘good, peaceful and food providers’. Grazers held more positive than negative perceptions about farmers in both Akum and Binshua.

On the other hand the grazers in Akum were seen in quite a negative light. Although grazer’s cattle meat and milk were important sources of dietary protein, the grazers were described with words like ‘aggressive, selfish, secretive, destructive, insulting, non-cooperative and lazy’. In Binshua, the area with low levels of conflict, there were more positive attitudes. For example grazers were seen as providing free cow dung for manure, lending cows to farmers for funeral ceremonies, providing free milk to sick children of farmers and most importantly helping to ensure food security.

In summary we find that, whilst grazers commonly cite broad reasons for conflict, for example land issues and lack of government support, the comments of farmers tend to be at an individual level and more personal. Farmers refer to themselves as indigenous people (using the French word, indigenes), people who have owned land and property for generations. By contrast they refer to grazers as outsiders, strangers and tenants. This is the very common ways that groups reference the ‘Other’ (Miles, 1989). These views are despite the fact that cattle herders have grazed cattle and settled in NW Cameroon for more than seven decades (Pelican, 2015).

# **THE EXPERIENCES OF CONFLICT**

In this section the experiences of conflict are discussed. These include more detail on the triggers of conflict and also detail about what happens as a dispute develops. Research by MBOSCUDA has shown that a large number of households (75%) have experienced conflict during the last three years in some way or other (Nchinda, 2014b). Cattle trample the crops of farmers entering fields which are sometimes not fenced. Farmers retaliate and cows are sometimes injured and slashed. Water courses become contaminated by cattle whilst farmers on their part divert water to their farms for irrigation, thus depriving grazers of drinking water for themselves and for their cattle.

Some conflicts are more serious than others. Conflicts which for example involve wounding or poisoning cattle or even rape and loss of life are, of course, extremely serious. In the reports given below the most serious events are the ones which are being brought up in the focus groups. This section describes these events as the farmers and grazers see them from their own, sometimes differing, points of view.

***Grazers' experiences of conflict***

Trespass on land either by farmers or by grazers is the major issue which triggers disputes. Grazers say that farmers have encroached on grazing land and created new farms and as the years have passed have clearly gone beyond the boundaries of their own farms. Farmers have been known to grow crops on cattle routes that lead to drinking points and routes used for transhumance and this has provoked unnecessary conflicts.

In Akum, the female grazers admit that a herdsman sometimes finds it difficult to control a large herd of cattle which trespasses onto farm land, and since these farms often have no fences, the cattle tend to damage the crops. Farmers have sometimes extended their farms and this has forced grazers to take their cattle far away in search of land with pasture, which is sometimes difficult to find. As a result cattle don’t always feed well:

*‘Because the herdsmen want to avoid these threats they do not graze the cattle well and I will not have the number and quality of cows I want’ Male grazer, Akum*

Grazers believe that farmers should fence their farms otherwise they are in contravention of the Land Commission Regulations for farmers in Cameroon. The result is that cattle are hurt. Grazers in Akum report that farmers cut and wound the legs of their cattle and the grazers spend a lot of money to have them treated.

*‘The farmers become problematic and threaten to kill us and we spend money to solve the problem with the law enforcement department but sometimes we do not succeed.’ Male grazer, Akum*

In Akum, when cows are wounded or threatened by farmers, the cows often run away and the owners have to search for them and bring them back. When threats are made against a herdsman he may give up his job and the cattle owners have to find a replacement. During such incidents the grazers say they don’t report the farmers. Farmers at times inflict physical injuries on cattle by using cutlasses, spears or guns or by poisoning the cattle. In a 1994 case in Pinyin, Santa Sub-division a grazer lost his entire herd as a result of attack on the cattle by farmers (Haman, 2002). Grazers in Akum say that farmers sprayed the grass with chemicals and as a result the cows fell sick:

*‘My cows are not reproducing well and I cannot make more money. I spend a lot of money to buy drugs to treat the cows’ wounds and sometimes the cows cannot eat well again’. Male grazer, Akum*

Payment to officials is an issue on both sides. Grazers admit that bribes are sometimes given to law enforcement officials when conflicts are reported (even a whole cow) to try to ensure a successful outcome.

On the other hand grazers disliked the fact that farmers report them to law enforcement officers who also receive large sums of money from the farmers. The female grazers in Binshua, where conflicts are less frequent, said that they have not had any physical fights with farmers but only court cases about cattle trespass and crop destruction.

***Farmers' experiences of conflict***

The farmers were very detailed in their complaints about the grazers and in articulating their grievances. They claim that herdsmen destroy fences around farms in order to direct cattle into farms to eat up corn tassel and bean flowers (which are said to influence fertility and reproduction in cattle). The herdsmen are rewarded by an increase in salary by the cattle owners whenever the cows reproduce often. Farmers also accuse grazers of theft:

*When we preserve our corn in our bush barns, their cows come at night, destroy the barns and eat everything. Even when any negotiations are made with them they end up not paying. Such persistent failures cause us to plan evil - possibly to destroy their cows in any way possible.’ Female farmer, Binshua*

Conflicts were particularly numerous in Akum (but less so in Binshua):

*‘My wife’s farm was attacked by cattle and her crops were destroyed. She requested that the elders of the Mbororos should understand and cooperate but they did not want to cooperate with her. Knowing what that means to her and my family I haven’t slept well for three weeks because my wife has abandoned her farm. She supports the family with earnings from this farm. While we were still trying to recover from the shock I found them in my own farm stealing and I realized that all the cocoyam has been stolen. I complained to the Ardo, requesting for negotiation but to no avail. My experience is that the grazers do not go up hills for grazing as instructed. They prefer being around our farms to pick and steal food. They destroy the fences we put around our farms just to steal. Sometimes they send their children to destroy. We like to stay with them in peace but they are not cooperative. They prefer to sell a cow and bribe the D.O. rather than negotiate. I do not think we can ever negotiate with them.’ Female farmer, Akum*

Grazers deliberately choose to trespass on farms on ‘Country Sundays’ (traditional days in which farming is forbidden) and normal Sundays when no work is going on. In Akum, grazers make matters worse by not taking responsibility when such cases are brought to the Fon. Some conflicts involve violence:

*‘Their cows trample in our farms and the soil becomes very hardened for hoeing. The herdsmen threaten us with knives and guns when we try to pursue them from our farm. In the day they protect their cows but at night they free them. Once a shepherd pierced my sister with a knife and despite the fact that she is well today she is disabled’. Female farmer, Binshua*

Farmers report that at times the grazers in Akum look after cattle from grazers from outside the community. They keep them in Akum on a contract basis and this has increased the cattle population in Akum. The herdsmen find it difficult to control a large number of cows (sometimes as many as 500) single-handed.

Night paddocking, or rather the absence of it, is also an issue. (Night paddocking is the process of locking cows up overnight in a secure compound so that they can sleep there and are secure). Grazers intentionally open the paddock gates at night to send their cattle to feed on the nearby enclosed farms and afterwards cows are led into the paddock and the gates are carefully closed. Although some grazers in Akum attend conflict meetings where they agree to night paddocking, they fail to implement such agreements.

Female farmers in Akum blame grazers for taking their cattle down to the valleys where farms are located and where they cause destruction, but the grazers don’t pay compensation for the damage caused. When the women get frustrated with the law enforcement officer’s actions or responses, they bring the case to the Ardo, but when they are not satisfied with the result, they bring curses down on those with whom they have a grievance.

*‘Their cattle enter our farms, eat up and destroy our crops (corn beans, potatoes, carrots). When my farm was completely destroyed, I went to the late Ardo to complain about the incident but he did not take my case seriously. I kept talking to him, insisting that something must be done but he entered his house and came out with a bag of salt to compensate me with it. This was very insulting to me so I rejected it and naked myself in front of him and cursed him that he will die and see no good and he died that way.’ Female farmer, Akum*

Again violence is reported:

*‘When we report them to their leader (the Ardo) nothing is being done. Once my child was taken by a Mbororo man to his compound and was severely beaten and he was bleeding through his mouth. I took the case to the gendarmes and the case was dismissed. In the second instance when I identified the cattle owner whose cattle destroyed my farm, I reported the case to the gendarmes and they said I do not have any case against him because I do not have a land certificate to prove that I owned my farm. The third time when all my corn was eaten I took the case to the gendarmes alongside my land certificate and yet the case was dismissed. When I found that I couldn’t rely on the law, I made nine trips to the Ardo and when he gave me a bag of salt as compensation, I cried in his yard, made myself naked, cried and left while cursing them and never returned to my farm again. That is how I gave up.’ Female farmer, Akum*

# **THE EFFECTS OF CONFLICT**

Although previous research has shown the extent of the farmer-grazer conflicts and its immediate ramifications we have much less research on the wider consequences of conflict, the effects on households, families, children, the extended family and the wider community.

***Effects on Income and livelihood***

Grazers say that the conflict prevents their cattle from grazing adequately so the cows grow thin and produce little milk. And they cannot be sold for a good price:

*‘My cows are not eating well and cannot produce enough milk. Usually, milk production from one cow was very much satisfactory but now a cow cannot produce even two litres of milk a day or even in a week and they are my major source of income’. Female grazer, Akum*

This reduces the amount of milk the family itself can drink:

*‘When a farmer cuts a cow which one is milking daily, the milk volume reduces and we lose and we cannot meet up with our family needs. This affects the wellbeing of our family. When one gets up and has nothing to eat, one can drink cow milk, but now one does not have the cow milk to rely on and as a woman I feel disturbed’. Female grazer, Akum*

Farmers rely mainly on subsistence farming and a reduction in income affects the whole family including children:

*‘I have put in so much money into my farm this year for corn, beans, potatoes and carrots, but I’m not sure I will harvest half of what I expected because the cows have destroyed everything two months to the date of harvesting. Now, I am not sure to pay my children school fess, and even to be able to rebuild a portion of my house that recently collapsed. I feel I have been rendered homeless and poorer. I use to get money to buy other food supplements, or crops that I don’t grow but now I will not have any money for that. I don’t know how I will eat during the harvest season?’ Female farmer, Akum:*

*‘My children usually sell carrots and potatoes to generate money for their school fees and other family needs. Now that the cows have eaten and destroyed everything, they are unemployed and it creates a burden to us. There are no alternative jobs’. Female farmer, Akum*

Farmers have a wider family, not only those living at the farm but children living in the town. This interplay is affected when there is not enough food being grown on the farm.

*‘I am unable to send food to my children in town: usually they appreciate yams from the village because they are never fertilized and the money normally budgeted to buy food is usually sent to me to buy other things for myself. But now that I am unable to send them enough food they are obliged to spend more in buying food and cannot send enough money to me again. This has changed my life in many ways, I’m now poor and can’t buy my needs and life is getting difficult in the village’. Female farmer, Binshua*

Farmers sometimes need more than one job in order to make ends meet but life becomes difficult at times:

*‘God has been our helper from the hands of these grazers. They have indebted us especially our women. The school year has just begun and my children were driven from school because I was unable to pay their school fees this term. With this destruction caused I’m not even sure if they will go to school this year. I am a caterpillar driver but my farm has been helping me more than the driving profession. My children are usually sick and they suffer from malnutrition. My wife depends on this farm to support my family when I’m away. We are very discouraged’. Male farmer, Akum*

There was generally recognition that both communities have common problems and that the government needs to be doing more to help solve these difficulties. This includes increasing employment opportunities:

*‘We have orphans and how can we help them? Can you help us with helping them too? We educate our children but government does not consider them into public service recruitments. We are a marginalised group; therefore the government should encourage us by enabling us to participate in the benefits of the national cake’. Male grazer Binshua*

***Wider effects on the family and an atmosphere of fear***

The conflict also has an effect on schooling and education (Stephens, 2007). One of the consequences of the conflict is to produce an atmosphere of fear, not only about what is happening but also about what could happen. This often affects women in particular:

*‘We live with a lot of fear because sometime the farmers come right into our yards to warn us with cutlasses’.**Female grazer Akum*

The story of one female grazer in Akum highlights a number of issues. A continuing thread is about income, the loss of income if cows do not produce enough milk and the lack of money to pay for children’s education. Her story also highlights issues of early marriage and gender empowerment more generally:

*‘We the female grazers like to work with the farmers if they come to understand us. Given the growth of the population the grazers and farmers need to understand ourselves. Our fear is that if the farmers enter our farms they may never want to leave. The farmer-grazer conflict is affecting so many women because cows do not produce enough milk anymore and there is a lot of disharmony amongst us and the female farmers which never existed before.*

*We are bothered because the men do not allow us to share our opinion and bring out our requests that will minimize the effects of the conflict. If we could be given at least five acres of land to grow pasture we could improve our situation. The women are not happy with all these happenings. We feel that if we are permitted to make pasture and work together we will solve many problems. We will get our children educated beyond class six in the primary school. The men do not encourage further education of the children. Among 100 boys /girls that pass through primary school only 1- 5 go further into secondary school.*

*I personally have worked very hard as a widow to get my children educated and my daughter is the only one in this neighbourhood who has gone further in education and she has now travelled abroad to continue her studies. The dropout rate of girls is high because the men prefer the girls to marry. They do not see the value of educating the girl child. Even the young boys who attempt to go through primary school, they all finally drop out and prefer to become taxi men or bike riders or night/day watchmen. The young women marry very early and their reproductive rate is high because they have no idea about birth control and family planning. This affects the children because they are of almost the same ages and cannot feed well since the women cannot generate income to support the family’. Female grazer, Akum*

In Binshua, where conflict is at a lower level female farmers say that conflict affects their livelihood as a whole and the education of children in particular:

*‘We can’t educate our children; particularly because the burden of child education lies only on women farmers – here in Binshua, women are the bread winners, responsible for children’s welfare and education while the men only support’. Female farmer, Binshua*

***Effects of legal and other costs***

Many issues relating to land and government at various levels lead to a financial cost. This includes the Land Commission:

*‘Administrators make us pay heavy sums and amounts to the Land Commission for allocation of grazing land. The amounts are being bargained depending on your bargaining power or how they know you. Sometimes we even add cows to the amounts given’. Male grazer Binshua*

The grazers complained about lack of government support and preferential treatment being given to farmers:

*‘I see that this conflict will make us even poorer because we do not have any support from the government. Farmers have received support including machines (tractors) to increase their cultivation of crops and this will make them encroach into grazing land even further.’ Male grazer, Akum*

Cases which go to court are very costly. The grazers complained about the punitive cost of judgements made against them:

*‘Many cattle grazers have been rendered poor and wretched in this Community. This is not how they use to look like. Last cattle market day, bailiffs auctioned four cows to fulfil unnecessary case judgments. Our brother has spent over two million francs CFA on a case of destruction. But how much crops did he destroy to have spent two million francs remains unknown’. Male grazer, Binshua*

There are also complaints about the Divisional Officers whose task it is to help resolve disputes*.*

*‘They take our money and enrich themselves. One Senior Divisional Officer faked many cases here and collected millions of FCFA from grazers, bought a new car and abandoned the old one here despite still in a very good state. The grazers are now very poor and their children don’t even have enough food to eat now’. Male grazer, Binshua*

In Akum the conflicts can have a large effect. Some farmers have borrowed money to buy potato seedlings, fertilisers and cow dung for manure and destruction of crops means they are unable to pay back what they owe. This can affect the whole family:

*‘Presently the damages have led me to resign from farming. My children have moved to town in search of better living conditions with friends and relatives. That’s why you find me looking so miserable today. I was a respectable person in this community but now my life has changed’. Female farmer, Akum*

***Effects on food security***

Food security is the availability at all times of adequate food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices. Food security exists when people have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Grazers explained that the conflict led to financial problems and this led in turn to food insecurity in their homes. It may be that these are the most extreme cases and not all farmers experience the problems described here.

*‘Because the herdsmen want to avoid these threats from farmers, they do not graze the cattle well and I do not have the number and quality of cows I want. My family does not have enough food and milk’. Male grazer, Akum*

*‘I sold my cows to pay losses at the court to the farmer, including time wasted, expenditure on bike transportation every day, running up and down diverting food money and school fees to solving problems’. Male grazer, Binshua*

*‘One time we spent a lot of money on conflict resolution such that there was not enough to buy food for the children and they eat from my neighbours’ house’. Female grazer, Akum*

Female farmers detailed the efforts they had made to invest in and improve their farms in order to earn enough for school and university fees (Appendix). Another farmer talked about microfinance and loans in order to cultivate potatoes and beans and the difficulty of paying back the loan:

*On March 5th, 2014, I borrowed 125kgs of potato seeds (worth 500,000FCFA) from the seed multiplier programme of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, bought 10 bags of manure each weighing 50kg and costing 3,200FCFA plus two bags (50kg each) of fertilizer with an added 18,500FCFA for labour. During the cultivation of these potatoes I used 24 packets of pesticides for 12 weeks at a cost of 4,500FCFA /packet and paid for the spraying of the farm at a cost of 2,500FCFA/day. I even paid some people for mulching the farm. All these costs invested for the cultivation of potatoes was a loan I had incurred from a Microfinance institution with accruing interest. I almost died when my large potato farm which was almost ready for harvesting was destroyed and the crops eaten in one day and all the potatoes collected by the herdsmen. What annoys me is that I farm along the forest where cows normally do not graze. I calculated how much I have invested on the farm and how much loan I had to payback. It was a huge sum and I had nowhere to get the money and payback. I had sleepless nights. Considering myself as a widow living with children (some of whom are in the university), two other widows (from my two junior brothers who died leaving them with me) and seven orphans, I saw the burden but I could not give up. I picked up the courage to try again. I went in for another loan to cultivate potatoes alongside beans so that I could generate some money to even pay the previous loan. I invested money and time and again but a similar destruction event occurred. I immediately became hypertensive and I cannot afford medication. I am still devastated. My children have graduated with their Bachelor’s degree and I am unable to afford to pay for Masters studies. I am only trying to pay interest of the loans. I have abandoned farming as we speak.’ Female farmer, Akum*

***Effects on health***

The conflict affected grazers who could not pay for hospital treatment:

*‘It did affect me because of the high expenditure incurred in conflict resolution, my children were hungry and sick but not enough money to take them to the hospital. I gave them only herbs. Thank God they got well’. Male grazer, Binshua*

The female farmers reported high blood pressure and kwashiorkor:

*‘The area where I farm is highly affected by the conflict. The pipeline which constructed for my water irrigation has been destroyed. The repeated destruction of my crops has made me poor and caused a lot of hunger in my household. Because of these we have abandoned the large farmlands to farm in small scale around our homes so that we can monitor the farms. This has been the root source of my ill-health today because I am suffering from hypertension’. Female farmer, Akum*

The tensions created by disputes sometimes spill over in public and there is a sense of public naming and shaming when conflicts take place:

*Imagine that when I walk through the community and people point fingers at me, saying that I am a wicked human being. I don’t live happily in the community’. Male grazer, Binshua*

*‘Grazers have been annotated as trouble makers, especially through name calling by administrators over the radio and this tarnishes grazers’ images. When a new administrator comes to Nkambe (the neighbouring village to Binshua) his opening speech cannot end without calling some grazers’ names and threaten them, explaining how he will deal with them’. Male grazer, Binshua*

# **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

In this section the resolution of conflict through mediation or through legal process is discussed. This includes the development of Dialogue Platforms, which offers a new way to resolve disputes.

***Grazers' experiences of conflict resolution***

There are a number of routes that can be taken when trying to resolve a conflict and statistics on this are provided in the Baseline Survey (Nchinda, 2014b). The two parties can reach amicable agreement with compensation (37%) or without compensation (18%). This process could involve the traditional leaders including the Fon or could involve the Divisional Officer (D.O.) Very few people want to take the legal route as this is expensive and the outcome is uncertain. Settlement via the court is relatively rare (13%).

The issue of payments (bribery/extortion /exploitation) is repeatedly raised. There was considerable disagreement about whether officials, the D.O.s, the gendarmes, or the Fons, favour farmers or grazers. The suggestion is that this depends on who is paying who.

The male grazers in Akum stated that in many cases, when the D.O. and gendarmes become involved in conflict resolution, they keep on demanding money and since this is very costly many cases remain unsettled. Grazers in Akum said that they reported some cases to the Fon but he always favoured the farmers and since the Fon has ultimate power over the Ardo, the grazers were almost always asked to compensate the farmers. They added that their Ardo usually gave something (like a bag of salt or some palm oil) to the farmer as compensation. In Binshua the female grazers reported that the conflicts are rarely resolved because the D.O. and the gendarmes keep asking for more money from their husbands, who are sometimes locked up in prison until they pay:

*No, they are still asking me to bring money. I don’t want the administrators to be involved in any of our problems anymore, I prefer to dialogue with the farmers and settle them. That is cheaper for me*’.*Male grazer, Binshua*

There is a contrary view from farmers. They claim that they have limited financial resources to influence decisions by officials and that they have less money than grazers and that decisions are decided on money not merit.

One of the central aims of the five year ‘In Search of Common Ground’ project is the setting up of new Dialogue Platforms through which conflicts could be resolved without the involvement of the D.O. or gendarmes. Existing ones will also be supported. This method of conflict resolution involves a farmer and grazer from the Dialogue Platform visiting and mediating between individuals involved in a dispute. Grazers said they would now prefer to have a dialogue with the farmers through a Dialogue Platform that would include their leader (the Ardo) and the Fon in each community. Some suggested that the farmers and they themselves should not be part of that committee because physical confrontations could result.

What is clear from this is that the Dialogue Platforms are important. Statistical data has shown that amicable settlement, perhaps via the traditional council is the first approach to a dispute in a large number of cases (33%, Nchinda et al., 2014b). The agro-pastoral commission is used by only 13% and the dialogue platforms by 12%. When people were asked about their preferred modes of conflict resolution the results were very different. The agro-pastoral commission was preferred by just 3% and the dialogue platforms by 40%. This suggests that there is considerable scope for the setting up more Dialogue Platforms and that if they were set up they would be used by large numbers of people.

***Farmers’ experiences of conflict resolution***

Farmers said that they went to the houses of the cattle owners to negotiate but that the grazers never wanted to cooperate. That is why they went to the Fon and law enforcement agencies, although they said that nine out of ten such cases were never resolved satisfactorily and amicably. There were some successes. A female farmer in Akum explained that she had once reported her case to the Fon:

‘*My problem was resolved in a certain way because our prince and some king’s men fought very hard to identify the owner of the cattle who compensated for the destruction with some money’.* Female farmer Akum

On the other hand, farmers in Akum said that the Fon did not satisfactorily settle such issues and complain that what was given to them as compensation was not equivalent to their farm losses:

*‘Even when you try to meet the grazer for negotiation they will offer something very insignificant which I can’t even accept. You can imagine that that one Alahaji’s cows came and destroyed my crops in my farm that covers about one hectare of land, and he was saying that he will compensate me with 10,000 FCFA. This was an insult to me because it was very insignificant just like a drop of water in the ocean. I rejected it and till today nothing was done. He is still keeping his cows and still destroying crops. I have decided to kill the cows when I find it in my farm. I will put poison on the grasses for the cows to eat, I mean it’. Male farmer, Akum*

*They got my son beaten on my farm to the state of unconsciousness because he pursued cattle from the farm and the matter was reported to the gendarmes and the case files soon disappeared and we were sent away. How can we say that the case was resolved when nothing was done against them?’ Female farmer, Akum*

Farmers accused the grazers of being heavily involved (‘soaked’) in a process of bribing law enforcement officers to dismiss cases. They say that grazers boasted about this, saying that they will sell cows and spend whatever it takes to get cases closed. What makes matters worse is that the law enforcement officials always ask for money from farmers to pursue their case, money which the farmers can ill afford. Some farmers in Akum decided to take matters into our own hands and went to the grazers to ask them to leave the village. They didn’t want to have anything to do with them anymore.

# **AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION**

The premise of the ‘In Search of Common Ground’ project is that improvements in alliance farming, in grazing practice (improving pastures using better seeds) and in water protection plus the use of biogas will help improve the relationships between farmers and grazers in the area. Tackling the problems of water protection will also be important. The views expressed here are at the beginning of the second year of the five year Project and therefore some of the project interventions are yet to be put in place.

***Grazers' experiences of agricultural innovation***

The Ardo’s wife in Akum said that with alliance farming their cattle were doing very well and producing a good quantity of milk relative to the cows of other grazers. They had just started planting grass for improving their pasture so they couldn’t provide evidence of the advantage of this. Although the grazers in Akum were well aware of the existence of alliance farming and pasture improvement, only the Ardo and his wife had some experience with both interventions. Grazers in Binshua, by contrast, had no knowledge of either.

Grazers in both Akum and Binshua did not have a sound knowledge of water protection methods, but they understand how important it is for them. They believe that only the grazers face water crises and that the water they have is unsafe. They haven’t any experience of watershed management or the use of biogas. In fact, they have never seen biogas technology being used.

Grazers stated that they had received some training in alliance farming and pasture improvement by MBOSCUDA and were very happy to know how land can be managed in this way. At the same time they raised the concern that they don’t own large tracts of land, and much of the grazing land has been recently allocated for farming. They are willing to improve pasture and use alliance farming, but they will need enough land, training and even some machines (for example a tractor) before they make such improvements. They say that farmers do not cooperate with them which could restrict the use of alliance farming. On the other hand, alliance farming could enable farmers to have access to manure which will improve their soil fertility and stop them from encroaching on grazing land. However farmers may not accept cattle on their farm because their soils become hardened due to the cattle trampling it. In addition, grazers in Akum believe that alliance farming will limit their cattle from walking freely and will prevent cows choosing the kind of grass they want to eat. They also believe that improving pasture requires a great deal of time consuming work.

Water protection is seen to be very important to them and their cattle and they are willing to take part in protecting the water catchment areas but see the farmers as responsible for water problems. Grazers were generally anxious to install and use biogas technology in their community but are, however, concerned about the cost.

***Farmers’ experiences of agricultural innovation***

Farmers said that they do not have any experience of working together on alliance farming but they had arrangements in which female farmers pay some money (10,000 FCA/bed) to cultivate vegetables on grazer’s land that is used for paddocking. They added that grazers pay female farmers to work on grazers farms. At the present time grazers sell cow dung to farmers for organic farming. Farmers are not happy about such payment because, in their view, cows are grazing on pasture which is free and given to the grazers freely by their ancestors. Generally, farmers did not buy the idea that cattle should be brought in to their farm. In Binshua, the female farmers stated strongly that this was because they practise mixed farming in which crops are harvested over different periods:

*‘Yes, we plant different crops on our farms and they grow to maturity at different time. When we harvest crops with short life cycle like maize and green beans, we leave behind those that have a longer life cycle like the yellow yam especially which is our delicacy in this village. So, how do you think we will want to let cows come and destroy all what we are relying on? Come to think of it. I am sorry, we cannot do alliance farming in our area, only those areas that don’t practise mixed cropping can do it’. Female farmer Binshua*

*Also the trampling of cow feet will harden the soil and we will find it more difficult for hoeing. We don’t want the soil to become harder than usual, there are no suggestions to this, it just cannot be done here’. Female farmer Binshua*

*‘We cannot and shall never accept it. We had a meeting with them that was organised by MBOSCUDA and we rejected this proposal from them’. Male farmer Binshua*

In Akum, farmers said that if they practise alliance farming their crops will be destroyed by cattle and the soil would become hardened and difficult for them to till. At the same time farmers in Akum wanted to at least try the technique. Some of them said that even if they adopt the technique, they would prefer to work with an indigenous grazer and not with a Mbororo because the indigenous grazers are more amicable. (Some indigenes who are not Mbororos also have cows).

Water protection was seen as an important issue. It was noted that farmers have connected pipes that supply potable water from water catchment areas to taps located all over their communities. Existing water management committee addressed issues concerning water supply, including some aspects of water protection in their community. Water protection committees had been involved in construction, monitoring and repairs of their pipes and this process had been effective. Meetings are organised when there are problems with water in the community. (The grazers however did not take part). The farmers were making requests for financial support in order to upgrade the pipes and increase the water supply capacity. In addition they welcome provision for training and to build their capacity on water protection.

Farmers in Binshua demonstrated some interest in using biogas technology. By contrast, farmers in Akum did not seem interested in this since they do not have cow dung at their disposal. They believe that biogas technology will be useful only to grazers.

Within the ‘In Search of Common Ground’ project the proposal is that the number of Dialogue Platforms should be increased and that alliance farming, improved pastures, protection of water catchments and biogas should be priorities. The issue of water catchment protection was further emphasised:

*‘Can you people support the maintenance of our water project to enable sustainability? The Mbororo people equally require water extension - how can this extension be done? We need protection of our catchment – we really need government intervention particularly enforcement of regulation towards preservation of our watershed’.* *Male farmer, Binshua*

# **GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

The farmers and grazers also expressed views about more general issues of change within the communities and the need for their voice to be heard. The fundamental issue of land ownership and land reform was again raised:

*‘Our well established compounds do not have boundary pillars while farmers plant pillars round empty lands and plant eucalyptus forests. We need to own land; that is why we need land title’. Male grazer Binshua*

*‘We have battled with land issues for a very long time. How can one acquire a land certificate less costly? I have been asked to pay about 800.000 francs just to get a land certificate and I do not know what to do because the money is too much?’ Male grazer Binshua*

The services offered by MINEPIA, the ministry for livestock, also came in for criticism:

‘*We are embarrassed by the services of MINEPIA because they require us to pay them before they even come here when our cows are sick or when our cows need vaccination. We are bound to take risk to treat our animals ourselves most of the time using unprofessional means. Why are we neglected by the government? Even when projects that concerns grazing arise, only the native people are given priority, is this right? Even to obtain the five years grazing permit is a problem. While Agriculture technicians value farmers and are always ready to stand by them during negotiations connected to crop destruction by cows the veterinary officials should equally stand by us but they are never around and do not care about us’ .* Male grazer, Binshua

# **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

What lessons can be learned from this? How does this research inform the development of the project ‘In Search of Common Ground’? What further questions are raised by this work?

The first objective of the study was to explore how different groups are affected by the conflicts. Views were expressed about, for example, cattle trampling crops on the one hand and farmers poisoning cattle on the other. What is abundantly clear is that very strong views are held on all sides and that, unless these grievances are dealt with, conflicts will continue. The research also references what we know about the complaints of farmers and grazers, that there is not the help they need from officials, from the gendarmes, from the different agencies of government and from the Ministries. These issues come together in the problem of land ownership and land reform, the problem of who owns the land and the purchase and registration of land and land certificates. This issue is repeatedly raised and, unlike some of the other sources of conflict, seems to be one which unites both farmers and grazers. The reason why a solution has not been found to these problems is a bigger question than can be answered here.

The second and third objectives of the study were about how the attitudes of farmers and grazers are affected by their knowledge and experience of Alliance Farming, Dialogue Platforms, water catchment areas and biogas and hindrances to the uptake of these. The findings are that there is a lack of knowledge of these interventions on the part of some of the respondents, partly because these interventions are just now being put in place. It is too early to tell what the effects of these will be though early signs are encouraging.

The fourth objective was to identify how people feel conflict can be resolved. Existing means of dispute resolution were seen as unsatisfactory including difficulties experienced with D.O.s, the gendarmes, the Agro-pastoral Land Commission and the Ministries. The terms used include the words ‘payments’, ‘extortion’, ‘bribes’, ‘exploitation’ and ‘corruption’. The participants suggest this remains a large problem and makes the settlement of disputes much more difficult. Support for Dialogue Platforms was clear and this suggests there is considerable scope for the setting up of new Dialogue Platforms.

If the above problems are overcome what would be the remaining stumbling blocks? There is a further strand which runs through the interviews that is, the relationships between farmers and Mbororos themselves, the question of inter-ethnic relations. There is a tension between the farmers and grazers with one group described as indigenes and the other group described as strangers, classic descriptions of the ‘Other’ (Miles, 1989; Pelican 2012; Pelican, 2015). This is after more than seven decades of settlement by cattle herders. This is both a cause and effect of the conflicts.

What further questions are raised by this work? This study suggests an agenda for further statistical work and case studies in the third year of the Big Lottery project including research on land ownership and land reform, on government officials and payments, on the interrelationships between farmers and grazers and on local institutional arrangements in conflict and natural resources management. The government actors need to be research subjects themselves. More in depth research is needed on the effects of conflicts on families, on children and on the wider community. Also, the interventions of the ‘In Search Of Common Ground’ project require evaluation. This includes measuring the effectiveness of the Dialogue Platforms and how mediation can be encouraged and measuring the effectiveness of the agricultural interventions. Grazers from time to time have disputes with other grazers and this is an issue also requiring attention. There is still a great deal of work to be done.

This study is part of a series of studies over a five year period and the evaluation breaks new ground with its length and size. It is in the hands of MBOSCUDA to implement the interventions of the project. At the same time it is in the hands of government, the Ministries, the government officials, the D.O.s, the gendarmes and the judiciary to help resolve these problems in an equitable way. The need for this is urgent.

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**Appendix One: A female farmer in Akum talks about the effects of conflict and her children’s education**

*I am a widow with seven children. I use to live in Yaoundé, the Capital city of Cameroon. I choose to do farming which I love so much and so decided to come to my home town - Akum and become a farmer. I have been cultivating beans, maize and potatoes for seven years but there has never been a year my farm has not been destroyed and yet I have never given up. Each time it happens and usually 1- 2 months when the crops are to be harvested I gather the crops and with all evidence I bring to the chief. The grazers were the same people responsible for all the destructions that have occurred in my farm and each time the chief calls them and talk to them, they will beg and cry. This grazer is the neighbour of my farm and he has three herds of cattle so their cattle graze around my farm. My farm is fenced but the herdsmen usually destroy the fence at about 6.00pm in the evening and the cows eat and sleep in my farm all night and leave at 6.00am in the morning. I have never harvested for seven years, I have been investing at least 20 bags (50kgs each) of manure, three bags (50Kgs each) of fertilizers and CFA 8,000 for labour each year on my farm, not even considering my own time and labour. How I can progress as a farmer? I have always been hopeful that one day the problem will go away but now that I find that I am unable to pay fees for my children in the university I have given up all efforts. The grazers want us to abandon the farms. Recently one Alhaji Masso, owner of cattle herds warned me not to cultivate and leave the farm that the dry season is coming. This implied his cattle will have to feed on my crops because the grass in his grazing land must have dried up’. Female farmer Akum*